

# ADULT EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT



**Supplement**

## Non-formal Skills Training

Adult Education for Decent Jobs and Better Lives

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**77**  
2011

# ADULT EDUCATION

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## AND DEVELOPMENT

**Adult Education and Development** is a forum for adult education practitioners from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Published biannually, the journal is specifically designed to facilitate exchange and discussion around practical and theoretical issues, innovative methods and approaches, projects and experiences, as well as political initiatives and positions. In this respect, "*Adult Education and Development*" is a tool for South-South exchange.

The journal also seeks to provide opportunities for readers in Europe, North America, and other industrialized parts of the world such as Japan or Australia to acquaint themselves with current sector developments in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, so as to contribute to their becoming more effective partners in practical and intellectual cooperation. As such, "*Adult Education and Development*" also serves to foster North-South and South-North exchange.

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**CONTENTS**

Michael Samlowski Introduction <b>EFA Goal 3 and the Outlook for Non-formal Education and Informal Learning</b>	3
Wolfgang Schur <b>New Skills for Afghanistan</b>	15
Alicia González <b>Education for Rural Development</b>	29
Vanya Ivanova / Matthias Klingenberg / Nazaret Nazaretyan <b>From “Learning to Listen” to “Speaking to One Another”</b>	43
Anita Borkar <b>ASPBAE’s Basic Leadership Development Course</b>	55
Sonja Belete <b>Literacy, Skills Training and Entrepreneurship – Support for Rural Women in Ethiopia</b>	67
Romualdo Huanca de la Cruz <b>Experience in Community Health through the Strengthening of Knowledge and Intercultural Skills in Bolivia</b>	83
Alejandra Elizabeth Velásquez <b>Competencies and Skills Created within the Scope of Development of the Local Communities of Totonicapán, Guatemala</b>	95
Astrid von Kotze/Lynn Stefano <b>Building Skills for Wellbeing: an Integrated Approach to Health Education in South Africa</b>	107

Mana Chanthalanonh/Heribert Hinzen/Mathias Pfeifer/ Dokham Xomsihapanya	
<b>Non-formal Education, Learning Needs, and Skills Training in Lao PDR</b>	117
<hr/>	
Janet Wicks	
<b>Men on the Side of the Road</b>	135
<hr/>	
Allah Bakhsh Malik	
<b>Adult Literacy with Vocational Skills for Adult Illiterates in Punjab: An Effective Intervention for Skills Development</b>	145
<hr/>	
Maja Avramovska/Britta Schweighöfer	
<b>Where Time Doesn't Pass – Skills Training in Tetovo Prison in Macedonia</b>	151
<hr/>	
Kamol Jiyankhodjaev	
<b>The Case of Central Asia: Non-formal Skills Training as a Tool to Combat Poverty and Unemployment</b>	157
<hr/>	
Feliciano Aguilar Hernández/Irma Estela Aguirre Pérez	
<b>CESDER: Meeting, Encounter and Dialogue – Creating Other Worlds of Hope</b>	171
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**Michael Samlowski**  
**Introduction**

## **EFA Goal 3 and the Outlook for Non-formal Education and Informal Learning**

*"We do not really know how we are doing on skills, because we have not figured out properly how to define them and measure them."*<sup>1</sup>

Nick Burnett, Assistant Director-General, Education, UNESCO

At the World Education Forum which was held in Senegal in April 2000, UNESCO, the World Bank and a global community of governments, development agencies, and civil society organizations adopted the *"Dakar Framework for Action"*, reaffirming their commitment to achieve Education for All (EFA) by 2015 at the latest. They pledged themselves to achieving six goals to give all people in every society access to the benefits of education: the expansion of early childhood care and education, the guarantee of primary education for all children, a 50% reduction in illiteracy rates, the elimination of all forms of gender discrimination, and the achievement of universal quality education. The goals are designed to ensure recognized and measurable learning outcomes for everyone, particularly in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills.

The UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (GMR), issued annually since 2002, evaluates how far the more than 160 signatory countries have come toward meeting the six EFA targets by the agreed deadline of 2015. The report traces their progress in policy development and alignment of policy and practice, describes the challenges that must be met, and promotes international cooperation aimed at strengthening education. Topics already covered include gender parity, quality education for all, literacy learning, early childhood education, the elimination of inequality, reaching the marginalized, and the implementation of the right to education in areas affected by armed conflict.

The reporting process has yet to be completed. Progress toward the achievement of Goal 3 will be dealt with for the first time in the next issue, which is scheduled to be released in 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> Gaitskell Lecture, 22nd May 2008, in: *"Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Analysis and Monitoring of Skills"*; Report by Kenneth King and Robert Palmer, (UK National Commission for UNESCO, British Council, Sept. 2008), p.1.

## **Learning and Life Skills – the Domain of Non-formal Adult Education and Informal Learning**

The object of EFA Goal 3 is to ensure *“that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.”*

Broadly stated, this is precisely the object of Adult Education as understood by *dvv international* and its partners throughout the world: helping people and giving them opportunities to learn and practice the skills they need to improve the conditions under which they live and shape their own lives.

We are therefore keenly interested in bringing our experience and convictions into the ongoing debate on the achievement of EFA Goal 3 to guarantee the acquisition of appropriate learning and life skills. It is our firm belief that special consideration in this respect must be given to the many and varied efforts in the non-formal and informal education sector that are so frequently conducted by civil society organizations in the interest of marginal and socially excluded groups and populations. We are fully committed to ensuring that their significance not be overlooked. For this reason we have decided to publish a special issue of *“Adult Education and Development”* to highlight examples of projects that are seeking to develop a broad range of diverse skills in different regions and countries of the world.

When speaking of life skills here, we mean those basic skills that are not transmitted through formal schooling. Life skills include technical and manual skills that are required to secure gainful employment, skills of the kind that enable people to feed their families, to keep them healthy, and to protect them from illness. They are the kind of skills people need to be able to help themselves when health services are lacking or not affordable. In multicultural societies with significant indigenous populations, the development of intercultural skills is especially important. In rural areas, small farmers need to learn how to profitably market the fruits of their labour. Where social welfare systems fail, people need to learn how to take the initiative to organize self help. Where jobs are scarce or exploitation is rampant, people must learn to earn a living as self-employed or independent workers. In such situations they also need to acquire business skills. Citizens need to learn how to participate in making political decisions that affect their communities. They need opportunities to acquire practice in protecting their interests. There are benefits for both men and women in overcoming traditional gender roles and in learning to develop the potential of women to increase family income and promote the welfare of their communities. People need practice in analyzing their problems and conflicts. They need to learn how to find common solutions and to implement

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decisions reached by consensus. They must come to recognize ways in which each and every individual can help reduce negative impacts on the environment so as to make the world more sustainable. The creation of opportunities for people to learn life skills makes it possible to successfully link general education with vocational and employment-oriented education so that the different components reinforce and build on one another.

It is our firm conviction that a wide range of knowledge, skills, and competencies must be acquired not in isolation, but rather interconnected with one another in a holistic approach in the same way that all facets of life itself are interrelated and interdependent. Learning experiences are always especially successful and enriching in ways that sustainably shape knowledge and actions when they are acquired not separately or in isolation, but when they stand in relation to other areas of learning and action which they complement and by which they themselves are complemented. It is this integral character of life and learning which determines and characterizes the way Adult Education functions.

In this sense, *“ensuring equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills”* is a domain of *dvv international* and its partners. We have accumulated decades of experience in pursuing this goal. We are familiar with the wide range of diverse possibilities and the different forms of work that doing so involves. We know that work in this area can bring success. But we are also aware of its conceptual and structural weaknesses. And above all we know that the education sector in question here is the one that serves the world’s largest potential target group, namely all young people and adults outside the formal education system. What is more, we also know that the education sector in question here is one with far too little political backing. It is an area that rarely has a secure place in legislation and almost always suffers from insufficient government funding.

## **EFA Goals and Measurability**

Particularly the next edition of the Global Monitoring Report has enormous potential to influence that situation. A lot will depend on how the report will be focused.

For the most part the GMRs are based on country reports and case studies. It is only natural that they concentrate on reliable statistical data based on similar indicators according to the same principles in order to achieve a maximum degree of comparability. In the formal education sector this task is already difficult enough, although, at least nominally, it is the basically same phenomena in different regions of the world which are measured. Indicators include factors such as total number of schools, learning facilities, statistics on students and teachers, boy-girl ratios, the

average number of years of school attendance, data on teacher training, curriculum, class size, the languages in which subjects are taught, and, last but not least, budgets. The reports themselves call attention to the problems that exist in respect of comparability of qualitative and quantitative reliability of the data. This naturally also has implications for the validity of the statements and conclusions drawn from the data. Quantitative changes, and in certain cases even qualitative changes, can certainly be proven in any given country even if the methods for collecting statistical data are not precise. This makes it possible to draw plausible conclusions.

Considering the fact that the various countries of the world have their own particular economic and cultural background and education structures, there is no question about the difficulties that exist in comparing this type of data from many different countries. But outside the formal school system, in the largely unregulated vocational sector, not to speak of the informal education sector, the difficulties in collecting comparable data are virtually insurmountable. These, however, are precisely the sectors concerned when we consider the realm of “*life skills*”.

It is perfectly obvious that the acquisition of life skills is vital in order for people to conduct successful lives. The fact that progress toward the achievement of this goal has not yet been the object of close examination is certainly due in large part to the lack of clear indicators. It will be the task of the GMR to measure progress toward the achievement of “*appropriate learning and life skills*”. But how can this be measured? The phrase has the character of a highly relevant policy statement. As a goal, however, it is far too vague and unspecific. It is intended to cover literacy skills, vocational skills, and competencies necessary for personal and social development. But without quantifiable and measurable quality indicators, it is more of a hindrance than a help in measuring progress and making an objective evaluation of the situation.<sup>2</sup> This is one, but not the only, reason in the complex debate on this EFA goal why attention almost always concentrates on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in a labour market context, despite the generally acknowledged need for other types of skills.

## Focuses of the Global Monitoring Report

To a large degree, groundwork discussions for the next Global Monitoring Report on EFA Goal 3 have tended to concentrate on formal training. Part of the reason for this is the actual or potential availability of reliable statistics on TVET, especially

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2 See Kenneth King and Robert Palmer, “*Skills for Work, Growth and Poverty Reduction*”. Op.cit., p.2; and David Clarke, “*Education For All – End of Decade Note Report – Goal 3*” <[http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/efa/EFA\\_Coordinators\\_Mtg/12th\\_EFA\\_Coord\\_Mtg/12JulEFA\\_EDN\\_Report.doc](http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/efa/EFA_Coordinators_Mtg/12th_EFA_Coord_Mtg/12JulEFA_EDN_Report.doc)>.

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considering that in most countries the area is subject to state supervision and in many cases even organized and implemented by government agencies.

As Wolfgang Schur so aptly observes in his article on the situation in Afghanistan which appears in this special issue of AED, however, it is crucial that in its concentration on TVET, the debate must not overlook the informal sector. Equally important is the focus on *“informal/traditional apprenticeship training ... soft skills, such as literacy skills, life skills, productive skills, problem solving and creative thinking skills.”*<sup>3</sup>

## Skills and the Informal Sector

As we seek to show with the articles in this issue, life skills are acquired in many different ways. The traditional master/apprentice model which in many countries is still a widespread form of training in the informal sector is something altogether different from the TVET model that draws on a country's formal economy wherever possible. This is likewise true for the informal training courses that people attend in hopes of finding some kind of income-generating work when they finish. Many, if not most, of these skills are picked up through non-formal and informal learning and in the informal sector.

Gathering data that is reasonably reliable, however, is no easy task in these areas. Nevertheless, the importance of the informal sector for the development of life skills cannot be over-emphasized. In the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, but increasingly in North America and Europe as well, it is in the informal sector where large segments of the population learn the skills they need to develop strategies for survival. To a very significant extent it is in the informal sector where the economic strength of many nations lies. Estimates indicate, for instance, that nearly half of Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) is generated in the informal sector.<sup>4</sup>

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3 A large amount of discussion that has been devoted to defining the scope of concepts such as skills, competencies, knowledge, and qualifications. Multilingual glossaries have been created so as to unify definitions and promote common understanding of mutual concepts. In our opinion, one of the more successful products of these efforts is the glossary published by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) under the title *“Terminology of European Education and Training Policy”*. It can be downloaded at the internet site of CEDEFOP under the following address: [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Upload/Information\\_resources/Bookshop/369/4064\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Upload/Information_resources/Bookshop/369/4064_en.pdf)

4 Arvil V. Adams, Skills Development in the Informal Sector of Sub-Saharan Africa World Bank, *“The size of the sector, estimated to account on average for 42 percent of GDP in 23 African countries in 2000, is forcing governments to acknowledge its existence and importance to the national economy and the welfare of those employed therein.”*

Moreover, the informal sector is the world's largest employer. Secure salaried employment is a privilege in the modern formal sectors of the economy where conditions are regulated and collective agreements are negotiated between employers and unions. Those who are barred from this privilege must seek to earn their livelihoods in the informal sector, if necessary by offering their services or products as small self-employed entrepreneurs. The informal sector provides "60% of all employment in Latin America, 60% in East Asia and about 70% in South Asia. In Africa, that proportion would be even higher."<sup>5</sup> These figures cannot be expected to change in the foreseeable future.

The informal sector takes care of training its own workforce. As pointed out in a background paper commissioned to assist in the drafting of the 2012 GMR: "a survey on Morocco's informal sector, which accounts for 40% of jobs in urban areas, revealed that that 80.4% of employers or employees in production or service units did not have any forms of skills other than those acquired on the job. A survey conducted in Ethiopia, where the informal sector accounts for 90% of all labour market activities and jobs, is even clearer in this regard. 67.86% of employees from the sector acquired their skills through self-training, 26.88% within the family and 3.54% through apprenticeship or on-the-job training. Only 0.09%, in other words a tiny number of people working sector, had done any sort of formal training."<sup>6</sup>

The informal sector is not regulated. It is not captured in statistics. It is highly heterogeneous and constantly changing. These aspects are precisely the conditions that characterize the sector. And yet, in order to ensure that this crucial area is not neglected in future policies and funding decisions throughout the world, it must be given due consideration despite all the apparent difficulties that make it so hard to measure.

## Skills and the Rural Population

All over the world we are witnessing an unrelenting trend toward urbanization and rural-urban migration, particularly among young adults. Nevertheless, almost half of the world's population resides in rural areas. In many countries the percentage is far greater. Rural communities account for close to 85 percent of Ethiopia's population. In India and Pakistan the figure is nearly 70 percent, and in China

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5 Santosh Mehrotra, Director General, Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR), Planning Commission, Government of India, "Consultation 2012 – Skills development: enhancing opportunities for the marginalized", 25 February 2011 <<http://gmrconsultation.wordpress.com/2011/02/01/consultation-for-the-2012-gmr/comment-page-1/#comment-30>>.

6 Richard Walther "Bildung Skills in the Informal Sector", <<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/gmr2012-ED-EFA-MRT-PI-08.pdf>>.

it is still more than half. Rural families rely mainly on farming for a living. Hardly anywhere in the world, however, are farming skills learned in the formal school system. Schools where farming techniques are a part of the curriculum are extremely rare, and in most countries, formal technical and vocational training is neglected and deficient. Very few countries place high priority on agriculture in their local and national development plans. This means that very few formal TVET systems include training in the sector in their curricula, particularly when it comes to small-scale farming rather than agro-business.<sup>7</sup>

It goes without saying, however, how important subsistence farming and small-scale farms are in the maintenance of food security, the protection of ecological resources, the control of erosion, the reversal of desertification, the mitigation of natural disasters, the development of perspectives for young people, and the prevention of rural exodus. Progress could be achieved in all these areas if concentrated efforts were undertaken to professionalize traditional skills, organize farms more economically, strengthen cooperative endeavours, build up profitable marketing systems, and facilitate rural credit development. Policy advocacy is crucial to secure life-skills training in the informal sector. The same applies in equal measure with respect to subsistence farming and small-scale farming efforts. For millions of people all over the world it is vital that the coming GMR give due consideration to the life-skills training needs of the world's rural populations.

## **Non-formal Education and Informal Learning – Unpopular and Under-Financed**

The fact that the informal learning sector plays no significant role in educational efforts anywhere in the world is nothing new. In a study on *“Literacy and Skills Development”* conducted as background material for the 2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report, John Oxenham investigated the close link between literacy learning and the different skills that are relevant in the lives and livelihoods of disadvantaged sectors of the population. Oxenham identified informal training opportunities in arts, crafts, trades, home economics, nutrition, and child care,<sup>8</sup> but he lamented their limited scope and the lack of systematic evaluation of their impact:

*“However, despite the long-standing concern, actual provision by the state, private and voluntary sectors has been modest, with relatively small numbers*

<sup>7</sup> See Igor Besson, Project Officer, FAR Network, Montpellier SupAgro, France, *“Consultation 2012”*, op.cit.

<sup>8</sup> John Oxenham, *“The Quality of Programmes and Policies Regarding Literacy and Skills Development, a Study Commissioned for the 2005 EFA Monitoring Report”*, p. 11, < [http://unesdoc.unesco.org/Ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?catno=146689&set=4E643BA9\\_2\\_215&gp=0&lin=1&ll=1](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/Ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?catno=146689&set=4E643BA9_2_215&gp=0&lin=1&ll=1) >.

*of learners and very small percentages of public funds involved. Regrettably, too, no assessments of their outcomes appear to be available. For the most part, poor unschooled people have relied on patterns of informal learning within families and communities, and traditional apprenticeships to acquire their skills (see e.g. Leach et al. 2000 and Afenyadu et al. 2001)".<sup>9</sup>*

In short, he found that although informal education was badly needed, and although sporadic learning programmes did exist, they received only token support. They were poorly equipped and for the most part invisible. Not much has changed in the meantime, as the examples selected for this publication clearly demonstrate.

Neglect of the non-formal and informal learning sector is by no means a phenomenon limited to developing countries. In Europe as well there is still significant debate over how broadly to define "appropriate life skills". In its Communication "New Skills for New Jobs – Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs",<sup>10</sup> the European Commission focuses almost exclusively on vocational skills for employability, the labour market, and the creation of jobs. The stated purpose behind the Communication is the need to develop a workforce "that is highly skilled and responsive to the needs of the economy."

Recommendations made by the European Commission include investments in education based on economic arguments of medium to long term profitability.<sup>11</sup> In its commentary on the Communication, the Adult Education Association (EAEA) emphasized the need for a wider view, stressing that teaching and learning must respond holistically to people's economic, social, and individual needs.

*"The renewed action plan for adult learning should not be restricted to measures designed to meet labour market needs, but should recognise the role of Lifelong Learning in contributing to individual and collective well being, active citizenship, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue.... We would also suggest that consideration be given to 'soft' skills, including team building, participation, problem solving and social skills which can be acquired in a range of non-formal and formal learning environments."<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Commission Communication COM 868, 16 December 2008 <[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/com868\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/com868_en.pdf)>.

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit. p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> The response of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) to The Communication from the Commission: "An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs: A European contribution towards full employment", June 2011, <[http://www.eaea.org/doc/eaea/EAEA\\_NewSkillsforNewJobs\\_2011.pdf](http://www.eaea.org/doc/eaea/EAEA_NewSkillsforNewJobs_2011.pdf)>.

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This is exactly the position of the German *Volkshochschulen*. The essence of the idea is aptly reflected in the recent position statement presented to the public at the 13<sup>th</sup> German Adult Education Conference on 12 May 2011: *“The work of the Volkshochschulen is guided by a holistic and integral understanding of education that considers general education just as important as vocational training.”*<sup>13</sup>

### **“Appropriate Learning and Life Skills” are more than “Vocational Skills for Employability”**

There is no doubt over the relevance of vocational skills for individual and community welfare. It goes without saying that Goal 3 of the Dakar Framework for Action requires the GMR to monitor the progress made toward ensuring that people are equipped with the skills they need to find employment in the growing and changing formal world economy. Considering that the area of general education has already been addressed in the progress reports on the goals of universal primary education and literacy, it is now time to investigate progress in the formal sector of vocational education and training.

But it is also imperative that the GMR give adequate consideration to all those life-skills training areas that do not fit within the categories of vocational and employment-related skills and their transmission through formal education systems for young people. The words *“appropriate learning and life skills”* most certainly were not intended to refer to TVET alone. They cover all the knowledge and know-how that is needed to master so many more demands challenges, responsibilities and opportunities posed by life.

Moreover, for all their efforts, many working age people never succeed in finding a steady job. The trend toward rising unemployment is growing – not just in the poorest countries of the world, and not just among people with no formal qualifications. Even a degree in higher education does not amount to a job guarantee. But there are also long stretches in life when gainful employment does not play a role. And these phases are getting longer, particularly as life expectancy increases in most parts of the world. As already pointed out, a meaningful life includes more than just work. EFA Goal 3 also covers the mastery of skills in areas such as health, nutrition, sustainability, environmental protection, inter-cultural coexistence, community participation, personality development, and the ability to solve problems or overcome conflicts.

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<sup>13</sup> *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (ed.), “Die Volkshochschule – Bildung in öffentlicher Verantwortung”, 2011.*

## **Access to Appropriate Learning and Life Skills through Non-formal and Informal Education – Examples for Successful Practice**

We have decided to publish this special issue of Adult Education and Development to demonstrate ways in which the non-formal and informal Adult Education sector is seeking to help people meet the diverse needs they have for acquiring life skills. The examples of good practice presented in the following pages document projects from different regions of the world where we cooperate with our partners in the interest of Adult Education. While they are not intended to be representative of the wealth of non-formal and informal education measures taking place all over the world, we hope they will suffice to demonstrate how important such measures are for people who have no other access to education opportunities. In striving to enable people to widen their perspectives for securing their existence, and in lending them support in their efforts to build their lives with dignity, they illustrate the type of learning that we feel captures the essence of EFA Goal 3.

As a rule, the areas of learning, training and action depicted in the following examples are not addressed in formal vocational training systems. But all these areas are indispensable for everyone. The fact that it is difficult to standardize, regulate, and measure them does not make them less important. Neither do they stand in opposition to formal vocational training. On the contrary, they often constitute a prerequisite for people to successfully participate in formal training.

Where the projects and programmes described in the examples seek to improve the employment potential of young people and adults and help them to learn the skills they need to sustain a meaningful occupation and earn their livelihood, or at least to develop strategies that allow them to save on expenses, they make it clear that for the majority of people in this world this is only possible in the informal sector. They testify to the need, but also to the potential, to help people, and especially women and indigenous groups, to develop essential life skills. And they emphasize the fact that in the nonformal and informal Adult Education sector it is always important to organize learning as a coherent whole. The integral and holistic approach of these projects is precisely what makes it so hard to measure their results, but it is also precisely why this approach so closely corresponds to the realities of life and the intentions of the third EFA goal to enable people to shape their lives in positive directions.

The list of the selected case studies could be extended indefinitely. They represent a very diverse range of similar projects and educational approaches that are being conducted by *dvv international* and numerous other organizations, especially in the non-government sector. Decision makers both in national and international institutions and agencies would do well to take a closer look at such measures to

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get a clearer idea of their relevance and to create policies, incentives and strategies to promote them – not as the fifth wheel on the wagon of education that only plays a marginal role toward achieving the goals of Education for All, but as an indispensable prerequisite for the good of the community and for each and every individual in that community.

I would like to take the opportunity at this point to thank the authors of the articles in this issue for the time and effort they have invested in describing and reflecting on their projects and the concepts on which they are based. Their willingness to do so without compromising the more immediate demands of their work in the implementation of their programmes testifies to their firm commitment and the inspiring dedication which they bring to informal and non-formal education.

## Lessons to be Learned

As the examples in this issue demonstrate, informal “*skills development*” and non-formal learning generally do not figure as integral parts of government training and education programmes. The IWEP project in Ethiopia, and literacy work in Pakistan, are perhaps two cases that count among the exceptions. There may also be approaches in Laos where such initiatives are initiated by foreign aid organizations which cooperate with state authorities. But for the most part, the initiatives are designed and implemented by civil society organizations in individually tailored programs, often as pilot projects, which means that they are frequently locally developed experiments. They may receive temporary financing from outside sources, but such support is not sustainable.

The lesson to be learned from this is that the best and probably the most effective efforts that give the broader masses of informal societies access to achieving EFA Goal 3 are rarely sponsored or strengthened structurally by government agencies. This, however, is imperative if the aims of EFA are to be reached in their entirety. Public education systems must accordingly remain open to civil society efforts and promote them as widely as possible. And they must integrate the methods and approaches used by these organizations in their own programmes.

But there is also another lesson to be learned: The representatives of non-formal and informal Adult Education must develop more reliable ways to collect and systematically document their achievements so as to increase awareness about their relevant and crucial nature among policy and decision-makers. This is the only effective way to keep the sector from being disregarded and neglected. Moreover, for interventions to be sustainable, they need to be more than just isolated, sporadic measures. This calls for closer networking among the NGOs that carry

out this work. Projects funded by the European Union are virtually all subject to documentation and publication requirements so as to make the results and achievements known for the benefit of others. This should become a normal and essential part of the work of all NGOs. Worldwide economic constraints and stricter funding requirements in national and international budgets make it even more necessary than ever before for us to try and find ways to provide robust statistical proof of the broader implications of our interventions. Regional organizations could make it a regular part of their activities to systematize and evaluate the achievements of its members. In the area of research there is a critical need to develop new and more reliable methods to measure the acquisition of personal development skills and the impact such skills have on improving people's lives and the standards of living in the societies in which they live. This would help to relieve the providers of informal and non-formal Adult Education from the constant pressure of having to legitimize their effectiveness and to defend the need for their services as something more than warranted solidarity on an idealistic plane.

For all our commitment to the strengthening the Adult Education efforts of our partners in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and for all our convictions about the positive potential of non-formal and informal learning, we must be careful to maintain a sober attitude toward the overall structure of the global world order. We should not delude ourselves into thinking that simply by strengthening the education sector, fundamental changes in the world will be possible, or that the efforts will suffice to fashion a new world without poverty where people live in mutual respect and peace. We do our part, and we do it gladly and with dedication, but we agree with Rosa Maria Torres, when she says:

*"Adult Basic Learning and Education in the South continues to be trapped between overly ambitious expectations and meagre attention and resources. Adult literacy is expected to produce miracles among the poor-self-esteem, empowerment, citizenship-building, community organization, labor skills, income generation, and even poverty alleviation. ... While pedagogical, and specifically methodological, issues are important, ... one must not forget that poverty is not the result of illiteracy but very much the contrary. The most effective way to deal with poverty is dealing with the structural economic and political factors that generate it and reproduce it at national and global scale."*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Rosa María Torres, "Lifelong Learning: A New Momentum and a New Opportunity for Adult Basic Learning and Education (ABLE) in the South", in *Adult Education and Development*, Supplement No. 60, 2003.

Since 2002, *dvv international* has supported the development of the adult education sector in Afghanistan with a wide range of projects. *dvv international* and its main partner, the "Afghan National Association for Adult Education" (ANAF AE), promote the development of programmes that improve literacy education, basic manual and vocational skills training in rural areas as well as educative services for young adults in urban areas. Currently, every year 2,700 learners take part in combined literacy and life skills classes in the province of Balkh, as well as 1,500 learners from the close surrounding of the urban Adult Learning Centers. Wolfgang Schur, director of "East-West-Institute for Social Management", has cooperated with *dvv international* since the inception of its project work with Afghan partners.

**Wolfgang Schur**

## **New Skills for Afghanistan**

### **A Contribution to Individual Empowerment, Community and Civil Society Development and Stability in Afghanistan**

During the first few years of our engagement, in particular, income-generating activities were conducted in cooperation with women's groups. Refugee women and war widows learned technical skills, attended basic literacy courses and acquired new orientation and knowledge. Civic Education Programmes for women's groups from different communities were conducted in cooperation with the Afghan Women's Network. In addition, 3-month courses for the acquisition of basic manual and vocational skills were offered for men and women in the provinces of Wardak, Khost, Logar and Ghazni.

Together with its partner ANAF AE, *dvv international* fosters initial and in-service training for facilitators, teachers, practitioners and multipliers, teaching adult groups in informal settings.

### **Increased Needs – Skills Development Can Contribute to Economic Growth and Stability**

Afghanistan is now at the threshold of transition and is heading towards 2014, when foreign presence in the country will be reduced.



Vocational Training

Source: Wolfgang Schur

The economy has recovered from decades of conflict, and improved significantly since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, largely because of international assistance and the recovery of the agricultural sector. This sector plays a major role in the country's economy, as nearly 80% of the labour force work in this sector.<sup>1</sup> About 31% of the country's GDP comes from agriculture, but 43% from the dynamic growing service sector (transport, retail, telecommunications, finance and insurance). The industrial sector contributes 26% to the GDP of the country.<sup>2</sup>

Unemployment and poverty manifestations are high and relate to the low levels of literacy and vocational skills. Only 2.7% of the working male population in urban areas (aged 25-54) has completed training in a vocational training centre. The figure for the working female population is only 2.5%. More than 95% of the working population acquire their professional skills informally "on the job." Many of them are illiterate.<sup>3</sup>

Great hope is attached to the development of the mining sector. But this sector is capital-intensive and will only generate a limited number of jobs and is unlikely to bring relief to the poor and vulnerable population.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the progress of the past few years, the Afghan manufacturers' market and the small scale industries are still backward. For example, in the food produc-

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1 Economy Watch.

2 World Factbook.

3 MoLSAMD Labour Market Information and Analysis Unit, An Urban Area Primary Source Study of Supply and Demand in the Labour Market, 2008.

4 Growth in Afghanistan World Bank, Afghanistan's Recent Economic Performance, 2010.

ing sector, new cooling, preserving and wrapping techniques and international standards must be introduced in order to compete with the neighbouring markets. This calls for workers with new knowledge and skills.

45% of Afghanistan's ordinary budget is still funded by the international community. Afghanistan remains one of the world's poorest countries, highly dependent on foreign aid, agriculture, and trade with neighbouring countries.

A large part of the population continues to suffer from shortages of housing, clean water, electricity, medical care, and jobs, criminality, insecurity, and the Afghan Government's inability to extend rule of law to all parts of the country.

Large portions of the population remain excluded from development strategies because they lack the basic skills for active involvement and participation in social and economic life.

Although the international community, committed to Afghanistan's development, has pledged over \$67 billion at four donors' conferences since 2002, Afghanistan's living standards and the literacy rate among Afghans are among the lowest in the world.

In many rural areas, only 8.1% of women can read and write. This is one of the lowest literacy rates among the female population worldwide. Widespread female illiteracy has direct impact on health in the families and well-being, on the education of children, on civil society and community development, as well as on productivity, economic development and the destabilisation of the country.

*Literacy class*

*Source: Wolfgang Schur*



The high population growth rate, child and maternal mortality, non-enrolment of children in formal schooling, especially of girls, and large average family sizes are related to illiteracy and low levels of knowledge and skills in one way or another.

Many Afghan women carry the responsibility of providing for the entire family as a result of either having been widowed or living with husbands disabled as a result of on-going conflict.

Due to illiteracy and lack of various skills, these women have problems to enter formal employment as well as to find productive self-employment.

Moreover, illiterates, especially women, are traditionally excluded from making decisions, economic and otherwise. They are not able to participate as full citizens of the country, with the result that many Afghan women have lost confidence and faith that their condition will one day improve. It is a necessity that women's sense of self-esteem and realisation of their potential are revived through substantial efforts towards an increase of female literacy skills.

Illiteracy, low level of skills and poverty go together: higher concentrations of poverty are seen in rural areas, among marginalised groups.

## **Increased Attention – Skill Development, an Important Factor at National Policy Level**

Skill development on a broader scale and in various fields is an important key for the development of the country and has become a higher priority.

In July 2010, the Government and the international community renewed their commitment within the framework of the *“Afghanistan National Development Strategy”* (ANDS) to improve governance, social and economic development, and security, to empower all citizens, government and non-governmental institutions to contribute to improved service delivery, job creation, economic growth and citizens' rights.<sup>5</sup>

In line with the ANDS, the education sector plays a main role to develop a productive workforce with relevant skills and knowledge that contributes to the long-term economic growth of the country. A main focus of the *“National Education Strategic Plan”* (NESP II and the Interim Plan), in line with the overall ANDS, is also on effective skills development to enhance the employability of adults and improve the relevance of vocational training. These are important starting points towards poverty reduction and improvement of living conditions.

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5 Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), Kabul, July 20, 2010.



*Vocational Training*

*Source: Wolfgang Schur*

The strategic importance of literacy and Lifelong Learning in reaching national and global Education for All (EFA) targets, Literacy and Non-Formal Education, has been identified as a core component of the National Education Strategic Plan.

In line with the Afghanistan MDG vision and NESP goals, the “*National Literacy Action Plan*” (NLAP) will contribute significantly to achieving the following results:

- Provide illiterate youth and adults across all 34 provinces with access to basic literacy and Lifelong Learning
- Enable at least 3.6 million Afghan adults by 2014 to attain functional literacy
- Provide opportunities for comprehensive literacy education integrating vocational skills, skills to develop own economic initiatives, agriculture and health components
- Provision of vocational and productive skill training at least to 360,000 adults (10% of learners of literacy education)
- Ensure that females, language minority groups, isolated communities, Kuchis and people with disabilities are targeted and prioritised
- Reduce the number of existing illiterates nationwide by at least 55% before 2020<sup>6</sup>

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6 National Literacy Action Plan, 2009.

The NLAP has been formulated according to Afghanistan's particular needs, priorities, and national capacities. The visions for sustainable development of Afghanistan of the ANDS, Afghanistan MDG targets, the Education Law (2008) and NESP are guiding the NLAP.

The NLAP is developed specifically to achieve literacy goals set in NESP and MDG Goal 2 (achieve Universal Primary Education) and Goal 3 (Promote Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women). The effects of improved literacy are also projected to help in achieving the MDG Goal 1 (Eradicate Poverty and Hunger), Goal 4 (Reduce Child Mortality), Goal 5 (Improve Maternal Health) Goals 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis and other Diseases) and Goal 7 (Ensure Environmental Sustainability).

The NESP has taken systematic steps to meet the EFA goals. The NLAP includes projections for needed increases in adult literacy programmes, in order to ensure continued progress towards the national EFA Goal 4.

Unfortunately the national EFA Goal 3 is not related to the wide range of skill developments that take place in the context of literacy programmes and incorporate components like civic, health education, development of own economic initiatives etc. EFA Goal 3 does not reflect the broad learning and life skills programmes, of out-of-school, non-formal and informal skill and competence development programmes for young adults.

The national EFA Goal 3 (Youth and Adult Learning Needs) only focuses on the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), curricula development, training of TVET teachers, enrolment, and on opportunities for skills-building through practicum and internships in partnership with the private sector.

No attention is given to informal/traditional apprenticeship training. Soft skills, such as literacy skills, life skills, productive skills, problem solving and creative thinking skills are not mentioned.

The NLAP was developed as an operational framework to effectively increase literacy rates and thereby contribute to improved livelihoods to foster positive change in the quality of the life of all Afghan people. The overall goal of NLAP is to build a productive, peaceful, secure and literate nation, through empowerment of the illiterate population of society with special focus on women and out of school girls and their families.<sup>7</sup>

The "Afghanistan Skills Development Project" (ASDP) under the "National Skills Development Programme" (NSDP) of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) addresses the skills gap by enhancing the employability

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7 National Literacy Action Plan, 2009.

of Afghan youth and young adults and identifying market-demanded skills. The NSDP supports productive skill training, technical and vocational education in partnership with the private sector.<sup>8</sup>

The development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) started in 2009. The important task here is to redefine training skills, to build a system of reference for acquired skills and competency-based training standards. The development of the NQF is coordinated by the NSDP and will encompass all areas of education.

The validation and recognition of literacy skills programmes, of out-of-school, non-formal and informal skills and competence development of adults in the context of the National Qualification Framework are particularly important concerns of the Adult Education Sector, which *dvv international* and its partner, the Afghan National Association for Adult Education ANAFAE, have supported actively up to now.

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8 National Skill Development Programme.

*Literacy class*

*Source: Wolfgang Schur*



## **Constraints and Challenges**

The present process to develop the NQF design in Afghanistan shows great opportunities, especially in the combination of literacy skills, non-formal skill training, employment and career-oriented education programmes. But large gaps are also present. The transition to the formal education system is very problematic. Problem areas are the definitions and the recognition of skills acquired outside the formal system.

Most adults have acquired their skills and qualifications in informal contexts. An important question is the recognition of the acquired skills in educational practice, for learners of the literacy programmes and in many non-formal skill training programmes, as for those who improve their skills in their existing job or want to attend training to improve their employability.

Other gaps are related to the recognition of certificates from private educational institutions, the linkage and permeability between different training programmes and education sectors, as well as the mechanisms for quality control.

In practice, there are major conflicts with the implementation of the National Literacy Action Plan and the formal education system, since on the one hand 10% of the adults in literacy programmes are supposed to attain active usable productive and vocational skills and, on the other hand, their acquired skills are not recognised in such a way that they can enter the formal TVET system, in order to continue their vocational training. Adults with new literacy skills achieve literacy and numeracy competency equivalent to the third grade of formal schooling, they can join class 4 of the formal system but in practice, there are not classes for adults.

## **New Developments and Alternatives**

The present revision of the National Literacy Curriculum, which includes literacy skills and skill development in various other fields, must take these constraints into consideration and should develop alternative means, by which out-of-school youth and adults may earn an educational qualification not only comparable to that of the formal elementary but also to the secondary school system.

The revision process of the present National Literacy Curriculum should include new definitions of skills and competences at different levels and should come up with a new system for assessing the levels of literacy and non-formal education learning achievement. This should be based on new National Literacy Standards and a Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency Curriculum Framework in line with the National Qualification Framework.



Literacy class

Source: Wolfgang Schur

This approach would be a new chance to better monitor the wide field of skill development. It will increase the value and the importance of literacy skills in combination with non-formal skill training. At the same time, it will allow to bridge different strands of literacy approaches and skill development programmes, like LCEP II, the curriculum for women, the National Curriculum, police and military based literacy and skill development programmes, and other programmes.

## Literacy Skills Training

*“Literacy is no longer exclusively understood as an individual transformation, but as a contextual and societal one.”<sup>9</sup>* Literacy and basic education include elements such as promoting health or environmental education, entrepreneurship training, preventive education, cultural skills and values for peace, tolerance, citizenship and human rights.

The literacy skills training programmes that we provide in cooperation with ANAFAE always incorporate additional components, like health, awareness and prevention, childcare, care for the sick, nutrition and sanitation; civic, human rights, gender relations, domestic violence, conflicts and resolution, development of own

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<sup>9</sup> UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006.

economic initiatives, productive skills etc., to properly address the learners needs and to improve the relevance and values, as well as the motivation of the learners to continue participating in the programme. This approach creates a lot of synergies in the skill development process.

Local assessments are conducted. The programmes are well prepared, both with the learners and with local authorities, as well as with the respective district literacy departments.

The literacy programmes depend on the support from community. All communities have to provide free rooms for the literacy classes.

Our literacy courses are well adapted to the interests and conditions of the participants. We use the standard literacy material, based on the national curriculum. In addition, we have developed our own teaching material and books for the learners related to civic issues, health, own economic initiatives and teaching manuals for the facilitators.

Role-plays, learning games, dialogue, group work and other participatory elements and innovative methods are used; practical activities, like some hours of voluntary works for the community, support the learning processes. The facilitators are encouraged to use real-life and relevant examples during the teaching and learning processes. Learners are encouraged to discuss issues of relevance from personal life or to their respective communities. The discussions are important to improve speaking, writing, reading, comprehension and word recognition skills.

The literacy facilitators are from among the communities. They take part in a 21-day training. This includes an initial training before the start of the literacy classes, follow-up trainings during the full nine month cycle, special trainings on civic and health issues and to support the development of own economic initiatives of the learners, and a training for the post literacy part.

In a section of Kabul which is heavily populated by refugees, training in the manufacture of soap, cookies and noodle products was given to refugee women. Most were members of the Hazara ethnic minority, many of them widows. They sold the products they produced in their neighbourhoods, in order to improve their families' income. During training, the participants also acquired literacy, health and civic skills.

The literacy programme in the northern province of Balkh is accompanied by supplementary measures that offer chances to all 2700 learners to develop their own economic initiative, to learn about self-employment and new productive skills and improve their qualifications.

Participants are encouraged to organise in small groups and develop their own ideas for income-generating; they find out about market opportunities and improve

their skills to run their own small projects. ANAFAE assists the groups in the realisation of the projects. Considering that many of the participants are women from very traditional families, these projects offer a rare, albeit limited, chance for them to break out of their domestic isolation.

Our literacy skill trainings and incorporated components are an important basis for the development and improvement of personal capabilities, skills, key qualifications and new competences. They open up livelihood possibilities and create conditions for lasting economic and social development, and this, in turn, contributes to the stability and the civil development of the country. Literacy levels among learners have improved and, as a result, they are now able to conduct their everyday activities more independently.

The learners who completed our literacy courses tend to be more confident and more willing to take initiatives, to start an own small business. They are motivated to continue learning. Their cognitive skills, personality, self-esteem, attitudes, are improved. They seem more responsible for the education of their own children and encourage their family members to obtain an education.

## Adult Learning Centres

More and more Afghans are discouraged with their situation. Many young adults are searching for employment. They need new skills and qualifications in order to find a job. If they succeed in finding work, they need to improve their qualifications to be able to keep up with the demands of their workplace. There is a huge demand for continuing education.

Young people are the asset of the country. But they require opportunities of learning and development to unleash their potential in an effective manner. Only skilled and trained young people can take the country ahead at a much quicker pace.

*Training of the trainers*  
Source:  
Wolfgang Schur



But normal training standards in Afghanistan are low. That is why ANAF AE, with the support of *dvv international*, has established 15 Adult Learning Centres (ALCs) during the last few years that provide open access to learning for young adults from the neighbouring urban districts. They operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

The education programmes of the ALCs are focused very deliberately on the target group of young adults, because education and skills are an important key to their future and have a direct impact on the development of their families, on communities, on society, politics and business.

Qualifying measures and further training are organised to serve specific focus groups and strengthen the personal initiative and employability of the learners. The provision of these centres is primarily designed for young adults aged 15 to 35. The response and demand for additional qualifications among young adults is enormous.

- About 37.5% of the learners in the ALCs are 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade pupils. They want to finish the 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade and need additional support in different subjects. Many schools are overwhelmed and not able to perform effectively. Classes are held in shifts; large classes and insufficiently qualified teachers are only part of the problem. The existing schools cannot fulfil their important function for the transition to employment or to university education. The pressure on the education system is high. Many pupils after grade 12 do not pass the selection process to study at the universities. They are also among this group and now look for alternatives or want to improve their employability because higher education programmes are limited.
- A further 14.5% of learners in our ALCs are university students. Many of them have a "job" and are trying to qualify themselves beyond university to get opportunities for advancement or to get more skilled jobs with better pay.
- Another group of about 15% are employees/staff in state administration entities, from the finance sector, from small industries or from NGOs and also school teachers. Their ambition is to continue to qualify themselves for their position, because work processes and tools are changing rapidly. They can easily become "functionally illiterate" in their field and thus no longer needed. To prevent this, in particular they require computer skills, better language skills (Dari, Pashto) and skills in office management in addition to knowledge of English.
- Another group, of about 12%, is made up of people in small businesses. Computer abilities, bookkeeping and marketing skills are especially important to safeguard their newly established businesses.

- The group of unemployed, who attend the courses in our ALCs, is also at 12%. They are trying to improve their employability in order to get a job. This is an important starting point toward the improvement of living conditions.
- Young adults without any qualifications and school drop-outs make up a further group of about 9%. They find an opportunity here to develop further in order to improve their earning power.

Each month around 7400 learners take part in the courses of the ALCs. They play an important bridging role in the transition from school and university education to employment, as well as in related areas such as school drop-outs and vocational training.

In addition, six of our ALCs also provide literacy courses combined with health and civic education to the local communities for 1500 learners. They are in their most productive years, between the ages of 15 and 35, especially women.

*Vocational training*

*Source: Wolfgang Schur*



The programmes aim to enhance the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the learners, to strengthen their abilities, in order to successfully finalise their school education, to accompany them during their transition from school to work or university and to increase their work place effectiveness and efficiency.

The centres provide qualification programmes for the unemployed and the employed, with the aim of strengthening their employability, their career prospects and increase their usable skills for employment. They qualify young adults to get a job, and give young adults who already have a job the ability to perform their work in a qualified way as well as to get opportunities for advancement in their job with better pay.

The education programs are also aimed at young adults without any school certificate qualifications. Two vocational training groups headed by two master craftsmen have been established. Here young people without employment acquire basic vocational skills in painting, plastering, woodwork and other occupations. The vocational groups are responsible for repairs and construction works to be done in our Adult Learning Centres.

Work-related courses are offered in bookkeeping, computer operation, and software applications. Participants can improve their language skills in Dari and Pashto or learn English as a foreign language. The practical learning is giving them a much broader knowledge and skill set.

Some of the ALCs in Kabul, Herat and Mazar offer four-month basic courses in office management, to give young women qualified access to the labour market.

The Adult Learning Centres in Kabul also conduct qualification courses for the employees of the National Literacy Centre or the First Micro Finance Bank. Staff members are trained in computer skills, software applications, management and English.

As another important focus, the ACLs offer courses to develop social and civic competences or Art courses.

Moreover, instructors and teachers of the ALCs are regularly trained a how to support the learning processes.

The training programmes and qualifying measures supported by *dvv international* provide people with opportunities to increase their knowledge and learn important skills in various contexts. They open new chances for the future and improve prospects for a sustainable development of civil society.

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*Starting from a health care facility in the neglected area around the capital, Buenos Aires, the organisation Centro Ecumenico de Educación Popular (CEDEPO), developed an integrated program in which small farmers in the region acquire and apply the necessary skills for ecologically responsible agriculture, independent seed production, cooperative organisation, direct marketing, the protection of community politics and contact with national networks. Besides the skills for sustainable but also profitable business and work, they learn to identify their own interests and represent them politically. Alicia González is a founding member of the CEDEPO and has designed the described processes from the start.*

**Alicia González**

## **Education for Rural Development**

### **Institutional Background**

*“Development is not a question of how much one has or accumulates, but how much and how one enjoys life.”*

The goal of the non-profit organisation, Ecumenical Center for Popular Education (CEDEPO), is to contribute to building a more Equitable, Democratic and Sustainable society through popular education. We are members of the Council for Adult Education in Latin America (CEAAL) and the Agroecological Movement of Latin America and the Caribbean (MAELA). The Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (*dvv international*) is one of the main organisations that support us in building and developing the Programme for Sustainable Rural Development.

Educators, technicians and professionals from various disciplines make up the work teams of the three main areas of the programme: Education and Agroecological Production, Health Education, Development and Community Management.

The aim of the programme is to

*“contribute to the strengthening and self-management of the peasant farmer organisations, so that this sector can exercise its rights, develop abilities and actively participate in the creation, definition and implementation of public policies that promote sustainable rural development.”*

## **Origin of the Proposal**

### **Justification for involvement**

The social sector in which this project intervenes has a history of exclusion since both state and public policies have not benefited the communities of agricultural families. This initiative came about with a diagnosis that identified a high-risk social group, characterised by signs of economic poverty, high youth migration, and lack of opportunities with limited access to educational, health, sanitation and basic services.

On the economic level, the productive unit of the population is mainly concerned with survival strategies, soil that is eroded and barely fertile, inadequate channels of commercialisation, low production diversity and underemployment.

### **Type of population**

The sector is a combination of the characteristics of rural areas and those sections on the periphery of the cities (peri-urban), both of which have a weak basic infrastructure. These areas are made up of low income families, the majority of which are unstable. In addition, they are largely supported by women, a situation that contributes to their vulnerability. They have migrated here from other parts of the country, the northern provinces and neighbouring countries. They have been pushed out of the land and job market and are looking for a way to survive. They have a low educational level, a high percentage of the adult population is illiterate, and there is a high rate of school dropouts as well. The health indicators are low, in particular for women and checkups for children.

### **Strengths, abilities, wishes**

- Most of the families believe that the way to improve the quality of life of their families is through work, increasing production and by marketing their products. Their desire for progress is tied to their rural identity.
- The families value the importance of being able to improve their situation and the education of their children.

- Many families possess a great deal of cultural, technological and productive knowledge, but it is either not appreciated or rejected.

**The perceived needs expressed by the families** were two:

- Training and support to recover or grow in the area of production
- Dealing with the health-related problems of the families that cause a high infant mortality rate

## **Introduction**

This article is a brief summary of the work experience that CEDEPO and the Provincial Board of Family Farmer Organisations promote in rural communities.

Reference is made to two of the experiences mentioned: The process of rural development that the community and its organisations carry out in the rural area of Florencio Varela, and creating the channels in the provinces and regions they belong to.

This is an ongoing process, in which diverse dynamics and reasons are established, as well as a plurality of actions, different operations, and the convergence of multiple players that are not always aware of the process. It is a process of the collective creation of strategies, built from “*deeds*” and the conflicts that arise in relation to them, in other words, from social practice. It took shape gradually, each time with greater participation, competence and autonomy of the different community groups and related organisations.

## **Beginning of the Process**

### **Introduction, diagnostics and work**

The presence of CEDEPO in the rural area of Florencio Varela began with the purchase of five hectares of land. This initiated a process of inclusion in the community that included integration, establishing relationships with families and situations by getting to know and assuming their social and cultural dynamics. This included the exchange of agricultural knowledge, the history of the community, encounters, visits, dialogues, and countless maths... Grassroots work, work in which feelings are at play, and emotions fill with indignation against the injustice; where conviction and belonging is reaffirmed, joining heart and mind to bring about a sense of empowerment that is contagious.

The diagnostics captured the perceptions and relationships of the community based on a representative group of people: *"The forgotten land"* (Tierra Olvidada) defines their territory. The cycle of distrust, lack of communication and desperation seemed nearly indestructible, feeding the sense of exclusion. *"It's impossible to change anything because one can't rely on each 'other', and on one's neighbours..."* And if language creates our reality, as Bourdieu says, how can this perception of immediate reality expressed in words be changed?

One would have to experience other realities. Despite all the disparaging looks, the first community-based group of 40 persons was created to begin work on building a Community Health Centre.

## **Health Education**

### **Administration for the well-being and care of the community**

When popular education is successful, it is first shown in the increased self-esteem of the people. They recognise what is theirs, value each achievement and the abilities that are put into play in finding solutions to everyday problems.

The group dreams of its health centre, they talk about their personal experiences in relation to the issue, how they would like the centre to be and put their body and soul into its construction first, and define its direction afterwards. The annual workshop for Training Community Health Promoters is created.

The first anniversary of the opening of the Community Health Centre is celebrated in March 1997. The *"First Exhibition Fair for Culture, Production and Peasant Farmer Technology in Florencio Varela"* is organised. Now people are saying, *"We are people of the earth in Florencio Varela."* *"Together, we can."*

These fairs were a reason for the agricultural families and people from the city to come together. It was a cultural, organisational and educational experience. It was an open forum for all to present what they do, how they do it and why, which provided opportunities of exchange with the visitors from the city. In other words, they created their own stories. The *"others"* now looked at the work of the peasant farmers with wonder, which helped to heal hurt identities. The Committee for the Promotion of the Agricultural Cooperative of Family Producers was formed.

Different sectors of the community slowly start gaining confidence, and the women in particular start to get involved in educational campaigns related to health. Priorities are defined as a collective: The health of women and children, sexual education and family planning, families at risk, senior citizens, work culture, and the roots of the peasant farmers. The Team of Community Health Promoters is

consolidated at this stage. The need to “*know what is going on in our community*” emerges.

The process continues, it consolidates, and together with a team of professionals, the Team of Promoters actively participates in the training, design and execution of a participatory analysis realised in 2002. A census was conducted of 236 families within a radius of five kilometres, making it possible to identify the main problems that the population was experiencing. This investigation made it possible to evaluate the seriousness of the impact of the economic crisis on a population of peasant farmers with a history of exclusion.

This investigative tool allowed the participants to associate local reality with the macroeconomic data, analyse the situations and their causes, as well as the hegemonic model of health.

Upon conclusion of the interpretation and identification of the main problems, a process was carried out for designing a strategy of holistic intervention for the promotion of local resources, which included various lines of action.

*Community Health Centre*

*Source: Alicia González*



The defined lines of intervention are:

**Redefining gender imperatives.** The activities here promote the development of women as social individuals, redefining their history in a critical way acquiring knowledge, information and resources. The purpose of this is to uncover the relationships of power, subservience and sexist stereotypes that prohibit women from exercising control over their lives, bodies and sexuality.

**Improvement of the health indicators of the population.** Alleviate the pain and social isolation with the strength of commitment, as a community and as a family. Medical care and health education for all families (general medicine, odontology and mental health), health checkups for children, senior care, reproductive health, etc.

The quantitative and qualitative indicators for follow-up and monitoring are conclusive with the achievements accomplished in all respects.

**Redefining the concept of health and illness as a product of life conditions and not exclusively in biological or clinical terms.**

*"An area of health in which we know more about ourselves, in search of a path so that feelings and will, reason and joy, can find each other again to heal us in equality and fairness."*

In summary, a space where we learn to exercise our rights:

- The right to literacy and basic education for young people and adults.
- Provisional rights. The entire elderly population exercises its rights and receives social benefits (retirement and pensions, a travelling library, social security PAMI, diapers, etc.).
- The right to recreation and literature at the community library.
- The right to continuing education.
- The right to practise natural medicine.
- The right to a life of dignity. Dignity, in which we are recognised as individuals, rediscovering ourselves, trusting in our abilities and our capacity for living and striving.

For more than 15 years now, the mission of the CCS has been to promote local development by improving the health coverage of the population through prevention campaigns, education and assistance for more than 800 families in the region. Agreements are concluded with municipal and provincial institutions that respect the methodology and health concepts that are implemented, assume the costs and implement a plan of action with health centres in the region to extend the experience to new populations.

## Agroecological education

### Creating productive collective alternatives

Parallel to the educational and organisational process related to the issue of health, CEDEPO built the **Centre for Education, Research and Agroecological Production "La Parcela"** (the plot).

This experience combines popular education and agroecology. We introduced this programme in search of a way to create agricultural policies that promote sustainable development for the poor rural sectors of this region.

### Mother Earth reclaims its children

Based on the abilities and interests identified at the beginning, a production programme was implemented with the purpose of ensuring that each one of the households has enough to eat while maintaining an attitude of respect for nature. It was the fifth household that enabled families to nourish themselves better through the diversification of their production.

*Ecological products*

*Source: Alicia González*



The history of the family and community was re-evaluated; the knowledge, values and experiences that were gained served to support the building and rebuilding of their identity as family producers.

Opportunities for contact were created to educate and train, where bonds of solidarity and exchange are established with neighbours. Spaces were created to overcome the isolation and fragmentation of women, thereby creating mutual confidence and shared action.

To move forward with our initial objective, the first major challenge was to re-acquaint oneself with the land, to feel the state of abandonment and deterioration that it was in. We had to work hard to make the eroded, degraded soil healthy and productive again.

We had to create a diverse agricultural system that was elastic enough to restore the mechanisms that recreate the biological conditions to optimise the recycling of materials and nutrients that incorporate elements of multiple use to insure an efficient powerful flow and then make them productive.

We had to build the capacity for the design of the agroecosystem. A great deal of learning had to be put in motion: The old local farming practices and handling of animals, soil biology, the genetic diversity of vegetables species, the relationship between weeds and pathogens, the necessary nutrients provided by crop rotation, allowing land to lie fallow, compost fertiliser and green manure, forestation for multiple use, the recovery of plant varieties, etc.

It was necessary to utilise locally available resources to minimise production costs, thereby making the production viable.

### **Complementary strategies for a better life**

Gradually, the crops became stronger, they diversified, developed and expanded the local surplus market channels. The organisational strength of the sector as a viable economic player emerged as an immediate challenge. Cooperatives and associations were created. The participation and commitment of the producers increased significantly. Being organised was the only thing that made it possible to integrate the low level family producers in the market since, as a whole, considerable volumes were now being handled for the market.

As production grew, it became necessary to build productive infrastructures for collective use to have an impact on the value chain, reduce costs and obtain good prices for the products: Plants for balanced food for the production of poultry and pigs, slaughterhouses for small animals, plants for handling vegetables, machinery and tools for expansion.

The growth in surplus made it necessary to develop competencies for defining marketing strategies with diversified sales channels with respect to the direct producer-consumer relationship. This meant creating different forms of economic participation, in which mutual values could develop through the production, distribution and consumption process.

While on this path, CEDEPO and the organisations continued to deepen their commitment to development in other areas of Buenos Aires, thereby increasing their ability to take action in relation to new issues and the requirements of the sector, such as the social economy, mass communication, land accessibility, food sovereignty and appropriate technology. Multiple social-economic organisational initiatives arose with respect to the development of work capacity and meeting demand, as well as alternative ways of organising production, distribution, exchange and consumption. Platforms were created for the reclaiming of rights, environmental issues and the building of citizenship. The organisations got together and formed the Provincial Board of Organisations of Family Producers of Buenos Aires and a wide net of alliances was created with different public institutions, academic centres, student centres, consumer groups, environmental organisations, workers' cooperatives, etc.

The process of incorporation, in which the focus of the social economy is based on experience and ability, developed important competencies that allowed appropriate legislation to be created in some regions to institutionalise the start-up of associated markets, ordinances of agrochemical-free areas, the promotion of productive agroecological channels, and the elaboration of protocols and participatory certification norms. The organisations and state assume joint management of public policies that give expression to rights: They utilize resources that allow them to offer credit services with general guarantees to their associates and communities that are to be used for production, services and commercialisation.

### **Technology is also for women**

A reference centre for appropriate technology run by a technical team of technology promoters made up of manufacturers and professionals is created that has the capacity to generate, adapt, validate and transfer the appropriate technology. They realise participatory analyses and coordinate training workshops for technology, forestation, the environment and biodiversity, as well as participatory investigation to take over available resources that are underutilised. It also looks at the capacities for the conversion of productive organic waste, such as biogas for domestic and productive use. Workshops are held for the construction and implementation of kitchens, solar collectors and dryers for domestic and productive use, as well as for

building ovens for the efficient use of firewood. Municipal diagnostics of the areas with the most regional deforestation are also carried out. Workshops take place for training the community in the preservation of forest resources, the implementation of a municipal forestation plan in the region, the rationing of foraging resources through rotational grazing with solar fences and bioclimatic buildings. Using the results for municipal socialisation is one of the educational activities at the service of the agricultural families of the region, in which women play a significant role.

### **Public policy is everyone's responsibility**

In claiming the right of participation in the villages in the sense of an agri-food policy for building up the capacities of the local population, we and the organisations of the Provincial Board of Organisations of Producers proposed the creation of a programme with national reach to the national authorities of the National Institute of Agricultural Technology that is aimed at strengthening family agriculture. A long ongoing debate of public policies for the sector gives way to the formation of the Centre for the Investigation and Technological Development for Small Family Farming (CIPAF). It is run together with three institutes with offices in the provinces of Jujuy, Formosa and Buenos Aires. We take part in participatory investigations at specific farms together with specialists from this centre, as well as with producers and technicians from the area.

### **The House of Seeds – A place for the exchange and preservation of cultures, knowledge and life**

The Centre for Training “*La Parcela*” built the House of Seeds right from the beginning. It is a place for training and the protection of biodiversity, which contributes to the network of exchange of native and Creole seeds with national reach among producers.

Its programme of recovering and producing genetic varieties shows that the chance to preserve part of the biodiversity at risk is in the hands of the farmers, and it also serves to provide an input that allows low input agriculture. From this stance, we support the free distribution and use of the seeds, which have belonged to the indigenous villages and people for hundreds of years and all forms of seed patenting is rejected.

The areas and collective experiences are reassessed as relevant areas for the articulation of demands and identity building among the organisations of agricultural farmers, peasant farmers and indigenous people.

We have been organising the Festival of Native and Creole Seeds for the past five years, which currently brings together more than 1,500 peasant farmers and indigenous organisations. This has been the product of an intense and systematic networking process with a variety of organisations and academic and public bodies, which we have learned to develop into a strategic collection during this time.

We are currently moving forward with the most ambitious goals: To generate the conditions for contributing to the consolidation of the organisations of family agriculture. A National Committee was formed with representatives from most of the federations, movements and networks, as well as peasant farmers, indigenous and producer organisations in the country.

*The House of Seeds*

*Source: Alicia González*



The organised producers find that these forums are privileged educational and cultural areas. That is why they prepare for it all year long, sharing their seeds, knowledge, information, methods, experiences, products and proposals. This takes place over two days of discussion and exchange between producers from all over the country, and evolves into a network of organisations that reaffirm rights and identities.

## Lessons Learned

**Our Stories, our feelings....** There have been many lessons learned along the way. The lessons that resulted from the investigations and critical analyses, from the resolution of conflicts and difficulties, from studying, from the numerous and valuable contributions of individuals who interacted with the CEDEPO teams during this entire process of collective building.

## Participation

We learned that creating goods is not enough, that the permanence of the process does not only depend on what happens with things, but also with people. That is why it was indispensable to have the relationships in mind and how the goods are produced. The concern for the individual growth of people and their potential, as well as regaining a harmonious relationship between individuals and their livelihood became a key objective in the process to ensuring sustainability. A stable process would also not have been possible without the real participation of grass-roots groups. We can affirm that this is one condition that compromises the stability and efficiency of the development programmes. We had to give deep thought to this condition: It was not just any kind of participation that had to be established. Participation means that the producers had to take active part in diagnosing the situation, defining the programme, planning the activities, executing them, and evaluating the results. It was necessary to design an ongoing process, which implied a growing understanding of the deficiencies and necessities, as well as of the relationships and causes, their relative importance, as well as the possible different solutions, until the needs could be converted into work objectives and integrated needs. It was a process that took shape in action. We learned to participate by participating, with the condition that reflection on what had been accomplished would inform and enlighten the new decisions to be made.

## Popular Knowledge

The recognition and appreciation of popular knowledge was an essential component in our experience of sustainable local development. This was our teaching and political philosophy, which implied breaking with the rigid structure and established hierarchy between knowing and doing, and the relationships of subservience and dependence that are created.

Starting with the knowledge, perceptions and accounts of the producers allowed us to establish a process of building, together with the knowledge of educators, technicians, and rural families and communities, based on a dialogue about a journey that recognises different ways of thinking and knowledge. A dialogue of knowing, together with scientific knowledge, through different disciplines like agronomy, pedagogy, medicine, ecology, economy, politics and from there to investigate the relationship between society and nature, creating a vision of development founded on food sovereignty and respect for nature.

## Competencies and Educational Focus

Relying on popular knowledge, our educational focus was on the necessity of developing and updating competencies for the resolution of problems, developing the capacity for involvement, creativity, and working in a team.

*National seed fair*

*Source: Alicia González*



Each one of the capacities reflected the development of those competencies for doing, for resolving situations whether in everyday life or in productive, social or political situations that entail conflicts and uncertainty.

In being confronted with increasingly complex situations, competence requires incorporating new theoretical and practical knowledge on the one hand, and a great deal of imagination and creativity on the other. It implies going from a passive attitude to an active one of intervention.

Our educational perspective understands learning as a process of appropriation on the part of the individual. A process that requires work, development, production, and progress. The individuals build on and create their learning experience within the process of permanent rebuilding. Knowledge is part of the person; they own this knowledge when it can be used, applied, transferred, channelled and integrated to build new knowledge.

Learning also implies that the individuals are aware of their own role in the process, their responsibility as individuals that have the opportunity to learn. In this sense, competence is *"knowing how to do something"* with *"knowledge"* and *"awareness."*

Taking critical stock of the experiences allows a future-oriented perspective, creative and transforming abilities that give shape to collective proposals that express the demands of the communities. The development of these competencies allows social and historical ideas to be created that are more comprehensive, and to make projections in structural and strategic terms.

Reclaiming our history as a people, our personal and social history, in which we are actors and protagonists, allows us to create a solid base to build upon our learning, which becomes increasingly complex and deep in relation to the reality that we want to change. It requires an individual who questions, a person who has his and her own theories regarding his and her own ideas and vision of the world and cosmos. It allows the recreation and permanent creation of knowledge, strengthening its cultures, knowledge, technologies, methods and tools. It signifies ceasing to be anonymous in order to transform oneself into a historical being, capable of changing reality while changing oneself at the same time.

Our experience, with its depth and complexity, is an ongoing process with a common history in the making, a search that encourages and motivates the participation and organisation of peasant farmers and assumes the political task of building social, economic and environmental relationships based on solidarity, trust and mutual respect, which require Lifelong Learning.

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*Injustices against international law that for generations have left behind deep wounds in the memories of the victims complicates the neighbourly coexistence which is the prerequisite for the peaceful coexistence of the international community. In order to overcome it, it requires the ability to see that history through the eyes of others and the mutual willingness for personal encounters. Since August 1, 2009, dvv international Bonn, in close cooperation with its office in Yerevan, has been implementing a project to promote Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. Both countries find themselves in a seemingly insoluble conflict since the mass killings of Armenians in 1915-17. Students from both nationalities work in the project and learn, among other things, cultural sensitivity, the ability to listen, techniques of conflict and crisis management and project management. Vanya Ivanova, Matthias Klingenberg and Nazaret Nazaretyan are responsible at dvv international in Bonn and Yerevan for the implementation of the project.*

**Vanya Ivanova / Matthias Klingenberg / Nazaret Nazaretyan**

## **From “Learning to Listen” to “Speaking to One Another”**

### **Skills and Competencies Trained in the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Project**

This article is an attempt to sum up the rich experience gathered during the more than two years of work on the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation project and is viewed through the prism of the skills and competences delivered to and received by the participants. In this regard, it reveals our understanding of the issue and of the learning process that is currently in its third phase.

#### **About the Project**

In August 2009, *dvv international*, in close cooperation with its local partners in Turkey and Armenia, and funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, began implementing a three phase project. Phase one was entitled “*Learning to Listen*”,

phase two “*Speaking to One Another*” and phase three (2011 to 2012) is now underway. The aim of the project is to contribute to the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation process. In both societies, though in different ways, the destruction of the Armenian communities of Anatolia in 1915 continues to weigh heavily on the present.

In recent times, the first signs of rapprochement appeared with the political leadership on both sides making conciliatory gestures. For a normalisation of relations to take place, however, it is essential to involve the populations on both sides in this process of rapprochement. After a century of conflict and lack of dialogue, both peoples will have to learn about each other afresh and to overcome deeply entrenched prejudices.

This project aims to build bridges between the populations of Turkey and Armenia through Adult Education, intercultural exchange and oral history research. Therefore, the project particularly addresses the younger generation in both societies, since they will play a key role in shaping the relations between the two neighbouring countries in the near future. It aims at building up and strengthening relations between the youth in order to promote dialogue and bring about mutual understanding.

Moreover, the project focuses on remembering the Turkish-Armenian past by telling individual stories from both societies through the means of oral history research. Given their interconnected history and the fact that Turkey and Armenia are in the process of coming to terms with a complex, conflicted and intertwined past, the sharing of the memories of ordinary individuals is seen as a valuable contribution to the process of reconciliation and democratisation. We believe that coming to terms with the past, accepting responsibility and achieving forgiveness can be important factors towards a peaceful future for the two neighbouring societies.

## **Skills and Competences in Reconciliation Work**

The article will explore the learning process from the first two phases of the project. Both of them aim to foster reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia through raising awareness and reconciliation work between Turkish and Armenian young adult participants – the next generation, including their friends, relatives and broader circle of acquaintances (social environment).

Our assumption for this reconciliation work is that there are particular reasons for the conflict between the parties and that this conflict needs to be resolved. In addition, the design of the measures implemented to facilitate reconciliation need to be based on an agreed understanding of the meaning of conflict and the meaning of reconciliation. Furthermore, the way to proceed depends on the type of conflict and the composition of participants.

## Which Types of Measures are Actually Able to Bring about Reconciliation?

The idea – and this is also the basic idea underpinning our projects – is to work on developing the skills and competencies of the people involved in the conflict. This is not as self-evident as it may seem at first. One could argue that a reconciliation project needs to concentrate on the historical facts – finding out what *really* happened and trying to convince both sides of the truth by addressing the participants' faculties of reason. If you advocate this line of thought, you will be able to criticise our course of action absolutely legitimately.

However, instead of arguing against possible criticism, we would like to use this opportunity to explain why the initiators of the projects strongly believe that working on skills and competencies will, in the long run, lead to the desired result.

Our argument is that the respective conflict consists of different layers, and that there are a variety of interventions we could implement: There is, as already mentioned, the "*historical truth*" layer.<sup>1</sup> Another layer consists of "*stereotypes about and prejudices against the other party in the conflict*". Real (true) experiences and their processing are located in this layer. The authors also recognise and therefore define a third layer, which could be called "*the layer of xenophobia, the fear of the unknown*". The fourth layer is "*the inability of dealing with the problem*".

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<sup>1</sup> Historical truth is in italics because the authors do not believe in the concept of historical truth and therefore do not think that an intervention on this level can be successful.

An Armenian is reading her story

Source: dvv international



This four-layer model is a visualisation sketch and used here to explain the complexity of the field of conflict and to define the areas of possible intervention. All layers are seen as concentric circles of different diameter, therefore of different sizes, in order to show the variability of this model.

Here, the authors concentrate on skills and competencies which directly focus on the management of reconciliation and crisis. All these skills and competencies can be helpful for the participants in aiding them to deal with phenomenon on all four layers, but mostly the skills address layers two, three and four.

In the field of reconciliation and peaceful conflict resolution (and beyond) several skills/competencies can be identified:

## **1. Written and Verbal Communication**

In the bounds of this project, this skill/competency was of huge importance because of the interview work. Local people from Turkey and Armenia, often from less educated and rural parts of the societies, had to be spoken to. What made it even more delicate was that the questions touched on a taboo topic in Turkey and a trauma topic in Armenia – actually the same issue: The Armenian Genocide. That demanded a well-developed intuition and feeling for tact from the interviewers, the participants of our project, on both communication levels: verbal and textual. The project design respected this to a high extent: There were several training sessions on interviewing and communication and negotiation techniques (please also see the paragraphs on Research and Oral History methodology p. 47). But apart from this very special area in the project – the oral history work – communication skills were indispensable for the implementation of the project altogether: Wherever people from conflicting parties come together, the style and manner of talking and communicating is crucial for the success of the joint work.

This skill involves the ability to write well, to be able to express thoughts, opinions and beliefs in a written form. The same applies to verbal communication; it must be clear, concise and appropriate to the situation. An important aspect of verbal communication is the proper use of rhetoric and the ability to speak effectively in front of an audience. The names of our project phases, "*Learning to Listen*" (phase one), "*Speaking to One Another*" (phase two), indicate that the ability to listen needs be prized! Both parties to the conflict had a strong tendency to talk a lot and not to listen to what the other side said. One of the main challenges was to train people in attentive and empathic listening.

This skill also includes foreign language proficiency, which is obligatory. In most environments this means English as an international lingua franca, or another regional language which all involved parties speak. In addition, a basic knowledge

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of different types of texts (e.g. report, interview transcript, minutes, article, abstract) enables the participant to interact efficiently and successfully.

## 2. Research and Oral History Methodology

Oral history is a valuable research methodology which participants in such projects can use. It involves a variety of skills and competencies that are implemented in various stages: from research in the library, using the traditional library resources, to writing down their own historical documents using oral evidence. When the students perform an oral history project, they become real historians and also develop their critical thinking skills. The primary source documents the participants generate offer personal information which balances the panoramic version of history presented in their school textbooks, what their parents and grandparents told them and what they were used to getting from the media.<sup>2</sup>

Oral history enriches historical knowledge, enhances historical research, improves writing, thinking, and interpersonal skills, and gives students/participants a feeling of belonging and makes them feel closer to the community. Oral history helps them and the people who teach them to understand the past and at the same time to organise interesting and qualitative learning environments. The students can reinforce and extend their knowledge on history by interviewing eyewitnesses and establishing contacts for future collaboration with them. The oral history method also helps students discover the ways the historical events have influenced the various communities and to document historical information which is not present in the official sources.

Oral history raises important questions about past events, such as questioning the idea that only a single monolithic truth about the past exists, and it advances the claim that there are multiple historical truths and perspectives presented by different eyewitnesses to history. Through oral history methodology, the participants learn to analyse and compare textbook history with the history presented by eyewitnesses, as well as decide on the credibility of the sources they are researching. A good interviewer should be an attentive listener and a careful observer in order to be able to ask thoughtful follow-up questions and constantly evaluate the interviewee's responses. The interview plays a crucial part in the whole process of gathering information, reflecting on it and communicating it to the other participants. Becoming a skilled interviewer helps participants to improve their communication, listening and analytical skills and it may also serve them for their future academic

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2 Ivanova, V. / Stoycheva, V. (ed.). (2006). "History Project 2006. Enjoying Teaching – Oral History in the Classroom. Teachers' Guide." IIZ/DVV SEE Regional Office, p.10.

or professional undertakings, considering an important part of a country's political, historical, cultural, and social inheritance is not only found in books, archive documents, newspapers, or other printed documents, but also in the oral accounts of the eyewitnesses or in the memories of the generations to come. These kinds of projects require careful planning and instructions on how to implement oral history, conduct interviews and respect the ethics of interviewing protocol.<sup>3</sup>

During the first phase of the project, participants from Turkey and Armenia were trained in oral history methodology, practiced recording their own interviews alone or in teams, learned how to transcribe them and, during the second phase of the project, learned how to write their own historical texts based on the oral evidence. Additionally, during the second phase of the project, they were trained use video recordings, to work with a camera and to take photos to illustrate the writings. These were additional technical skills that would be there to help them in the future in addressing issues that are easier to understand through visuals, which are powerful and influential tools in reconciliation projects because they make it possible to capture feelings, gestures, facial expressions, enable reaching others and therefore serve to improve understanding.

### 3. Teamwork

Since it is natural that most of the work in reconciliation projects takes place in multi-ethnic and/or multi-cultural teams, the ability to form teams and to work together in a team is crucial. Teamwork means to be able to agree on a common schedule, to share a common framework, to jointly define goals and milestones for the work that needs to be done together. This skill/competency also includes the ability to compromise, or even sometimes just to give in. In addition – and very importantly – participants must be able to share information equally with all team members. Decision-making processes in such teams need to be understood and accepted by all team members. Also, teams have task division and a certain hierarchical structure – at least a team leader or team speaker. And teams sometimes have complex and challenging social dynamics: to react accordingly and appropriately is not always easy.

Learning about teamwork in our projects can be implemented on two levels: on the training level and on the *learning-by-doing* level. Apart from trainings which were specially conceived and designed, the projects themselves were long-term and sometimes very extensive trainings in teamwork. It is in the nature of reconciliation projects to work in mixed teams containing both conflict parties. As we all know

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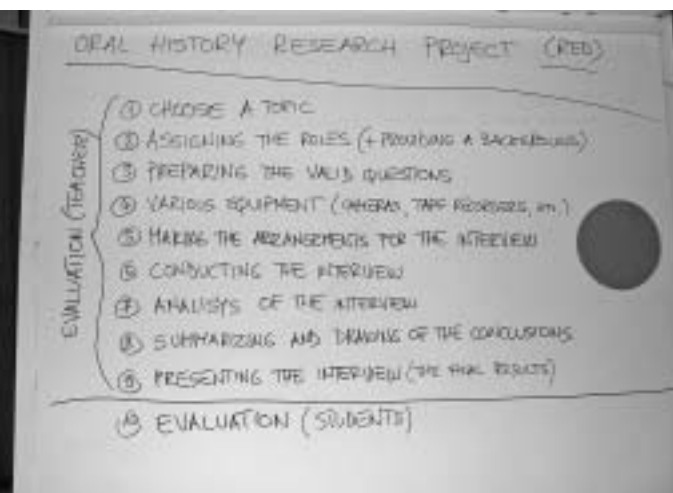
3 Ibid.

from daily life in the workplace, to act as a team is a hard job, but to form a team, define a common goal and to pull together is even more complicated if the team members distrust or even hate each other. Therefore, understanding teamwork, as a general skill or competency is not enough, changes in mind-sets and in behaviour are an obligatory peripheral condition.

#### 4. Appropriate Self-management, Self-reflection and Self-perception

After underlining the importance of the ability to work in a team, we want to now combine this with a skill/competency which focuses on the individual: A good team player needs to have a clear perception of her/himself and to know about her/his perceived image. To achieve this, one needs to be able to reflect about oneself in a less subjective way. One should know about one's weaknesses, prejudices and limitations but also about the strengths and qualities one has. This includes being able to accept and adequately reply to personal criticism and to be able to change or adjust one's own beliefs and behaviours (self-improvement). In addition, the skill of self-management includes components which are more directly connected to management and work organisation, such as time-management, the ability to organise one's own workload according to a certain time-framework, or life-management, to be able to organise and combine one's own private life and work-life based on ideas of efficiency and well-being. The ability to recognise one's own capacities, limitations and to respect one's self (self-protection) is very important for both the health of the individual and the attainment of the team goal.

In our projects we had examples of participants not respecting their own limits and getting too emotionally involved: the trauma of the Armenian Genocide, which happened almost a hundred years ago, was causing their own individual and current trauma, which



Source: *dvv international*

they suffered from both psychologically and physically. Empathy is an important competency, but sometimes limiting the focus on empathy is necessary as well.

## 5. Culture Sensitivity and "Culture" Sensitivity

Culture is a very comprehensive and at the same time very narrow concept. On the one hand the factors and variables contributing to the culture of a certain region, country or group are uncountable and extremely diverse – at least that is the way we, the authors, understand culture.

On the other hand, the term "*culture*" is very often (mis-)used in a narrow context. In conflicts like ours, "*culture*" is often instrumentalised in order to differentiate between the "*own culture*" and the "*other culture*". Like: "*We do it like this in Turkey, and they do it differently in Armenia.*" This is a matter of "*culture*". Besides the fact that very often this differentiation is not to the point, it contains a high risk element which can contribute to deterioration of communication and fuel the conflict by generating stereotypes, half-truths and stencil-like views. Therefore cultural sensitivity means not only to be sensitive towards one's own culture and the culture of the other party, but to be sensitive towards the concept of "*culture*" itself and its use.

The "*traditional*" way to foster cultural sensitivity, by learning and being informed about the other side's *culture* in terms of gaining knowledge is not sufficient for reconciliation – it can even have a contradictory impact, in the sense of: "*I learned a lot about their culture – what I learned did not make me respect them more.*"

Also, the common way of illustrating similarities and intersections in both of the conflicting cultures is not too promising an approach, since these visualisations often remain at a stencil-like level. Experience shows that focusing on an abstract, floating understanding of "*culture*" characterised by diversity and openness, which incorporates the knowledge of the shortcomings of the whole concept, is most appropriate. In some compromise situations, it can be helpful to work with an overarching cultural concept, like for the current conflict, the idea that both parties are part of the "*European House*" meaning: the European culture.

The points mentioned above apply very much to our projects. Comparing the cultures involved did not take us any further along, since we recognised that there are too many things to compare: Turkey is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and extremely diverse society. The Armenian culture is also part of its society, as one of the cultures forming it. For example, you cannot distinguish between a Turkish and an Armenian coffee – there is absolutely no difference. What we tried to do in the trainings and other project activities was to raise awareness of "*culture*" as an important but often misleading concept.

## 6. Peaceful Conflict and Crisis Management

This skill can be useful with a third-party or a conflict party. It is useful for all types of conflicts, from the family conflict all the way up to the interethnic conflict. A conflict itself is not always a bad thing. Conflicts can evoke progress, change and improvement, therefore the idea is not to – in all cases – solve or resolve the conflict but rather to make it non-violent and, in the best sense, productive. The skill we try to pass on is thus not called conflict resolution but conflict management. Several abilities are collected under this title: the ability to sense a conflict situation, the ability to mediate between rivals, the ability to negotiate solutions respected by all parties, the ability to control stress (stay calm and be diplomatic) and emotions when necessary, and the ability to prevent people from deteriorating into open conflict. One more very important competence is to keep the overview and the overall perspective in mind and to act accordingly.

Our project was full of situations where the skills and competencies described above were needed. Most of all at the beginning of the project (phase one) most participants and some of the third-party actors didn't have sufficient knowledge and this led to many small conflicts which were accelerating noticeably.

An example: In the project, interviews with local people collecting post- or post-post-memories were held in both countries. The participants – students from the social sciences, history and adjacent disciplines – were actively involved in the interviewing, but the whole process was supervised by a scientist in each of the countries. Both national groups collected interviews in their own country with the objective of publishing them in a joint book. The conflict occurred when one side refused to exchange the materials collected, namely the transcripts of the interviews. The real reasons can only be guessed at. The “official” answer was that one side was bound by a scientific codex in anthropology which does not allow handing over intimate testimonies to any other person. But, if both sides would have understood themselves to be working in one team, the codex would not have prevented sharing the fruits of the joint work. The whole discussion about the “exchange question” became a real crisis in the project. The situation escalated to the point where the question was raised about whether or not the project could continue. This was in phase one at the beginning of the projects. The situation was finally saved (not solved) by a night-long talk with the two scientists and with the core project team convincing them to compromise and to sign a contract about it. What the authors seek to describe here is the learning process for everyone involved in the project: This type of escalation did not occur again and it was an informal lesson on how to avoid such a crisis, how to sense it and calm it down and how to go on after the conflict (which is sometimes the most difficult thing, especially if somebody feels they have lost face).

This crisis also had its positive aspects, like most non-violent conflicts, because it made clear where the cracks in the project team were. It was much easier afterwards to avoid escalations and to act and work in a preventive way.

## 7. Project Cycle Management (PCM)

Project cycle management is important for a structured and controlled run of a project and involves quite a number of skills, among them the ability to design and properly implement a project. As the participants had to plan and carry out their own small projects on reconciliation work, it was important and necessary to train them in PCM. The training in those skills covers the following topics: the characteristics of a project and the different phases of it; methods for planning: identification of a problem and of the concerned people (beneficiaries and stakeholders); the formulation of objectives, activities and resources; the draft of a budget; the writing of a proposal, monitoring and evaluation as well as the roles, responsibilities and timelines within the project.

Most of the topics were very much practice-oriented rather than theoretical. Several concrete examples were presented which helped participants to get acquainted with the project approach. By using the motto of non-formal education "*learning by doing*", participants had to develop their own projects, which they then implemented at the end of the second phase of the project.

In the next stage, students started working in their teams: they had to prepare a project proposal which contained a concept, the activities and the financial planning. In the next step they had to implement their undertakings: They organised the arrangements for their travels, booked hotels, figured out local transport opportunities, arranged meetings with interviewees, conducted the interviews and produced the final products (two films and one publication). At the end of the small scale project, students were obliged to hand in final written and financial reports. Furthermore, publicity of the project and its results had to be secured.

Students' teams arranged all their meetings and interviews in the neighbouring countries by themselves, in some cases with support of other students and partner organisations involved in the project. Taking into consideration the difficult political situation and sensitivity of the question, it was one of the most demanding parts of the projects. Interviews were conducted based on the experience and skills developed in other components of the project. To produce a book or film out of the material collected was another challenge for the students involved and improved their PCM skills effectively. The concrete outcomes of the project were, as already mentioned, two films, "*Nor & Eski*" and "*Two fat ballet dancers*", and the brochure "*Armenian voices of Istanbul*". At this stage, the work of the student teams was



*Feedback of the participants*

*Source: dvv international*

concentrated on cooperation with professional translators, text and video editors and publishers. The main issue was to negotiate with professionals on quality, price and the time frame for the production of the final products.

After finishing the projects, all the teams wrote narratives and financial reports. In their reports, students presented the implementation of the project, described how they could meet the objectives of the project and which difficulties occurred. Reports were mostly provided by the coordinators of the projects. By producing the financial report, students learned to collect and classify all financial documents for expenditures done within the framework of the project. Students learned to differentiate between types of financial documents such as contract, bill, receipt, and bid.

Finally the students presented their work to a broader audience at the final workshop in Istanbul which was attended by the public. In addition, students shared results and lessons learned with the rest of the project team as well as with different stakeholders.

It is not easy to assess to what extent participants internalized the skills which were passed on. Some of them may have learned more and some of them less. But, taking into account the high quality of the products of the project (films and books), it is very obvious that the learning success as regards the success of the cultivation of skills is high. It is also obvious that skills developed in the framework of the project will be very useful for participants involved in the project in their future professional life.

## **8. Active Citizenship**

If we advocate for peaceful conflict resolution, as a basic condition, we implicitly think of a society which is democratic, pluralistic and free, a society which respects

human rights, the rule of law and the division of powers. Such societies demand certain skills and competencies from their inhabitants. The European Commission's Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning (CRELL) defines active citizenship as follows:

*"Participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy."*<sup>4</sup>

And it is further said that training and education fostering active citizenship shall provide:

*"Appropriate and effective formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities at any stage of the life cycle that facilitate or encourage active citizenship."*<sup>5</sup>

Active citizenship learning is about citizen's rights and duties, about ways and forms of civil participation, thus about political education in general. It contains knowledge transfer and enlightenment about election processes, representation, chambers and bodies of the state, the constitution, non-violent forms of civil unrest, etc. In addition, it supports the ability to make use of rights and duties in order to play the role of citizen successfully and for the sake of the welfare of society. And in this context, all of the skills and competencies summarised above are part of the set of active citizenship skills.

## Instead of a Conclusion

The role of young people in dealing with the past, reconciliation processes and peaceful conflict resolution is of crucial importance for overcoming the traumas in today's societies. Young adults are much more willing to confront history and to contribute to the rapprochement processes across national borders. In this respect, investing in developing a set of life skills in dealing with the inherited stereotypes and prejudices, the xenophobia, the fear of the different and unknown, is of vital importance for the functioning of a healthy society and of equal importance with professional and vocational skills.

*"The past is never dead. It's not even past.*

*We cut ourselves off from it; we pretend to be strangers."*

(Christa Wolf / William Faulkner  
Patterns of Childhood 1976)

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4 Bryony Hoskins: "Active Citizenship for Democracy. Report of the second research network meeting." (CRELL, European Commission Joint Research Centre), p. 6, 2006.

5 Ibid.

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*Since 1993, the Asian Adult Education Association (ASPBAE) has been carrying out a training course for employees of its member organisations in which they are made familiar with the principles of socially-oriented Adult Education in theory and practice. Among other things, the participants learn contextual analysis, communication methods, leadership skills, organisational management, networking and political lobbying. The goal is not only the strengthening of the respective organisations, but also the ASPBAE itself. Anita Borkar is the regional ASPBAE coordinator, and is responsible for the ASPBAE Training for Transformation Programme.*

**Anita Borkar**

## **ASPBAE's Basic Leadership Development Course**

The universally accepted purpose of education is to “*prepare the individual for life*”. However, the predominant understanding of this “*preparation for life*” is narrowly confined to enhancing the chances of employability of the individual in the prevalent labour market. Success of education is thus primarily measured by the levels of economic achievements (rise in per capita income) of the individual through her/his life.

The Education for All (EFA) Goal 3 states that “*the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes*”. This commitment covers learning activities that enable people to improve the quality of their lives, including livelihood choices, decision making, resolving conflict, value-based community leadership, critical thinking, creative expressions, environmental concerns and every aspect of living that contributes to a sustainable life for themselves and their communities. These are life-skills – psycho-social skills that can be learnt and practised throughout life.

Experiences from purposeful initiatives in the alternative education arena have demonstrated and proven that learning is indeed life-long and is often sought through diverse modes of social and cultural appropriateness, to address and deal with the ever-changing realities and issues that confront individuals and communities. The aim of this Lifelong Learning thus shifts from mere livelihood gain or income generation, to learning of contextual life-skills throughout one's life to live a meaningful and dignified existence.

The Asia Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education's (ASPBAE's) initiatives, over the years, at promoting life-skills education have been manifold. One such endeavour is its Basic Leadership Development Course, which has, since 1993, engaged over 300 representatives of civil society organisations in Asia and the South Pacific, in an innovative learning process.

ASPBAE ([www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)) is a non-profit, non-government regional organisation with membership throughout the Asia Pacific region. Its overall purpose is to strengthen the theory and practice of Adult Education as a contribution to individual and social development. ASPBAE works with civil society organizations, national education coalitions, and other campaign networks to hold governments accountable in fulfilling their obligations towards education. It aims to build an Asia-Pacific movement for the right to access relevant, quality, and empowering education and learning opportunities for all.

The ASPBAE membership primarily consists of over 200 civil society organizations spread in around 30 countries of Asia and the South Pacific, who are engaged in transformative politics on contemporary themes and issues, through employing adult learning principles and practices. Their association with ASPBAE lends them the leverage to deepen their work at the local level and extend it to the regional level through exchange of experiences and resources, with others in the ASPBAE network.

The depth and reach of ASPBAE's network has provided a platform for exchange across the significant pool of its organizational and individual members who identify with its mission and vision, share a sense of ownership with the organization, and are willing to devote time and energy towards pursuing shared goals and commitments towards social justice, gender justice and sustainable human development.

Given the critical role of civil society organisations in building democratic values and accountability into their organisational work and campaigns, ASPBAE's trainings and capacity building endeavours, including the BLDC, have assumed significance by bringing together education campaign coalitions and thematic groups, to build strategic partnerships that gain voice, visibility and conceptual clarity.

## Rationale

The Basic Leadership Development Course (BLDC) is a flagship program of ASPBAE, with more than a decade-long tradition. The BLDC is premised on ASPBAE's commitment to the promotion of education for all and Lifelong Learning. The BLDC is part of ASPBAE's long-term multi-level strategy to build and expand the "leadership corps" in the region, committed to advancing the right of all to learn, and to promoting the learning needs and interests especially of the most marginal groups. A six-day residential training, the BLDC is one of the most widely known annual programs of ASPBAE, amongst its membership.

All ASPBAE member organizations from the Asia-Pacific region are encouraged to nominate participants for the BLDC. There are criteria for selection, which are shared with the member organizations to enable them to send appropriate nominations for the BLDC. These criteria have been distilled from the experiences at the preceding BLDCs, and are considered to be relevant and useful in nominating as well as selecting participants for the BLDC. They are:

- A minimum of three years of work experience in Adult Education and related development work fields;
- Demonstrated potential to take up leadership roles in ASPBAE member organizations;
- Limited opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and leadership development;
- Access to and a reasonable ability to work with computers; and
- Reasonable ability to communicate in English, which is the working language of the BLDC.

*Basic Leadership Development Course (BLDC)*  
Source: ASPBAE



Every year a Selection Committee is constituted from amongst the Executive Council of ASPBAE, which makes the final selection of the participants based on the agreed criteria, thus ensuring a fair and transparent selection from amongst the nominations received for the BLDC. The Selection Committee also ensures a balance of gender and sub-regional representation of participants at all the BLDCs.

The main objectives of ASPBAE's Basic Leadership Development Course have been defined as:

- Develop a holistic perspective on Adult Education
- Enhance skills and attitudes on processes that support transformative Adult Education
- Provide opportunities for the sharing of adult learning experiences
- Facilitate structured reflection towards developing a basic understanding of adult learning principles and practices that are transformative, gender sensitive, rights-based and contribute to sustainable development
- Gain a better understanding of, and develop a commitment to ASPBAE
- Develop a critical understanding of the contexts in Asia Pacific that impact on adult learning
- Contribute to developing a "talent bank" for the leadership in ASPBAE, the membership and the Adult Education movement in Asia Pacific

The BLDC is primarily offered to the ASPBAE membership with the aim of creating and holding a space to facilitate this acquaintance and exchange. It builds upon the experiences of the participants to harness learnings and co-create a framework for understanding regional Adult Education practice. The BLDC thus is conceived as an induction to development of leadership in regional Adult Education practice.

Every year, the BLDC is hosted by one of the ASPBAE member organization in the country where it is based. This host organization takes the responsibility of organizing the logistics of hosting the training. Each BLDC is facilitated by a gender-balanced team led by two Course Directors. The Course Directors are the members of ASPBAE's Executive Council and play this role as part of ASPBAE's commitment to build and nurture the emergent leadership within the ASPBAE-fold. The faculty and resource persons for the BLDC are drawn from the expertise that exists within the ASPBAE membership and staff.

## Conceptual Framework

To fulfill the stated objectives, the BLDC dwells on the following subject domains:

A. Principles of Adult Learning



BLDC

Source: ASPBAE

- B. Frameworks of and for Transformative Adult Learning
  - Rights-based Approach to Education and Development
  - Mainstreaming Gender and Lifelong Learning
  - Education for Sustainable Development
- C. Contexts of Adult Learning in Practice
  - Local Community Visits
  - Asia-Pacific Regional Overview
- D. Leadership in Adult Learning Practice
  - Leadership in Learning Organizations
  - Educators as Leaders
- E. Networking and Policy Advocacy
- F. ASPBAE's Thematic Engagement and Policy Platforms
- G. Formulation of Individual Action Plan

The BLDC's conceptual framework proposes that adult learning is most relevant when it is contextualized and rooted firmly within the socio-economic-political and cultural realities. The content of adult learning thus changes with the change in the context brought about by the impact of one's practice, among other factors. The practice of Adult Education is thus dynamic, with its content being shaped by the context and the context being influenced and impacted by the content. The effectiveness of the methods and tools of adult learning largely depend upon their appropriateness with the context and content and the learner's realities.

The participants at the BLDC are able to appreciate this interplay of context-content-method, through a reflective process of their own individual/organizational work, when they share the most significant change brought about by the Adult Education work that they are engaged in individually or through their organization.

*BLDC*

*Source: ASPBAE*



This understanding is further enhanced through site visits and interactions with Adult Education practitioners and learner groups from various local organizations, in and around the city where the BLDC is being organized. These site visits serve as an important learning experience for the participants as it affords an opportunity to learn from a living practice in the real world. It also contributes in understanding the linkages between local, regional and global issues, as participants exchange experiences from their own contexts with the local practitioners and learners. The site visits as an integral part of a structured learning process demonstrate the significance of consolidating the frameworks for and frameworks of transformative adult learning practice.

Analysis of the social context is considered vital in any transformative adult learning practice. The BLDC bases this analysis of the context on the three pillars of human rights, gender justice and sustainable development. Adult Education practitioners and policy advocates with rich expertise from the ASPBAE network are invited to input on these analytical frameworks at the BLDC. Meaningful interactions with these resource persons have contributed to enhanced analytical abilities amongst the participants as well as led to emergence of country-level and sub-regional alliance-building on related themes.

The discourse on gender rights at the BLDC has brought in the realisation that gender inequalities perpetuated by key institutions – the state, market, community and family can be challenged in order to influence engendered adult learning practices and education policies. Sharing and understanding of various local, regional and global initiatives have enabled the participants at the BLDC to integrate essential learnings in their own work with women and girls to increase the levels of knowledge and awareness, improve negotiation skills and enhance assertion and self esteem of women and girls. This is best represented in the feedback of one of the BLDC participants Md. Akbar Ali from Bangladesh:

*“... the components of leadership, adult education and gender rights were all related to his work. He was able to share the learning with his colleagues and bring his exposure to gender, human rights and rights based initiative to his work. He found the BLDC an eye-opener. As a result of that exposure, now he is able to support women to go to the district level (authorities), cooperate with local development (offices)...they are empowered to take steps to protect women’s rights and support women in distress as a result of their increased awareness. They developed a module to train women and the conceptual clarity that he gained at BLDC helped to shape his intervention strategy.”*

(Strengthening a Strategic Learning Partnership – Evaluation of ASPBAE – dvv international Cooperation, 2007).

One of the most striking features of the BLDC is the emphasis on building leadership capacities of a learning organization. The underlying assumption here is that practitioners are continually advancing transformative Adult Education within their own communities, in the “external” world, but are seldom mindful of doing the same internally, within their own organizations, which bear the same characteristics of any community. The BLDC provokes and enables the participants to be attentive to the learning needs within their own organization. It further builds a perspective and enhances skills to foster a learning culture within organizations, based on the very principles of adult learning which are promoted by adult educators.

## **Pedagogy**

In keeping with ASPBAE's commitment to participatory learning, the BLDC is designed to build on the experiences of the participants and to be attentive to their learning needs and priorities. Each year the BLDC is fine-tuned to the learning expectations of the participants. The course is highly interactive and designed to tap into the rich and diverse experiences of the participants as valuable resources in the processes of teaching and learning.

Engagement in the BLDC begins much before the actual start of the course. The Course Directors contact all the selected participants and provide an orientation to the course by email. Participants are encouraged to share their introduction to the entire group as well as prepare a postcard on the most significant change that their individual or organization's Adult Education work has contributed to, and would like to share with their co-participants at the BLDC. There are a couple of introductory readings that are also shared, for the participants to read and build a readiness for an exciting learning experience.

Lecture-discussion is just one among the varied methods used at the BLDC. Emphasis is on fostering active participation from all, beyond language barriers. Popular education methods like role-plays, group work, reflective exercises, simulation activities, debates are some that are extensively used to engage the participants in the learning process at the BLDC.

“*Learning Groups*” has also been experienced to be a useful way for the participants to overcome their cultural barriers. Each participant is part of a “*learning group*” composed of participants from different countries and contexts. These learning groups meet at an assigned time every day through the entire course of the BLDC. These learning group meetings serve the purpose of creating a non-threatening space for dialogue wherein the participants can clarify and support the learning needs of each other. This space for mutual learning is also illustrative



BLDC

Source: ASPBAE

of the significance of a co-learning process, which enables the participant group to deepen and integrate the gains from the BLDC in their individual or organizational adult learning practice.

The Film Festival organized at the BLDC is one of the most popular activities amongst the participants. All participants are encouraged to bring short films and social documentaries related to their work and country context. These films are screened at the BLDC on one evening that is dedicated to the “*Our Own Film Festival*”. The films and the discussion thereafter create a forum for awareness and appreciation of issues and concerns that resonate with the social context of every participant at the BLDC.

The residential nature of the BLDC offers rich possibilities for informal interactions between the participants to form bonds of friendships and professional ties. For most participants, the BLDC is their first or early association with co-learners in an international and cross-cultural setting. Experiences shared by the participants, years after their participation, indicate that the BLDC was a major building block in furthering their understanding and grounding them in their Adult Education practice, beyond the boundaries of their immediate local work. The exposure at the BLDC also goes



BLDC

Source: ASPBAE

a long way in boosting their confidence as they discover the linkages of their local grassroots work (micro) with the regional and global (macro) development issues.

Long standing members of ASPBAE have endorsed the spurt in confidence of their colleagues who had participated in the BLDC. To quote Malini Ghose of Nirantar, India:

*"The Basic Leadership Development courses have been very good in building*

*capacity and confidence. The presentation to international fora helps in confidence building and regional exposure expands the understanding of issues."*

Further, highlighting the importance of the BLDC, Kazi Rafiqul Alam of Dhaka Ahsania Mission, stated in an earlier evaluation by *dvv international*:

*"The Basic Leadership Development training is very good for the junior staff and builds a lot of confidence plus provides exposure to other country issues. The BLDC of ASPBAE helped us to define issues that are programmatically important and helps in raising issues at the regional level."*

## Conclusion

Through the BLDC, ASPBAE offers a striking example of how a learning organization can premise its growth and development on the principles of experiential learning. ASPBAE continuously contributes to knowledge creation from its experiences in adult learning practice in the Asia and South Pacific region. While doing so it also designs and improvises learning processes to co-create adult learning frame-

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works from practice, in an effort to build and strengthen its members' capacities to advance and deepen Adult Education in the region.

The BLDC has been featured prominently as a sub-site on the ASPBAE website. The BLDC site includes the BLDC Manual among other information. The BLDC Manual is the documentation of the modules and is made available in the print form as well for any organization interested in capacity-building based on ASPBAE's experience of BLDC. The BLDC Manual is also an invitation for learning exchanges as described by ASPBAE's President J. Roberto Guevara in his preface:

*"Manuals also have a tendency of becoming a document to be followed step by step, like a recipe book, which results in potentially stopping what has been essentially a story of growth. My hope is that as you read, apply and adapt the contents of the BLDC Manual, new seeds of transformative Adult Education practice will sprout. We encourage you to share these new seeds with us, as we all continue to nurture and grow the BLDC in responding to dynamic contexts that we continue to face in the Asia and South Pacific regions".*

Viewed from a life skills training perspective, the ASPBAE's BLDC provides for a unique cross cultural exchange and exposure to a range of other experiences and contexts, which have profound effects in expanding the world-view of participants – critical to global citizenship and an understanding of a shared humanity which is a very important life skill in the current world order. Participants at the BLDC have expressed a deep assimilation of their newfound collective identity as representatives of a regional organisation with a shared purpose and convergence on issues. This experience of finding oneself in a "foreign" context with people from different backgrounds and language and yet being able to communicate and find clear connections to their work and world is an empowering experience and an important element in building leadership skills.

The BLDC has also contributed specifically to improving the effectiveness and capability of ASPBAE and the education movement in the region, further strengthening the Adult Education network and ensuring the leadership succession within ASPBAE. More than half of successive Executive Council members of ASPBAE are BLDC alumni.

The growing need for BLDC is aptly captured in the remarks of ASPBAE's former President and one of the first Course Directors of the BLDC, Rajesh Tandon:

*"The Basic Leadership Development Course has been very useful in capacity strengthening and perspective building. Unfortunately there are not enough trainings to meet the demand from partners. The BLDC's should be multiplied through collaboration and extra funds, as the demand is high."*

The BLDC has been a dynamic and evolving endeavour, which is the key feature of any life skills development training. With the changing environment and growing challenges in Adult Education practice, the Course Directors of the BLDC have adapted and modified the design of the BLDC thus making it relevant and meaningful to learning needs of its participant group. When in action the BLDC becomes the microcosm of the real world outside, its participants echoing the demands of the diverse adult learners in the region and the space comes alive with learning exchanges to build, enhance and refine the much needed life skills to equip oneself to advance transformative adult learning practices in their local, national and regional realities.

## Reference

Edicio dela Torre, Kannabiran, Vasanth (2007) *"Strengthening a Strategic Learning Partnership"* – Evaluation of ASPBAE *dvv international* Cooperation.

BLDC

Source: ASPBAE



*The Integrated Women's Empowerment Program (IWEP), supported in Ethiopia by the Embassy of the Netherlands, combines literacy and basic education for women with the transmission of employment-oriented and income-generating skills and the support of micro enterprises through small loans and training in business skills like accounting, financial planning and market monitoring. Here, it uses the synergies of various organisations that are active in the selected villages and districts. Sonja Belete is program manager of dvv international in Ethiopia and has implemented the project since its inception.*

**Sonja Belete**

## **Literacy, Skills Training and Entrepreneurship – Support for Rural Women in Ethiopia**

The 2012 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report will focus on skills development and look at strategies that can increase employment opportunities for marginalized groups. The current status of technical and vocational training in Africa shows that many countries have undergone promising reforms, and the need to link skill training to employment (either self or paid employment) is observed as best practice and strategy world-wide. It has to be noted, though, that in Africa, globalization has created a tension between developing skills for poverty eradication and skills for global competitiveness. The lack of skills and the demands of poverty alleviation imply that African countries must pursue the development of skills at all levels of the spectrum (basic, secondary and tertiary), with each country emphasizing the skills level that correspond best to their stage of economic development and the needs of the local labour market.

When exploring opportunities for marginalized target groups, it emerges that these target groups are often illiterate and lack basic life skills. Vocational educators are aware that without sufficient mastery of literacy and numeracy, learners can

only take limited advantage of possibilities to enhance their skills and capacities. When taking the context of Africa and marginalized populations into consideration, it also emerges that it may be better to talk about skills training for improved livelihoods rather than employment only, because a large number of the target groups derive their living from mainly subsistence agriculture and from exchange of goods and services. The context and circumstance of marginalized groups matters, and to address these multiple issues an integrated approach that involves a variety and combination of skills, role-players, structures and systems is needed.

This article will explore *dvv international's* attempt to implement such an integrated programme for one of the most marginalized target groups in Ethiopia, namely poor and illiterate women residing mostly in rural areas. The Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme (IWEP) is implemented within the wider context of the policies, programmes and structures of the Ethiopian Government and aims to develop and test a comprehensive approach and model to empower poor women and improve their livelihood while at the same time contributing to the national Adult Education system and strategy of Ethiopia.

## **The Ethiopian Context**

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-cultural nation where about 84% of the around 80 million population inhabits rural areas. Despite marked economic growth in different sectors, poverty levels remain high. The government's present long-term vision is to transform Ethiopia to a middle-income country within the next 15 years. This vision demands a transformation of the economy which in turn demands a literate and skilled population as pre-conditions for any nation to become competitive and achieve growth and transformation. There are clear connections between literacy and skill levels and both economic output and GDP capital growth. However, Ethiopia's illiteracy rate is estimated at 64% (50% male and 77% female), and a number of challenges exist as far as technical and vocational skill training is concerned.

Women are one of the most marginalised groups and bear a disproportionate share of the burden of poverty in Ethiopia. They take the major responsibility for household chores in addition to the support they provide in the households' livelihoods activities such as agriculture and livestock production. Women spend a large part of their day on laborious household tasks leaving them with little or no time to benefit from training and other opportunities to improve their livelihoods.

This becomes more evident when engaging with the women themselves. In the soon to be published "*Faces behind our work*", *dvv international* explored the



*IWEP women celebrating their new literacy center*

*Source: Development Expertise Center in Liben Chikuala Woreda*

realities of their target group participating in the IWEP. Their stories reveal a life of early and forced marriage, polygamy and the challenges it brings, no or interrupted schooling, and engaging in subsistence farming and daily labour that require minimal skills, such as washing clothes for neighbours and working on commercial farms, engaging in petty trade, etc. When asked about their dreams for the future almost all express the need for more skills, having a job or starting a business and generally having a better life for themselves and their families.

Recognising these challenges and problems women face and their importance in the economy and growth of the country, the Constitution of Ethiopia has guaranteed equal rights for women and men. The government is promoting gender equality through the National Policy on Women and various institutional arrangements such as the establishment of a Ministry of Women Affairs with corresponding offices at regional and woreda (district) levels as per the three-tiered federal structure of Ethiopia. Gender focal persons have also been placed in various sector offices such as Agriculture, Health, Education, etc., with the specific intention to mainstream gender in all sectoral programmes.

In addition, the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP IV) of Ethiopia is placing a specific focus on Integrated Functional Adult Education (IFAE), seeking to link literacy and numeracy to livelihoods and skills training in areas such as agriculture, health, civics, etc. *dvv international* supported the Ministry of Education (MoE) not only with the development of the National Adult Education Strategy (2008), but also with the Master Plan for Adult Education which was finalised in 2010. The MoE intends to implement the Master Plan as a broader, holistic and

more integrated framework for quality service provision to adults in Ethiopia. In this regard *dvv international* continues to contribute through its programmes such as the IWEPE to test models and present lessons and modalities for up-scaling to the Ethiopian Government and other partners.

## Conceptual Understanding and Frameworks

In order to guide IWEPE’s implementation and create mutual understanding amongst partners a number of conceptual frameworks have been developed. The Integration Framework shows, for example, the interpretation of the concept of “*integration*” across IWEPE’s 3 key components, starting with a conceptual understanding and moving to how Ethiopia’s current policies and strategies embrace the integration of these concepts. The framework also explores institutional integration between government, NGOs, different sectors and levels of structures and how that will translate into programme design and ultimately implementation on the ground. As IWEPE develops best practices and models during its implementation, this framework will be populated with approaches, methodologies and examples, and ultimately become an overall model for implementing such a programme.

IWEPE Key Concepts →	Literacy	Skills Training	Entrepreneurship Support
Levels of Integration ↓			
Conceptual Linkages			
Policy and Strategy			
Institutional			
Programmatic Design and Implementation			
Impact for target group			

*Sonja Belete (IWEPE Partner Guideline, 2009)*

IWEPE delivers literacy, technical/vocational skills training and entrepreneurship support (in the form of business skills training and access to revolving credit/start-up capital) in a non-formal setting to women. The overall goal is to improve the women’s livelihood. Livelihood in IWEPE’s context is understood according to the wider definition as put forward by Chambers and others, namely that “*A livelihood*

*comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living.*" This wider definition also relates to the livelihoods framework adopted by a number of international agencies, including the IWEPP, and looks at livelihoods within a wider system approach. A livelihood is therefore understood not only from the individual's perspective but considers also all the influences and factors in the environment of the individual.

Considering the basic skill level of the women, such as their lack of or limited ability to perform literacy and numeracy tasks and other basic skills such as problem solving, accessing opportunities, etc., a non-formal learning environment seems to fit the target group better. It has the advantage to be delivered in the location where the women live, and according to the time they have available. The emphasis is on practical skills for direct and immediate use. Differentiation is made in IWEPP between:

- Literacy and Numeracy skills with the emphasis on the use of the skill by the learner;
- Life skills, which relates to basic skills such as problem solving, hygiene and sanitation, etc., which is covered by the topics in the literacy programme;
- Technical/vocational skills, which relates to income-generating activities such as weavery, pottery, sheep fattening, etc.; and
- Business skills, namely skills to run a business such as basic book-keeping, assessing your competitors, etc.

*Crop Production: Senbete Gelgelu*

*Source: IWEPP Partners Adami Tulu Woreda*

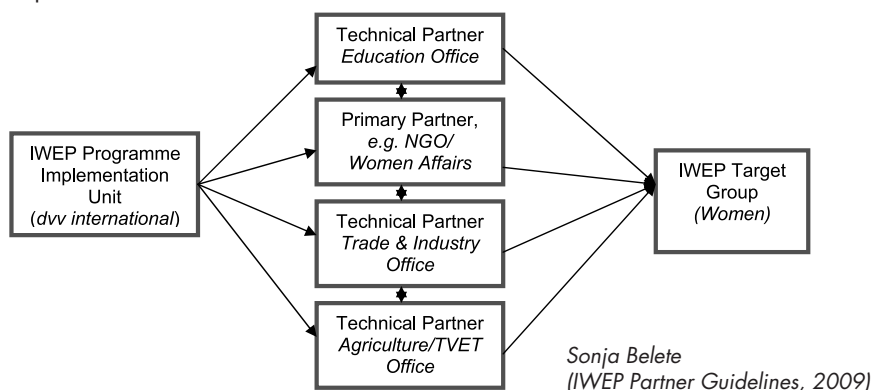


## Overview of the Integrated Women’s Empowerment Programme (IWEP)

*dvv international’s* Regional Office, East and Horn of Africa, in bilateral agreement with the Ministry of Education (MoE) of Ethiopia, is implementing a pilot programme in Ethiopia, called the Integrated Women’s Empowerment Programme (IWEP). IWEP strives to promote an integrated approach that combines three traditionally separate components, namely functional adult literacy education (through methods such as Functional Adult Literacy and Reflect), livelihoods skills/non-formal vocational training, and entrepreneurial support (business skill training and economic support via small scale credit, etc.). These components are not new as ingredients of women empowerment programmes, the challenge however is to deliver them in an integrated manner to the target group, namely poor, illiterate adult women, and by so doing developing a model that can be up-scaled throughout Ethiopia.

IWEP is currently reaching more than 22,000 women in 6 of Ethiopia’s eleven regions (9 regions and 2 city administrations) with plans to scale up to 28,000 within the next few months. The programme is funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy and started actual implementation in June 2008 and will be completed in December 2012. It is implemented with a number of governmental and non-governmental partners.

It is the integrated nature of IWEP that requires the bringing together of a variety of stakeholders across sectors (horizontally) as well as vertically from community to district (woreda) to zones, regions and finally the federal level. IWEP partners are therefore selected from a range of role-players at each level with structures mirroring each other across vertical lines. The IWEP Partner Modality can be depicted as follows:



In order to deliver IWEP's three key components (literacy, skills training and entrepreneurship support) to the target group, the programme relies on "clusters" of partners at community, district (woreda) and regional levels to co-operate and integrate their implementation activities. These clusters of partners, as depicted in the partner modality above, work together right from IWEP's inception in an area by planning and budgeting together during an integrated orientation and planning workshop. Regional and woreda steering committees where all partners, are represented provide fora for future planning, coordination and regular monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, technical teams are formed to train community facilitators and supervise and follow-up the progress of the women groups on literacy, skills training and business development. A technical team will typically be comprised of experts from the Education, Agriculture, Women Affairs and TVET offices as well as experts/staff from local NGOs. Center Management Committees play a coordinating role at community level. Recently these structures have been transformed within the government's new directive to form integrated Adult Education boards and technical teams at woreda and regional levels. Other sectoral partners such as Health also came on board.

Each partner has a specific role and responsibility to fulfill. *dvv international* does not only see itself as a financial partner, but also as a technical partner. IWEP's Central Programme Implementation Unit (CPIU) and Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) provide technical support in the form of Training of Trainers workshops in the various methodologies and approaches that IWEP uses. It also provides technical backstopping and advisory services to partner organisations. IWEP has developed a number of materials, and these are made available to partner organisations in several local languages. The workshops and materials have contributed to build the expertise of government and NGO staff in adult literacy, market assessments, business skills training and business development support services, etc.

IWEP differentiates between primary and technical partner organisations in order to create an implementation modality that can provide the three key skill elements to the target group through different sectoral partner organisations. Primary partners are usually partner organisations that have women groups in the communities with whom they are already working in one or more of IWEP's key components. Primary partners are usually local NGOs or Women Affairs Offices but can also include Education Offices or TVET centres depending on the context and situation. Technical partners typically play the following roles:

- Education bureaus and offices for support on literacy.
- Trade and Industry (MSE) bureaus and offices for support on market assessments and business skill training.

- Agricultural and Rural Development bureaus and offices for technical skill training through their Farmer Training Centers (FTCs) as well as business skill training and market assessments. The Development Agents (DAs) also provide business development support services (BDS).
- TVET bureaus and offices for technical skill training in Community Skill Training Centers (CSTCs).
- Women Affairs bureaus and offices for support on women group mobilisation and orientation and oversight/monitoring.

## **Addressing Skills Development: An Integrated System Approach**

In a study conducted by John Oxenham and others (2002), he refers to 5 categories of programmes that combine livelihoods training (including technical/vocational training) with literacy and basic life skills. Some start with literacy, others with livelihoods and some run the two components parallel while others attempt to integrate literacy and livelihoods training. One can therefore differentiate between mostly literacy-led or livelihoods-led programmes. During IWEP's start-up and conceptualization phase, attempts were made to test these different approaches by using the 5 categories to design entry points for IWEP partners in the different regions to start the programme. This was useful since some partners had already established women groups while others formed new groups. It was however soon discovered that more than anything else, the realities on the ground determine the implementation approach, and that full integration of literacy and livelihoods skills training needs to take into consideration a number of factors such as:

- The literacy component of the programme needs a longer time period, namely a minimum of 2 years, and within a programme with a specified time frame, it is better to start with the literacy sooner than later.
- Although topics related to health, family, problem solving, the environment, etc., are of interest to the women and they appreciate the new basic skills and knowledge they acquire alongside the literacy skills, the burden of poverty makes them impatient to start with the technical skills training and engage in business.
- Time is a major factor, not only in terms of the women's time to attend classes, but implementing partners often do not have enough experts and time to handle all the IWEP programme components simultaneously. Supervisors are for example engaged in follow-up support and supervision of women group facilitators with literacy while at the same time having to oversee the conducting of market assessments and designing relevant skills training programmes with technical partners.

- In the interest of integration it is important not to allow for “specialisation” of experts in either literacy or livelihoods, but to bring experts from different sector offices together for training on all IWEP’s key components.

Based on these and other factors and realities, IWEP designed an overall programme cycle, incorporating a literacy and livelihoods cycle that can be synchronized. Most IWEP groups therefore started with the literacy component on topics identified during local situation analysis exercises and using either the Functional Adult Literacy or Reflect approach. Women were also oriented in all IWEP’s components and started saving immediately so as to build up complimentary capital for IWEP’s available Women Entrepreneurship Fund which can be utilized after the skills training. Facilitators have been trained and continued with literacy classes 2-3 times a week while experts from government sector offices such as Trade and Industry, Agriculture, TVET and primary partners (NGOs and Women Affair Offices) received training in IWEP’s market assessment approach which draws heavily on the value chain analysis. These experts worked together in teams and conducted market assessments for each operational woreda/district of IWEP. Reports were compiled and analysed and experts identified the most feasible income generating activities (IGAs) for women and the kind of technical skills training required to engage in these activities. These activities are identified based on a list of criteria

TVET Center

Source: Development Expertise Center in Liben Chikuala Woreda





*Sheep rearing: Birke Meressa*

*Source: IWEP Partners Adami Tulu Woreda*

such as competition, availability of raw material, start-up capital required, skills training needed, etc. The skill level of the women is also considered, as well as the fact that they lack basic skills such as literacy and numeracy.

The results of the market assessments then have to be shared with the women who usually have their own pre-determined ideas on the kind of business they want to engage in. Conflict often arises between what the experts consider to be viable income-generating activities and what the women want to engage in. The women's preferences are usually based on a different set of criteria such as:

- Choosing IGAs they are familiar with and saw others do successfully in their community.
- IGAs that have minimal risk, and often these are already saturated and the market demand may be low.

It is therefore important to ensure an alignment between the actual market assessment results and the women's business interest. IWEP designed a complimentary guideline to its Market Assessment Manual to assist the experts to facilitate a dialogue process using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools such as Matrix Ranking to share the market assessment results with the women and discuss their own interests at length. This finally leads to a consensus, and women are grouped according to the IGA they will engage in. The market assessment exercise and

alignment with the women's interest therefore directly determines the kind of skills training that will be conducted and who will be the best role-player/partner to do so. Experts liaise with other members of the woreda technical team to compile skills training plans that will enable the women to start these businesses. Most often it is the woreda agriculture or TVET offices that will conduct the skills training, while in exceptional cases private individuals are brought on board.

When designing the skills training plans it is important that all primary and technical partners work together. Factors that have to be taken into consideration include:

- The number of women that will require a specific skills training. It is not cost-effective to conduct training courses for a few individuals, at the same time market saturation should be considered.
- Who will conduct the training, and do they have the necessary experts and equipment?
- Where will the training be conducted, e.g. in nearby Farmer Training or Community Training Centers? Bear in mind that the women cannot leave their households for an extended period of time to attend training. Most training is therefore conducted in centres within walking distance to the women's homesteads.
- The number of days the training will need. In IWEP's experience most courses last between 2-6 days. The skills training should ideally also not interrupt the attendance of the literacy classes and at the same time consider women's already heavy work load.
- Considering the women's limited literacy skill, course content has to be very practical so that it can be memorized (sometimes with pictures and basic words) and applied immediately.

Once women have attended the skills training, they are eager to take loans from their group and start their business. It is therefore important to incorporate topics on business skills training as early as possible into the literacy programme so that women gain this knowledge and can start their business having analysed their competitors, being aware of profit calculations, etc. IWEP has worked closely with partners to integrate the contents of its business skills training manual with the literacy programme, and facilitators have been trained so that currently women receive this as an integrated skills package where business concepts are linked to literacy and numeracy in a variety of local languages. Business Development Support Services (BDS) are rendered by technical partners who visit the women groups on a monthly basis to follow-up on the success of their businesses and identify gaps and further training needs. These BDS related topics will also be included in the literacy curriculum in the future.

## Achievements so Far

The majority of IWEP's target group live in rural areas and this context determined the results of the market assessments. When it comes to Addis Ababa and other semi-urban areas, a marked difference in the selected IGAs and skills training required can be observed. Areas on the outskirts of the city also allow for urban gardening, poultry, vegetable and mushroom production, etc. The following table gives some examples of the IGAs the women engage in and the skills training conducted by IWEP's technical partners:

Rural Context	Urban Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sheep and goat rearing and fattening</li> <li>• Crop production</li> <li>• Poultry</li> <li>• Pottery</li> <li>• Vegetable growing</li> <li>• Handicraft production</li> <li>• Cattle and dairy farming, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast Food Preparation (often for the large number of construction workers in the city)</li> <li>• Juice-making and small restaurants</li> <li>• Laundry services</li> <li>• Beauty Salons, etc.</li> <li>• Bakery</li> </ul>

From partner reports and IWEP's mid-term review and internal monitoring processes it has been observed that:

- Women started saving within their groups and together with IWEP's Women Entrepreneurship Fund managed to take out loans and start businesses. The pay-back rate on loans has been more than 90%. In some districts women are already taking their third round of loans from the revolving credit fund in order to expand their existing businesses or start new second businesses.
- Women started to engage in a number of income-generating activities after receiving technical skills training combined with business skills training. They often start within a group, and as their confidence grows, they start a second business on their own as an individual. Many report marked improvement in livelihood beyond subsistence farming.
- They report functional use of their literacy and numeracy skills, and examples of using literacy and numeracy for business calculations, in clinics, at the grinding mill, etc., give encouraging evidence.
- Women reported changes in lifestyle such as having more decision-making power at home and the ability to discuss issues with their husbands, as well as changes in using harmful traditional practices. In some woredas IWEP women have become models for health extension programmes and other government services due to the integrated nature of the programme.

One marked difference in IWEP's technical skill training approach is the entry point for providing skill training. Many skill training programmes focus on the institution and service provider of skills training and then conduct tracer studies to determine whether trainees actually use the training and engage in labour related or business practices. Training is also focused on individuals who approach the center for training.

In the case of IWEP the focus remains on the women target group and their business interest in relation to the market assessment results. From here skill training plans are designed as per the reconciled market assessment results and the women's interest. The skill training institution becomes a service provider for the group. This approach has resulted in the fact that IWEP can report more than 90% of women trained actually using the skills training to start businesses. Because the approach evolves around the group, they are continuously visited and followed-up by experts to ensure they manage their businesses correctly and to answer any technical skills-related questions. In minor cases the women could not use the training due to external environmental factors, e.g. poor soil quality, etc. In these cases new opportunities have been selected and women engaged in different income-generating activities.

The following serve as examples:

- In Jimma Geneti Woreda District, 250 women have been trained in beekeeping. All of these women engage in beekeeping and have started onion production on the side as an additional income-generating opportunity.
- In the same woreda, 75 women have been trained in dairy farming which they have taken up and they are currently benefiting from selling milk.



*IWEP women about the changes in their life*  
 Source: Development Expertise Center in Liben Chikuala Woreda

- Another woman engaged in preparing and selling local drinks in Hareto town after receiving basic training coupled with business skills training. With the 520 Ethiopian Birr profit she made, she bought 2 sheep which she is rearing to generate further income.

On an institutional level, IWEP received recognition from various government sectors and has been awarded by the regional governments of Oromia and Tigray region. The institutional integration and modality piloted by IWEP has been adopted and adapted and forms part of the government's approach to implement Integrated Functional Adult Education in Ethiopia. Tigray region made a decision to up-scale the IWEP approach from the original 4 implementation woredas to all woredas in the region. Apart from impacting on the lives of many women, IWEP is starting to show evidence of achieving the purpose of the programme, namely to contribute towards an overall Adult Education system in Ethiopia.

## **Lessons Learnt: Creating an Enabling Environment for Skills Development Targeting Marginalized Groups**

As observed during the programme's implementation, and also corresponding well with the literature and experiences elsewhere in Africa and beyond, skills training can definitely be a mechanism to expand opportunities for marginalized groups. The context in which it occurs and the way it is designed matters. Some of the lessons learnt in IWEP are:

- The entry point for relevant skills training is a well-conducted market assessment that takes into consideration all factors, including the target group's skill level and interest. Marginalised groups have specific contexts and needs that have to be taken into consideration when designing skill training programmes, and often complimentary skill programmes such as literacy, numeracy and other basic life skills have to be incorporated with technical skills training. Skill training has to be designed in a way that the target group can use the skill immediately after the training, and often pictures and demonstration methods have to be used extensively to compensate for a lack of literacy skill.
- Skill training providers have to be available in close proximity of the target group and equipped with experts, equipment and time available to conduct the training. A non-formal approach seems to be better suited to the needs of these groups.
- Other supporting mechanisms and services have to be available, e.g. access to start-up capital and other resources such as land, etc. In IWEP's case, woreda administrators have been most supportive and allocated land for

crop production, additional access to start-up capital, etc. and this enabled the women to actually start their businesses after the skill training.

- Integration and cooperation amongst institutions are vital for an integrated skill development programme. Sector offices often operate in silos but bringing experts together in technical teams and steering committees transcends the barriers and focus on the needs of the target group as a whole rather than the specific sector programme. Integration can be promoted by joint planning, implementation and monitoring throughout the programme cycle.
- Programmes have to be embedded within the government's existing frameworks, policies and strategies to promote ownership and sustainability.
- To raise marginalized groups' opportunities beyond basic income levels, linkages have to be made with the private sector and different industries to which they can supply products or services.
- Weak infrastructure and access to different markets, coupled with women's often limited mobility due to family responsibilities or cultural constraints, also limit their opportunities.

*Pottery: Motu Mengistu*

*Source: IWEP Partners Adami Tulu Woreda*



- Business Development and other follow-up support services should be made available in local languages to ensure sustainability of the programme.
- New innovative income generating options for marginalized target groups should be researched, and as much as possible value chain linkages should be established in order to ensure better income for poor target groups. Market saturation and high levels of competition in concentrated areas remain big challenges in Ethiopia and elsewhere in Africa.

## Conclusion

IWEP's experience thus far has shown that skills training can be a vehicle to address poverty alleviation and improve livelihood. Due to the context of the target group, in this case poor and illiterate women, it is not realistic to consider only employment opportunities but rather self-employment and improved livelihood options. Skills training has to be addressed in its widest sense and coupled with literacy, numeracy, basic business and other related life skills. Overall it has to be implemented within a system approach which brings different sectoral stakeholders together and links with government's existing policies and strategies.

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*Radio San Gabriel is an educational institution of the Catholic Church, dedicated to radio, basic education and community work with the Aymara people of Bolivia. In remote communities, the traditional knowledge of the indigenous people is being revived through balanced Andean nutrition and the medical use of medicinal plants in order to counter the lack of accessible public health care. In addition to the medical gains, they increase their self-confidence as Aymara through connecting the values and traditions of their people. Romualdo Huanca de la Cruz is responsible for the community work of Radio San Gabriel and coordinates the nutrition and health program.*

**Romualdo Huanca de la Cruz**

## **Experience in Community Health through the Strengthening of Knowledge and Intercultural Skills in Bolivia**

The new political constitution of the plurinational state of Bolivia presents a community approach to social policy and recognises traditional medicine as a complementary component to the health system. In this way the people who do not have a health centre can treat diseases with the medicinal resources provided by nature (Mother Earth) and traditional medicinal and therapeutic knowledge preserved by the communities.

Radio San Gabriel is an educational institution of the Catholic Church, which for the past fifty-six years has carried out communication and education activities under the Church and State Convention. Its primary work is the promotion and development of Aymaran-speaking indigenous peoples and peasants through various projects and training workshops.

The activities take place in two education centres for training and production. The first centre is Choquenayra Farm School, located in the highlands of Ingavi

province in the Department of La Paz, which carries out agricultural training in the areas of Andean food crops (barley, oats, wheat, potatoes, beans, peas and others); in fodder (alfalfa and others); horticulture in greenhouses and open fields; forest plantations in greenhouses and nurseries; livestock, genetic improvement of dairy cattle, sheep rearing, poultry, rabbits and pigs. In addition to production, the development of the area of health care, preventive and curative, through the capacity-building and care of the Aymara people.

The second is the Cochuna Educational Centre located in the subtropical zone of the Nord Yungas province of the Department of La Paz. In the same way, farmers are trained to improve their agricultural products, the raising of poultry, of laying hens, broilers and the breeding of pigs.

Since 2002, seeing the economic situation of the participants attending from these remote areas and communities of the provinces, and the cost required for spending on tickets, food, accommodation and other things, the Community Education Department of Radio San Gabriel planned to conduct seminars and workshops with training in Community Health, Traditional Medicine and Andean and Amazonian Food Nutrition in rural communities in the provinces of the La Paz Department, providing the people there with the opportunity to access community health education, traditional medicine and nutritional food. With this knowledge they will be able to diagnose, prevent and cure the most common diseases with natural medicinal resources which are available in indigenous communities.

Currently, Radio San Gabriel is an educational network with a nuclear infrastructure in the city of El Alto de La Paz, with radio programs and alternative education centres providing services to the Aymara people in areas and departments and led by bilingual professors (Aymaran and Castilian).

- The Community Education Department works with broadcast radio programs and technical training in community health, millennial ancestral traditional medicine and Andean and Amazonian nutrition, livestock production, training in agriculture and genetic improvement in the breeding of dairy cattle.
- The Aymaran Language Department conducts teaching in reading and writing of the Aymaran language to youth and adults.
- The Graphic Press Department creates illustrations of texts or educational modules for the teaching and learning of students.
- The Aymaran Culture Department broadcasts radio programs containing the ancestral wisdom and culture of the Aymara people.
- The Radio San Gabriel "*System of Autodidactic Adult Distance Learning*" (SAAD) is responsible for the bilingual literacy and post literacy for young people and adults who, after finishing their studies, receive their Bilingual Bachelor's diploma.

In this article we want to share experiences, results and what we have learned, as generated by the training processes, because we believe it constitutes an important contribution to local development and to the improvement in the quality of life of the people.

## Origin and Context of the Experiences in Health Education

In contacts and meetings with Aymaran, Quechua and Tsimane communities, there is evidence of acute and chronic malnutrition, especially in children, young people and seniors. In addition to this, there are infant and maternal mortality, diarrhetic diseases, respiratory infections, tuberculosis, endemic infections such as malaria, measles, Chagas disease,<sup>1</sup> and digestive, renal, rheumatological and other diseases.

This reality was so troubling – and the fact of the remoteness of the public health centres – it urged us to start educational work, where community members would be made aware of the danger signs during labour, learn to prevent malnutrition-borne illness as well as recognise the signs and symptoms of other diseases, for treatment first with traditional natural medicine available in the community and, if necessary, then with scientifically developed medicine in health centres.

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chagas\\_disease](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chagas_disease)

*Sale of traditional medicine*

*Source: Romualdo Huanca de la Cruz*



Traditional practitioners over sixty years old still live in these rural communities and practice their medicine daily on patients with pains from a variety of diseases and heal them only with the use of medicinal plants, medicinal fauna and minerals. Seeing their satisfactory results, this knowledge and these skills were rescued in order to transmit them to new generations and develop medical science in the new millennium.

In this context, the Community Education Department of Radio San Gabriel – within its educational offerings as related to the cultural recovery of ancestral knowledge and wisdom – is developing an Andean-Amazonian nutrition training program and traditional medicine in order to

*“train leaders of communities in the management, use and acquisition of adequate knowledge on prevention, treatment and cure of diseases that afflict the Aymara, Quechua and Tsimane people, so that the trainees spread it in the communities through the multiplier effect strategy”.*

## **Development of the Experience**

### **Selection of communities and groups for training**

The selection of groups and communities is by invitation through the Community Health Radio Program and contacts with local authorities in Mayo-Mayo<sup>2</sup> and Secretaries of Health. These are responsible for organising the group with persons knowledgeable in traditional medicine and interested in learning. It also appoints a coordinator in charge of community health seminar-workshops.

The seminar-workshops are conducted in rural communities that speak Aymaran and Castilian in the highland areas and valleys. The training languages in the Amazon region are Tsimane and Castilian. The trainings are aimed at organised groups of young people and adults, men and women who have expectations to achieve this skill or deepen their knowledge about nutrition and traditional medicine.

The centres that provide the training there are located in the provinces, remote from the seat of government, including:

- The Mocomoco Centre, located at the head of the valley of the Camacho province is an eight hour journey from the city of La Paz. Attending participants are from the plateau and the valley and speak Aymaran, Quechua and Castilian.

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2 Mayo Mayo is a town in Bolivia. It is in the state/region of Beni. <http://www.collinsmaps.com/maps/Bolivia/Beni/Mayo-Mayo/P705026.00.aspx>



*Traditional market in Bolivia*

*Source: Romualdo Huanca de La Cruz*

- The Santiago de Callapa Centre is located in the middle of the La Paz plateau, a five hour journey from the city of La Paz.
- The centre in the city of El Alto, where participants attend from the twenty provinces of La Paz Department as well as participants from rural communities.
- The Achacachi Centre, located in the town of Achacachi in the Omasuyos province, in which community members from across the province participate.
- The Chivisivi Centre, located in the Loayza province where the inhabitants of the province also participate.
- The Puerto Ruso and Undmo Centre in the Abel Iturralde province in which the Tsimane indigenous population participates.
- The Cantuyo Centre, located in Tocopilla town in the Pacajes province, in which the community members of the province participate.
- There are also centres in the Bautista Saavedra Province, the town of Charazani and Curve, the village of Kallawaya in the Ingavi province, the town of Jesus de Machaca, the community of Tacaca Titicani, and in the Abel Iturralde province, the people of de Apolo with the Lecos ethnic group.

The educational task in the centres is to reduce malnutrition, maternal and infant mortality and diarrhetic diseases, respiratory infections and other diseases plaguing the residents of the communities. At the same time, train community health promoters, traditional medicine and nutrition with the resources available to them in the regions and thus start the recovery and strengthening of knowledge and ancestral wisdom of the Aymara medicinal culture and its integration in biomedicine.

### **Objectives of the Training Program**

- Create centres of study and research of medicinal plants with a training plan for young leaders, mothers, heads of families and students in rural areas.
- Rescuing ancestral medicinal knowledge, practicing natural therapies as experienced in the healing of various diseases.
- To train a group of traditional physicians, systematically instilling knowledge of the medicinal resources of flora, fauna and minerals, helping to improve patient care.
- To hold seminars and practical workshops on the development of natural medicines such as syrups, ointments, tinctures, tonics, and teas for the prevention and cure of diseases.

### **Pedagogical Approach**

Approaches guiding the development of the training program are:

- Community-oriented: Because it addresses the individual and collective needs of the local context and requires participation of stakeholders in the process of implementing the activities.
- Intra and inter-cultural: It is necessary to recover the knowledge and proper identity in order to establish contact with other realities and other actors of the medical culture of the indigenous peoples of the highlands and lowlands of the plurinational state of Bolivia.
- Practical: Because it aims to develop skills and knowledge-framed skills to solve everyday problems related to health and nutrition.
- The Community Education Department is responsible for promoting, protecting and enhancing the knowledge and practical knowledge (skills) of traditional medicines and Andean and Amazonian nutritional elements of the indigenous cultures.

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## **Methodologies and/or Training Strategies**

The training methodology is based on the development of practical workshops, where research and knowledge and the experience of traditional healers is shared, which is then evaluated in group presentations, thus becoming the learning process.

The training strategies are appropriate to the conditions for people looking for active participation: bringing theoretical aspects together in presentations with knowledge gained from experience, popular nutritional knowledge, the constant practice of traditional medicine, doing practical work in groups, research, participation, survey, participatory problem analysis, planning and evaluation.

They also develop Expo-Fairs in communities where skilled groups explain how to detect signs and symptoms of disease and adequate nutrition in the different diseases, their treatment with natural medicines and including the teaching of the preparation of medicines.

## **The Organisation of Seminars and Workshops**

The seminars and training workshops take place in rural communities in the provinces of the Department of La Paz, as noted above. The region counts on – in addition to community organising – human resources from Radio San Gabriel and economic resources provided by the German Association for Adult Education, *dvv international*.

In effect, it is necessary to cover the purchase of educational material, of food products, packaging for the preparation of natural medicines, travel, and the feeding and payment of facilitators.

Complementing the workshops are the Expo-Fairs in each community centre where the participants carry out the process of development and production of natural medicines and foods of the region.

At the end, participants are awarded certificates of attendance, so that afterwards they can practice with traditional medicines and justify it to local and health authorities.

## Contents

The contents developed in the workshops are:

### Andean and amazonian nutrition

Areas	Contents
<b>Food and classification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• food for growth</li> <li>• protective foods</li> <li>• energy food</li> </ul>
<b>Andean nutrition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concept of food and nutrition</li> <li>• Andean food consumption</li> <li>• Manufacture of food products from Kanawa, lupine, quinoa, amaranth, soy, corn, wheat, cassava, barley, oats, fruits of the region and season</li> </ul>
<b>Practice in food processing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lupine bread, Kanawa, quinoa, amaranth, corn, soybean, cassava and coca</li> <li>• coca cookies, lupine, amaranth</li> </ul>
<b>Development of natural milk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lupine milks, amaranth, quinoa, soy and other grains and legumes</li> </ul>
<b>Preparation of natural refreshment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kanawa drinks, amaranth, quinoa and soy</li> </ul>
<b>Manufacture of tonics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tonic of coca and alfalfa</li> <li>• Tonic of watercress, coca and alfalfa</li> </ul>
<b>Nutritious vegetable mixtures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grain and legume combination</li> </ul>

### Traditional medicine <sup>3</sup>

Areas	Contents
<b>Phytotherapy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concepts</li> <li>• medicinal properties of plants, vegetables and cereals</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Traditional phytotherapy is often used as synonym for herbalism and regarded as “*alternative medicine*” by much of Western medicine. – Dr Carlos Brandt, along with Arnold Ehret, Benedict Lust and Louis Kuhn, was one of the original pioneers of naturopathy. Brandt taught Nicolas Capo (born around 1902), who wrote his first book circa 1935. Many of Brandt’s books were distributed though Capo’s Institut de Trofoterapia, in Barcelona.

Areas	Contents
<b>Hydrotherapy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water use in disease prevention</li> <li>• Steam Baths</li> <li>• Sitz baths</li> <li>• Thermal and mineral waters</li> </ul>
<b>Geotherapy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clay and medicinal properties</li> <li>• The use of clay and phase</li> </ul>
<b>Naturopathy (Trofoterapia)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit-concept</li> <li>• Medicinal properties of fruits</li> <li>• Salads, juices and juice</li> </ul>
<b>Prevention and treatment of disease</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respiratory infections: coughs, colds, tuberculosis</li> <li>• Liver disease, hepatitis, inflammation of the gallbladder, gallstones</li> <li>• Digestive diseases, gastritis, ulcers and diarrhea</li> <li>• Kidney diseases: kidney stones, prostatitis, cystitis, urethritis, and so on</li> <li>• Hypertension, hypotension, diabetes and anemia</li> <li>• Rheumatism, gout and arthritis</li> </ul>

## Technical, Social and Personal Skills that Are Acquired

The Constitution of the plurinational state of Bolivia recognises and incorporates the health system, traditional medical practitioners in their specialties, in order to contribute to biomedicine and vice versa, in order to solve pathologies. Therefore the training is to enhance the level of expertise and knowledge of medical culture, likewise, after gaining experience with them and spreading them, to systematise their value.

In order to understand the functions performed by traditional practitioners of the indigenous people, we will explain their special areas of competence:

**Herbolarios or Herbalists** acquire their knowledge through oral transmission, through family inheritance or through an experienced herbalist. They know crop sowing, dehydration and processing of natural medicines from medicinal plants. In the treatment of disease, know dosage and method of administration, as well as the contraindications and unwanted side effects.

**Qulliris or traditional healers:** Their functions can be compared to a general practitioner, they attend to many conditions and diseases using a variety of medicinal resources, and they have knowledge of diagnosis and treatment. The discovery of this vocation as well as the training or learning process is determined by cultural practices and experiences, family and community. This man or woman is endowed with a gift of knowledge or special power that can manifest itself at any age, including from conception. This predestination is recognised by signs of a physical nature or on the body, most commonly by revelations ranging from the interpretation of dreams or divine appointment, announced by the appearance of deities or supernatural entities according to their cosmological vision.

**Qhaqhiri or bonesetters:** Their main function is to attend to fractures, dislocations, sprains, deformations of the human skeleton and muscle aches, bruises, swelling, cramping, shrunken tendons, displaced organs, hernias or ligamentous laxity, etc. The bonesetters are also responsible for treating *caida de mollera*,<sup>4</sup> rheumatism, shock and sterility. Usually, the learning of these specialists is of an empirical nature. The gift is conferred orally, through observation, experience and practice, just as are certain exploratory manipulations performed for diagnostic purposes or intended to match and accommodate bones or organs that are considered out of place. In order to immobilise the affected part, they bandage and use splints and apply poultices made with plant and animal products to reduce inflammation. Also, depending on their knowledge, some bonesetters also use other techniques.

**Usuyiri or midwife:** Knowledgeable in care during pregnancy and childbirth, as well as assisting the woman and the newborn child during the postpartum period. The work of midwives is not limited to maternal and child care, but extends to providing services for prevention, family health and rural native community. This specialty is practiced by older women after having experienced several pregnancies. In rural communities the original acquisition of knowledge and expertise and the traditional training is obtained through observation and practice as an assistant to an experienced midwife. During regular visits and home visits that the midwife makes throughout the pregnancy, she uses various external manual manipulations, like prenatal massage, in order to accommodate or maintain the correct position of the foetus; she is also responsible for providing pertinent advice in relation to the activity, diet and preventive measures that a pregnant woman must follow in order to avoid complications for herself and her baby.

**The Yatiris**<sup>5</sup> forecast and predict good or evil of the present and future, have the power of communication with the spirits of plants, *achachilas*, *wak'as*, etc.,

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4 Caida de mollera – according to *Curanderismo* – is the incidence of underdeveloped fontanel in an infant, believed to result from the mother's neglect.

5 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yatiri>

making it known through the reading of coca leaves, and dreams, based on their interpretation of the messages that the spirits communicate to them.

The Yatiri is chosen by the nature divinity, which shows some signs that are visible marks on the body, such as deformation, being born feet-first or being a twin with a brother, having been struck by a ray of light, that is, that a discharge during an electrical storm has struck a person, and of course, that the person survives this phenomenon. When this occurs, that person becomes a Yatiri candidate, whether male or female. When something like a lightning event intervenes in the life of a person, and therefore of his family, it is believed that their heirs will also have the powers of the lightning, transmitting them through the generations.

There are other ways of initiation for the Yatiri, like dreams, through which the special path to be followed appears to the aspiring Yatiri, based on their own interpretation of the dream. For this revelation, the aspiring Yatiri must repay the spirits with a sweet meal, intended for the protector of the house, the *kunturmamani*, for the *pachamama* and for the *achachilas*, who are the ancestors of the community, charged with their care and protection.

**The Ch'amakani** have power over the beneficent and evil deities of the world, *alaxpacha*, *akapacha* and *manqhapacha* who are active mostly in the dead of night and spread fear among the inhabitants of the community. Also, when the Ch'amakani wants to gather together the spirits and supernatural beings, he uses the *aphalla*, beings that protect the Ch'amakani, sitting on his shoulders, at his beck and call, thus commanding respect among all people around him, because this belongs to the highest hierarchy of the special rituals of the Aymara.

## Results Achieved

Leaders and promoters trained in community health, traditional medicine and nutritional food, serve in the prevention and cure of diseases in rural communities with their own natural medicinal resources.

The knowledge and ancient wisdom of traditional medicine and Andean-Amazonian nutrition, encourages families in rural communities to continue to follow, retrieve and transmit these to the new generation so that in the present and future the residents will continue to have good health in order to live well.

With the experiences and skills acquired in the management, harvesting, and drying of medicinal plants, preservation and processing of natural medicines, community members are working to build a pharmacy of natural medicines. For meals, mothers prepare a variety of nutritious foods of vegetable mixtures with foodstuffs produced in the community, so that in the present and future the boys and girls, the

young people and families in the community escape from malnutrition and know how to prevent diseases.

They present Expo-Fairs in communities and in the city, promoting the finished products in order to make people aware of their own medicines to prevent and cure diseases in Bolivian families.

## **Social Impacts of Training**

Participants are encouraged to investigate the classification and medicinal properties of plants, to prevent and treat diarrhetic diseases, respiratory infections, parasitic infections, liver disease, kidney disease, rheumatism, etc., and the application of natural healing therapies with water, sun, clay, vegetables, animal products, medicinal minerals, fruits, greens, etc.

Farmers in rural indigenous communities assume responsibility for the use and protection of natural resources, and above all in the prioritisation of their own ecological food production with the goal of improving the quality of life.

The native people of the plurinational state of Bolivia, whether in the highlands, valleys, Yungas<sup>6</sup> or in the Amazon have wilderness land for potential agricultural production and vast grasslands for livestock rearing. What they need is to implement the practical techniques and biological control of crops, free of agricultural chemicals, which do much damage to Mother Earth as well as to the environment and health of mankind. If the people of the world would consume organic foods, they would be free of disease, because human beings are the product of what they eat and food is their own medicine for healthy living.

Finally, as a conclusion, it is important to note that at the state level and in the field of traditional medicine and food security, there are two important developments: The first is that the plurinational state recognises the importance of traditional medicine as a specialised field and complementary to modern medicine regarding the establishment of well-being. The second refers to the tangible results in the socially vulnerable communities, who are able to use the criteria and knowledge of traditional medicine and focus on the food security of their own indigenous communities to improve their quality of life.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yungas>

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*The Cooperación para el Desarrollo Rural de Occidente (CDRO) association supports the development of Maya communities by strengthening their grassroots organisations, supporting their cohesion and their bond with the land, leading them to sustainable economic independence through productive and market-based organisation of their work and enabling them to identify their interests through consensus and to represent them politically. Women in particular develop the ability to carry out independent economic activities and gain equal participation in decision-making. Alejandra Elizabeth Velásquez is the coordinator of the women's programme with CDRO.*

**Alejandra Elizabeth Velásquez**

## **Competencies and Skills Created within the Scope of Development of the Local Communities of Totonicapán, Guatemala**

### **National and Departmental Context**

Guatemala is a country with a history characterised by political, social, economic and cultural exclusion, especially with respect to indigenous people;<sup>1</sup> it is the most populated country of Central America (approx. 14.7 million as of March 2011), and its gross domestic product (GDP) is an estimated US\$5,400 per annum (as of 2007). It is considered to be a middle income country with a medium human development index (HDI).<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the internal situation in Guatemala is marked by inequality. For instance, the HDI of those who live in the capital of Guatemala is 0.826 (approximately the same as Bulgaria), whereas in the department of Totonicapán, the municipality with the lowest HDI is Santa Lucía La Reforma with 0.427 (approximately that of Burundi, which is in position 167 according to the

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1 Summary of relevant data, report on the State of the World's Indigenous People, United Nations System, 2009–2010. National Human Development Report (NHDR), 2009–2010, Chapter 10.

2 Position 122 of 182, index of 0.689 (NHDR).

world human development ranking).<sup>3</sup> From an economic perspective, the analysis becomes even more dramatic with a Gini coefficient of 55.1, which is one of the highest in the world. In the gap between the rich and poor, this figure implies that the ratio between the richest 10% and the poorest 10% is 48 to 1.

Totonicapán covers a geographic area of 328 km<sup>2</sup>, with 33% of the region dedicated to farming, 9% for grazing and 3% for infrastructure. It has a population of an estimated 461,900 people – 98% thereof are indigenous people, with women making up 53% of the population and men 47%. Most of them dedicate themselves to subsistence farming, especially for growing corn and beans; the rest migrate to the United States and urban centres. Only a few work with handicrafts and textiles. The lowest health and education indicators are found among the four poorest departments.<sup>4</sup> In the political area, exclusion and marginalisation persists in the indigenous communities, although they should be represented at the state level by means of the electoral process. However, since the state has not managed to fully carry out its responsibility,<sup>5</sup> the commitments made to implementing change on the economic, social and cultural levels, and with regards to gender have not been consolidated.<sup>6</sup>

These national and local indicators represent an equation that results in the limited participation and exercising of full, inclusive and fair citizenship.

The living conditions of men and women differ with respect to workplace and the type of work they do, the resources that they have access to and the remuneration they receive for the same. In Totonicapán, they have entered the different areas of economic activity, working mainly in agriculture, industry, business and services. However, it is difficult to determine whether they have some kind of social benefit that will allow them to have the minimum to cover medical expenses, food, clothes, or housing when they are old.

Based on this, there is a need to contribute to fostering the development of the communities, by creating and establishing the theoretical and technical capabilities in the social groups and agents of their own development.

Therefore, as a municipal organisation of Mayan origin, the Association for the Cooperation for Rural Development of the West, CDRO, fosters the development of the communities by means of the Maya K'iché organisational model called POP, which is made up of grassroots groups, municipal councils and the associations

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3 According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Chapter III, NHDR, 2009–2010.

4 National Survey of Quality of Life (*Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida, "ENCOVI"*), 2006 – National Survey on Mother and Infant Health in Guatemala (*Encuesta Nacional de Salud Materno Infantil, "ENSMI"*), 2010.

5 Guatemala towards a state for human development, Human Development Report, 2009–2010.

6 Report on the compliance with the peace accords ten years later.

for integrated development that constitute this model and/or organisational system that is woven from its many interrelationships based on horizontality. It is characterised by its focus on the unity of the rural community, practising self-reliance and promoting the sustainability of the grassroots organisations that they work with, as well as the commitment between the organisation and region in executing its programmes, projects and activities.

The CDRO is made up of 30 rural communities, with a population of 6,579, of which 80% are female and 90% are adults. The campaigns for developing their communities are carried out with them and they are also active in the various economic-productive, sociocultural and political processes.

Different strategic goals have been defined for the development initiative at the local level, such as: a) putting organisational processes in place that facilitate and promote the unity of the community in a permanent growth-oriented way through grassroots groups, committees, municipal assemblies and the establishment of political agreements between the actors that make decisions in favour of local development; b) establishing institutions at the municipal level that address the needs of the population by means of projects, programmes, systems and their own institutions, which are set up and managed entirely by them; c) fighting poverty and stimulating the local economy by developing capacities in productive and business areas, as well as for the sustainability of the families and community organisations; and d) fostering negotiating skills in local bodies, thereby generating proposals at the different levels that have been established.

*Workshop with partners*

*Source: Alejandra Elizabeth Velásquez*



## **Competencies and Skills Created within the Scope of Local Development (Sociopolitical and Economic Area)**

### **a) Competencies and skills developed in political leadership**

The informal educational process, with respect to the work of the CDRO, has been an element of vital importance and challenges, as the campaigns that have been developed are based on the principles, values and wisdom of the Mayan people, which has enabled identification and commitment to a political vision that leads to a transformation of reality. This commitment is formed at the grassroots level in order to encourage legitimate, fair, autonomous and critical participation of the population in the political life of the state and society, and in this way to have an impact at the local and municipal level, as well as on public policies so that they are inclusive and fair.

The development of the abilities and skills in the leadership and managerial boards that are emerging in men, women and young people, has created substantial changes in the lives of the residents, in particular, in the organisational structure within the rural communities of Totonicapán. The struggle to reclaim rights, improve living conditions and support the socio-productive processes of the villages has been and continues to be one of the goals of extreme importance to the CDRO. From this perspective, the areas for participation and decision-making at the local level are the following:

#### *Grassroots groups*

Come together for a common objective and constitute the first-level organisation based on the history of the rural communities which have different ways of organisation as an important element of their culture.

#### *Specific committees*

These consist of the directives elected by the groups when there are several of them in the community or by a delegation of the Municipal Council to address a specific established process in the municipal institutions of the community. At this organisational level, there are four specific committees: the women's committee, the educational committee, the health committee and the environmental committee.

- **The women's committee**

The competencies and skills developed by the women's committees are first carried out in the role of supervisor. Their responsibility is to monitor, direct and manage the operation of the grassroots groups within the framework of the established organisational structure. They also play the role of administrators in their own institution, known as the Municipal Centre for Women, which

facilitates social, economic and political services for the rest of the women in the community. The administration and operation of this centre is in the hands of 144 women who are members of 20 organisational committees.

With the establishment of the network of women's committees, the leadership has anchored itself in regional bodies as a convenient mechanism that fights for the rights and visibility of the role they occupy in society.

Another important issue to address is the monitoring of the cases of domestic violence and violence against women identified in the community, in which the women's committee intervenes to provide social counselling to the victim, and if the situation warrants, recommendation is made for legal counsel and psychological treatment.

Promotion of the Municipal Centre for Women as an instrument for their social, political and economic development has allowed the committees to promote actions to increase the self-esteem of women, as well as improve their social education and role as a citizen, their means of communication and the development of their productive skills in the areas of handicrafts, agriculture and farming.

- The health committee

There are physiotherapists, Mayan therapists and midwives on the health committee – local human resources who attend to the health needs of the people. They have developed the capacity to provide and encourage the use of alternative medicine by producing traditional folk medicine and offering

*Agricultural production*

*Source: Alejandra Elizabeth Velásquez*



treatment using safe practices to the communities. What is important about this process is the delivery assistance realised by the team of midwives, which has contributed up to 80% of this type of treatment in the department of Tonicapán.

- The educational committee

The people who come from the communities have become involved in literacy courses with the aim of improving their prospects and acquiring a global view of reality. The extent to which people get involved in the various organisational processes (the women's, health, finance and production committees, etc.) can be seen in the families' need to know, read and write, understanding this is the means and an important way to be effective in their analyses and proposals, and in claiming their rights as citizens in the face of a reality of inequality, discrimination and exclusion.

The lessons with regard to literacy have created a critical perspective in the families regarding the situation in which indigenous people and peasant farmers live. They are convinced that by being organised and informed, they will be able to have a say and demand their rights through the respective official channels. In this sense, popular education has been a very important instrument which has had a multiplier effect on the experiences in the communities.

- The environmental committee

In order to encourage a culture involved in caring for and preserving natural resources and the environment, as well as rescuing the traditional values of reverence for nature, targeted action was necessary. In this process, the considerable participation of young people is evident, in which we make use of their energy, enthusiasm, academic knowledge, and above all, the awareness that has been created in them.

The environmental committees have carried out immediate campaigns, such as defining environmental prototypes for waste collection, reforestation and forestation, and the conservation of water and rivers. They coordinate these actions with the authorities, as well as the elderly who have passed on their knowledge on the use, preservation and utilisation of natural resources.

Similarly, the endeavours of young people can also be seen in civic participation and engagements as the adolescents analyse how the laws work, like those that pertain to the Antimaras. They create proposals directed at government and public authorities for the correct application of justice. In the area of farming, young people get involved in the various production processes (planting fruit trees, gardens, greenhouse tomatoes, etc.).



Weaving

Source: Alejandra Elizabeth Velásquez

- Financial committees

This is the municipal organisation in charge of managing the community's own funds together with the Municipal Council, and which authorises or denies requests for loans. The committee is made up of adult men and women who are responsible for reviewing the loans for feasibility, profitability, ability to pay and for compliance with the requirements and legal stipulations established.

Reinvesting the profits generated back into the municipal agencies at the end of the fiscal year translates to social services that benefit the community itself. These committees act as financial agents of the community and the support provided in this area is of vital importance as it ensures the sustainability of the municipal agencies and the integrated development of the consumers and the very community.

The competencies acquired have resulted in successful experiences in financial management because there are agencies in the communities that handle a large loan portfolio. This experience, which has developed in the communities, has served as an example so that other communities on the path to development can adopt these ideas.

- Municipal fronts

The front for Food and Nutritional Safety (*Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional*, "SAN") possesses knowledge related to the importance of rescuing the traditional native recipes of the communities, is adept in speaking the K'iché language and can interact more easily with other people. They are able to express themselves easily when exchanging information with other organisations regarding issues related to SAN and in sharing what they have learnt in

their dealings with other organisations. Most importantly, the ideas that are generated in this area result in proposals for the fulfilment of the laws and policies in favour of SAN.

- **Municipal Councils**

The concept of a Municipal Council (*Consejo Comunal*, “CC”) has a cosmic connotation, which is taken from the Pop Wuj, the sacred book of the Mayan people. It represents the advice passed down from ancestors. The Municipal Council is defined as a second-tier body made up of the delegates from the grassroots groups. It is composed of the legal partnership of the CDRO and the communities. During the 25 years of the CDRO’s legal existence, the members of the Municipal Council have been able to attain visibility and fulfil their role in local development in their own right, establishing themselves in its participation in the local organisational structure as a governing body of development. Similarly, they have a decision-making power with regards to the programmes, projects, services, etc. that they implement in the communities, making sure that these are in conformance with its principles, values, norms and the community’s ways of thinking.

Within the unity of the different sectors of the community: the Municipal Council, local authorities, municipal councils for development (*Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo*, “COCODES”) and others create the political agreement which subsequently constitutes part of the development plan or list of priorities that pools together the collective interests and needs of the community. The Municipal Council as a governing municipal body and the key players of the communities drive the political agreement forward. To date, eight political agreements have been consolidated with key players of the communities, important platforms where campaigns are analysed, drawn up, managed and implemented, which have led to the improvement of living conditions for the families in the community with respect to health, education, food, microfinancing and other matters. Another role that the municipal councils play during elections is to create awareness in the community so that people can explain their vote and exercise their citizenship in a critical and healthy way.

## **b) Productive skills and abilities**

### *Handicrafts*

These are production activities revolving around crafts, in which groups of women develop skills in the production of blouses embroidered by hand, backstrap weaving for the production of fabrics, napkins, sashes and other textiles and dressmaking.



*Poultry Farming*

Source: Alejandra Elizabeth Velásquez

The training process takes from eight months to one year; and up to three years for design and the production of güipiles. During this time, the women specialise and modernise their products with the use of technology. Those who stand out due to their skills and dexterity get to a level in which they are able to become rural micro-entrepreneurs.

#### *Poultry farming*

In this activity, the women's groups are in charge of vaccinating poultry, producing their own homemade medicines to prevent avian diseases and maintaining the small farms for housing poultry. They also possess the skills to manage the cycle of care and growth of the birds, to prepare them for butchering or to be sold.

The women prepare their organic fertiliser from poultry excrement, known as bocashi, which is made from chicken manure and other ingredients like brown panela and ash used for decomposition. This product is taken advantage of in the communities because it is a great help when planting corn.

#### *Agricultural production*

This activity consists of the production of family gardens (cabbage, chard, lettuce, coriander, mint, tomato and medicinal plants) which is carried out with an agro-ecological focus.

In this context, men, women and young people have learnt the appropriate methods for preparing the soil, enclosing plots, the time between sowings and the cycle of growth of sugar beet and seeds. In these processes, the agriculturalists make use of good agricultural practices (GAP).

In order to control plagues, the producers breed beneficial insects by making use of the existing resources in the communities. They also prepare vermicompost (fertiliser made in a box to produce worms) for soil micronutrients.

In order to have a better yield and harvest, the organic fertiliser known as bocashi is produced, which is used instead of chemical fertilisers. According to studies

obtained from the communities, this process results in better soil performance. The results show that favourable changes have been achieved with this material for farming production.

### *Food processing*

This is a process that allows the women to acquire knowledge about how to process locally grown food as a necessary requirement for improving the nutrition of the families. In this sense, the grassroots groups of SAN are equipped to give demonstrations to prove that they are proactive individuals who take the initiative in realising programmed activities to train themselves in food processing by using traditional methods in this process.

That way, the groups show their capacity to replicate, including what they have learnt in the preparation of foods in their home. They also take the initiative in implementing food processing activities for sale (ice cream, traditional manioc pastry (nuégado), packaging). In addition, they copy the recipes and include them in an activity for the church, school or for a social event in their communities. They even distribute their products to other related organisations.

### **c) Competencies and skills developed in rural micro-entrepreneurship**

This is a process that looks to improve product quality through the improvement of labour practices and helping people have access to and use new equipment and supplies that could increase the level of production.

The entrepreneurs are able to use technology for production and, in looking for micro-entrepreneurial guidance, to obtain new information and methods of production. One of the experiences that has resulted from this is dealing with the marketplace for the commercialisation of their products, positioning them at the local level with the establishment of channels or commercial connections to municipal markets.

One example of this is the case of Gaspar Jeremías Olá, producer and marketer of vegetables in the Comunidad de Paxtoca, who, after two years with the CDRO Programme for Rural Entrepreneurship, has consolidated his skills in:

#### **1. Administration**

- Making good use of his financial and material resources
- Using scheduling for his work activities
- Applying basic monitoring tools
- Using basic accounting for his production activities

## 2. Production

- Applying good agricultural practices
- Applying the technology of scaled production
- Producing organically
- Increasing his area of production from one acre in 2010 to three acres in 2011

## 3. Commercialisation

- Applying tools for monitoring the sale of vegetables
- Positioning himself in the community by creating a sale outlet from his home

### d) Competencies and skills in local microfinancing

The financial network emerges at the root of the entity that accompanies the production process in the communities and which provides financial services to the diverse production and social processes that arise in the communities confronted with obstacles in obtaining access to services that contribute to the increase in production, processing and commercialisation of their products. It is because of this that the need has arisen for creating and institutionalising the local financial network, better known as the local financial agency, which is defined as a community organisation represented, preferably, by a Municipal Council or a Municipal Association that relies on a programme of financial services (microfinancing) targeted at supporting the development of the local economy and organisational sustainability.

The participation of the community in this process is of vital importance as it ensures the recognition and transparency of the work developed by the grassroots groups, committees and local finance committee, because it promotes the participation and contribution of all the people involved in the local development.

Up to 2010, the agencies and municipal associations were handling a credit portfolio of Q41,461,458.00 (approx. US\$5,528,194.00). The portfolio is divided by economic activity: business, crafts, properties, agriculture, animal husbandry, housing and consumption, among others. This has allowed the organisational and financial sustainability of these processes. These processes are managed from a central body made up entirely of women from the same communities, who are in charge of authorising and approving the allocation of loans.

The profit created by the agencies and municipal financial associations are used for social services as a mechanism for managing social performance. Based on the experiences acquired, 79% of the utilities received during the period are for education, with particular emphasis on the primary school level. The remaining



*Rural entrepreneurs*

*Source:*

*Alejandra Elizabeth Velásquez*

15% is used for other social needs, such as health, culture, women, etc., and the last 6% is used for the infrastructure.

### **e) Competencies and skills in the municipal economic model**

This experience has been going on since 2005 as a response to the problem of the minifundio (subsistence-oriented small holdings) in Tonicapán where beans and corn were previously grown, however, the profitability of these started to decrease over time. This is why the diversification process of traditional plants was started with the participation of women and men. To date, they produce 57 species of medicinal plants, an activity that has allowed them to increase the profitability of the minifundio.

In the same way, this production has been the necessary raw material for the production of the SPA line as a prototypical production line for personal hygiene and care, which is labelled as a “*natural*” brand in the market. This process has enabled the producers to take part in the company’s campaigns and has generated a commitment to the production, processing and commercialisation of the product.

### **f) Cultural competencies and skills**

Despite the exclusion in which they live, the rural communities of Tonicapán excel within the element of their own culture, as 98% of the population are indigenous people who recognise their multiculturalism and are aware of their environment. The way of life of the communities revolves around the culturally recognised principles and values.

Generational transfer is part of the principles of the indigenous people and this capacity for passing knowledge down from one generation to the next has translated into a respect for the cultural biodiversity, language, traditional clothing, customs and the honour system for service (rendering services to the community without pay), as well as others. Currently, the efforts of the leaders in trying to preserve these principles and values have been affected as they are faced with the process of globalisation that acculturates the very way of life of indigenous people.

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*Life Skills cannot be won in isolation. Literacy combined with learning about AIDS/HIV and child welfare in rural surroundings, and the combination of food, shopping and consumer habits in the urban area are evidence for this. Participatory and community empowerment techniques like the REFLECT approach and STAR are helpful. Astrid von Kotze is a professor of the Department of Lifelong Learning at the University of the Western Cape, and Lynn Stefano is Director of the Family Literacy project, South Africa.*

**Astrid von Kotze/Lynn Stefano**

## **Building Skills for Wellbeing: an Integrated Approach to Health Education in South Africa**

### **Introduction**

This article outlines two case studies of integrated health education in South Africa supported by: one, a family literacy project that works in a deep rural area in KwaZulu-Natal and, using the *Reflect* approach, combines literacy with learning about HIV/AIDS and child health. The other is a new popular education initiative working with poor communities in urban Cape Town that integrates a focus on women's health as a community issue with broader citizen education.

Both illustrate in a number of ways how health education can be the beginning of a holistic path towards wellbeing:

- Firstly, the process of having regular participatory education sessions builds trust and the basis for mutual care and support. This is the important foundation for the social cohesion necessary to create solidarity and collective action for change.
- Secondly, the information and skills needed to make informed choices in the interests of individual, household and community health are put into the hands of the very people who want to affect changes. In this way people no longer depend solely on the diagnosis of health professionals but can take action to avert further risk.

- Thirdly, learners are encouraged to recognise illness and disease as not necessarily the result of their own deficits and inadequacies but rather structural inequalities.
- Countless literacy and community-based development projects the world over have shown that an integrated approach to teaching and learning achieves the best results. Health is rooted in and reflects the material conditions of everyday life. It has a lot to do with knowing how to take care of body and mind, how to keep children safe, how to sustain a clean environment, and how to engage in safe sexual practices. Here are two examples from vastly different contexts that both manage to make a difference, not just to the people who participate in the programmes but also to their families and communities.

## **Family Literacy and STAR**

The Family Literacy Project (FLP) has been working with families in the southern Drakensberg region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa since 2000. The main aim of the project is to address the low literacy levels of young children by supporting parents and carers to improve their own literacy skills. FLP employs local facilitators who run literacy sessions for groups of adults, teens and children, and who oversee a home visiting programme that combines literacy, health and early childhood development.

The 15 villages where FLP works are situated in the foothills of the Drakensberg mountains. Many tourists travel from around the world to experience the beauty and serenity of the region. In contrast, the local people face many hardships that negatively impact on the quality of their daily lives, such as:

- Poverty and unemployment
- HIV+AIDS
- Lack of access to health facilities
- Lack of adequate infrastructure such as electricity and piped water

In 2004 FLP introduced a health programme, using the Household/Community component of the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI). IMCI is an international strategy that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of children because many under 5-year-olds die or suffer due to preventable or easy-to-treat illnesses. 16 Key Family Practices (KFPs) have been identified that can make a significant difference to the health and wellbeing of young children when these practices are adopted by communities and households. The KFPs cover topics such as preventing HIV, exclusive breastfeeding, micronutrients, recognizing the danger signs of illness, and the importance of play and stimulation in the home.

FLP adopted *Reflect*, the overarching methodology used for their literacy sessions, for the health programme. Detailed and sometimes technical information relating to the 16 KFPs was adapted to follow the *Reflect* learning cycle:

- Identify an issue/situation of concern to the community (in this case relating to child health and HIV+AIDS)
- Surface existing knowledge and analyse the issue using PRA tools
- Practice reading and writing based on the content of the session
- Introduce new information in the form of leaflets, books, and other supplementary materials
- Invite specialists to motivate participants and share personal experience
- Develop action plans to improve the issue/situation
- Review progress made

FLP began to use many of the suggestions from the STAR programme (a methodology arising from the combination of *Reflect* and Steppings Stones) when it was launched in 2006, to strengthen the HIV+AIDS component of our health and home visiting programme. We developed facilitator session guides and participant workbooks which combined STAR and IMCI. We used the various tools very effectively with the groups, for example:

- Body mapping: Participants discussed the different symptoms of HIV+AIDS in a child, and plotted these on a body map. This exercise enabled people to

*Information about micronutrients*

*Source: von Kotze/Stefano*



identify when a child could be HIV positive, it encouraged discussion about HIV and how to care for an infected child.

- Timeline: We used this tool to share information about the day-to-day care of an HIV positive child.
- Matrix: One of the ways this tool was used was to identify where participants seek help for different childhood illnesses. In the case of HIV, participants approached the clinic, doctor, hospital, traditional healer and faith healer for help with different aspects of the illness.

Stigma around HIV+AIDS is still a major stumbling block in South Africa. Through discussion and accurate information, participants in the FLP health programme are becoming more comfortable talking about HIV+AIDS, and making changes in their lives. For example, at the end of 2010, 13 adults from the Vusindaba adult literacy group together went to their local clinic for HIV testing and counselling. The counsellor asked *“Aren’t you afraid to all come to be tested?”* to which the group members replied that they regularly learn about HIV + AIDS during their adult literacy sessions and so feel quite confident being tested. Many of these adults are parents or carers of teens who attend the STAR sessions, and so are proving to be very good role models for their children as well as their communities.

Another example of the benefits of using *Reflect/STAR* to address issues of HIV took place in another village where we work. After using the body map tool depicting the symptoms of HIV, one of our facilitators noticed that her niece, who was often ill, experienced five of these symptoms. She took her to be tested for HIV and the little girl is now on anti-retroviral treatment.

The value of combining accurate, up to date and relevant information with *Reflect/STAR* is that important information can make a significant difference to people’s lives if presented in an accessible way that encourages people to engage meaningfully in the learning process. Adults, who mostly have very low levels of literacy, are not only making changes in their own families as a result of attending literacy health sessions, but are also sharing with neighbours their new knowledge through the home visiting programme.

## **The Popular Education Programme and Women’s Health**

Popular education aims at developing people’s socio-historical knowledge and consciousness so that they are better able to participate in and contribute to maintaining or establishing a democratic society. In pre-1994 South Africa, *“People’s Education”* was rooted in the interests and struggles of ordinary people and aimed to contribute to progressive social and political change. Seventeen years after the

historic elections there is an urgent need to deepen and broaden democracy by developing a better understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities in relation to organisations, institutions and the state. Physical, mental and emotional wellbeing are a crucial foundation for engaging in education, especially in a society where the majority population was and is being brutalised by the effects of violence and abuse associated with oppression, unemployment and poverty.

In the first half of 2011, with the support of the *dvv international* South African office, the Popular Education Programme (PEP) established four virtual "schools" in existing community halls for initial 10-week courses. This hailed the beginning of what is now an ongoing ever-expanding programme that is extending across Cape Town with weekly classes for many people who "never thought I would get another chance at education" (participant, Vrygrond, 3 June 2011). Here, I will focus on two of these "schools" where participants are members of various women's organisations who requested classes on women's health issues.

One is in Vrygrond, where mainly women community activists representing two organisations have requested popular education classes on health and leadership / advocacy. Vrygrond is the collective designation of a densely populated low-cost housing area where apartheid-style housing is next to extensive informal settlements with shack-lands built on sand-dunes without access for emergency vehicles. Most parts of the area are highly polluted, with large numbers of dogs scratching through household waste on the roadsides. There are communal taps



Vrygrond Participants  
Source:  
von Kotze/Stefano

and some householders have hired private portable toilets that are surrounded by barbed wire and kept under lock and key, in order to avoid the overcrowded public porta-loos. This area is particularly notorious for high levels of unemployment, drugs, crime and gang-related violence. Women's organisations work with abused women and children; teenage pregnancy is another area of concern. The weekly 4-hour "school" takes place in a converted garage adjacent to the private home that houses the headquarters of one of the organisations.

The other school uses the hall of the Athlone Community Centre at the corner of a busy intersection. The building is surrounded by the usual high fence, sparse grass, playground equipment in need of repair, but everything is neat and clean and organised. The 16 women participants are seasoned members of "Women's circles"; they are volunteers who assist other women in groups all over Cape Town to improve their lives and livelihoods. Aged between early thirties and fifties, most of them are unemployed, the majority are single parents, and a few pursue other training in the hope that one day they will find paid work. Crime, drugs and gangs are the biggest issues causing a lot of individual distress and stress, but also passionate collective anger, especially when crime is discussed in conjunction with the justice system. Participants frequently express a sense of rage at the total injustice that turns them and their family members into victims while criminal perpetrators go unpunished. All they want to see is a justice system that works for them – and a police force that follows up instead of dismissing cases for "lack of evidence".

In both schools' initial curriculum-building sessions the participants had identified women's health, counselling and community development as the topics they wanted to learn about. In the end, the initial 10-week course focused on women's health as a community issue and set out to make clear connections between the individual troubles experienced by the women and their 'clients' and the social, economic, political institutions that constrain their daily life.

The Popular Education School uses a participatory approach to teaching and learning. It builds on themes and topics that are important to the participants and uses their experience as the basis for further exploration and analysis. New insights are translated into questions about action – and, as the description below shows, often these actions are "rehearsed" in anticipation of future situations. Thus, the methodology is rooted in Freirean / Gramscian ideas of "liberatory pedagogy" and employs the principles of popular education as classes aim to construct really useful knowledge that can be used to work collectively for changing the conditions that cause the problems. This involves analysing power relations and structural constraints and possibilities within the particular contexts of participants.



Demonstration of a body map

Source: von Kotze/Stefano

Below, two examples will illustrate how themes are interconnected, how knowledge is interdisciplinary, and how skills necessary to make informed decisions and act on them are identified and practised so they become available to be used in daily life. They also show *“methodology in action”* and how our approach generally favours oral forms of communication, as many of the women are unpractised in writing and often feel intimidated by written English spelling and grammar.

### Learning about Nutrition, Sickness and Research

In one session, nutrition and its connections to various common conditions and diseases was linked to learning about basic research. We had asked: How do you find information, and how do you know which information is reliable so that you can base your decisions on it?

In preparation for the session, participants had done *“homework”*. They had interviewed family and community members about common health problems and recorded their symptoms, causes and treatment on *“worksheets”*. They had also asked them about *“special”* foods that might mitigate their condition. This information was brought to class and participants compared their findings to establish

commonality. We then reflected on the difference between various sources of information and discussed issues of “reliability”: Who would you believe more, we asked, your friend who is an experienced home-based care worker, or the nurse at the clinic? Why was this the case?

Working in small groups, participants drew on a variety of books on (women’s) health and nutrition to look up anaemia (a common condition of women that presents as fatigue but often goes undetected), diabetes (a common condition associated with lifestyle and eating habits), arthritis (associated with HIV/AIDS) and hypertension (another common condition often associated with stress and tension). Some women were skilled at using reference materials and taught others how to use an index and reference section. Lively discussions ensued as they discovered overlaps or contradictions between the anecdotal information they had gathered in their interviews, and the printed information in various books.

Meanwhile, a simple blood-pressure monitor was doing the rounds and each woman had a turn at taking the BP of her neighbour, and having her own taken by the next woman in the circle. This was another way of doing research and the message was clear: all of us can take charge of monitoring our health and learning more about it. All we would need is, firstly, information and secondly, some basic equipment, the skills to operate it and the know-how to read and interpret measurements. In this case, we needed information about normal and elevated blood pressures and possible causes and treatment of high blood pressure/ hypertension.

The groups compared the information gathered from various sources and drew conclusions about symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of the different conditions. One woman spontaneously commented how she now realised why her doctor had given her worm treatment medication – she had not taken it as she didn’t know why he had given it to her and felt offended at the possible insinuation of being worm-infested. Now she saw how worms could possibly be related to her anaemia. She laughed, and said she would now take it!

The conversation led to a discussion of other home-practices in diagnosing and treating everyday sicknesses. For example, women shared a range of appropriate responses to lowering a person’s elevated temperature and reiterated the need to seek professional help in a case of fever. They also taught each other about the signs of pneumonia and de-hydration – with some expressing surprise at the discovery that they had, indeed, seen a “sunken” chest in a child but not known this was a sign of pneumonia, or heard about the “pinch-test” to establish dehydration in a case of diarrhoea, but not trusted this simple test.

So why did they not trust their own knowledge and know-how in dealing with common illnesses? Moments like these in the health course present perfect opportu-

nities for illuminating the link between power and knowledge. Whose voice speaks, relates to authority, and people who are formally educated and are employed in positions of power would generally be trusted to know more than ordinary people like themselves. The group explored the relationships of women to medical professionals: Why did nurses often patronise them, and why did doctors “speak down”, giving instructions without reasons and explanations? Collectively, participants drew on previous conversations about “blue collar” and “white collar” work, and how they command radically different incomes, but also attitudes. They used discussions about patriarchy and forms of control from other sessions and linked these to communication patterns between medical professionals and women like themselves. They realised that they themselves contributed to entrenched relations of power and authority every time they did not challenge hierarchies. And they concluded that they would try and change this by speaking up.

This session ended with brief role-plays in which all participants practiced assertive questioning in a fictional conversation with a health professional. There was lots of laughter as the role plays conjured real situations and experiences and participants questioned their own ability and courage to make their voices heard. The final “listing” of strategies that can be used for challenging and asking was to give them a reservoir of ideas to draw on when next in a compromised situation that requires speaking up and out.

Yet, we also acknowledged that while individual agency in challenging unhelpful entrenched relations is important, only collective action would finally stand a chance of changing their unquestioned dependency on medical professions and institutions and allow them to take charge of their own health with each one sup-



*Role play*

*Source: von Kotze/Stefano*

porting the other in learning when to trust existing knowledge and how and where to seek further information.

The 10-week course ended with an exercise in which participants made a collage that showed what seeds of knowledge and skills had been planted, and which of these had already grown into seedlings. One seed was labeled *"how plants are manufactured"*, and another *"genetically modified seeds – tomatoes without pips"*. All around these "seeds" were "seedlings" speaking about healthy eating, nutritious meals for health, human rights and budgeting.

In the end, the women reiterated what they had found useful: *"I think I have become a very strong mother since I started to attend sessions. I have gained my self-esteem. I feel free to express myself to other women and share my problems. I get some advice from them and how to solve my problem."* Having learnt to entrust personal troubles to others in the course knowing it would not be abused or divulged was an experience that all valued greatly. I had assumed that the shared experience of multiple abuses would provide the basis for a degree of women's solidarity. Yet, many of the participants expressed their dismay at the lack of respect of women for each other and the maltreatment instead of support and help they dish out. Another wrote how *"healthy eating was the most exciting and how to make your shopping. I used to make my shopping without buying healthy food. Now I know how to budget my money and what to buy."* And, laughingly, they swapped stories about changed eating regimes in the home and the responses of husbands and children when, at times, expensive meat was replaced by economical beans.

The Popular Education Programme is not essentially about health or literacy only – like the Family Literacy Project it recognises that all *"life-skills"* go hand in hand. However, in recognition of the difficulties most participants have with reading and writing, every session includes time for writing and every week participants take home reading to be discussed the following week. And questions of health and well-being undergird all the other work in the schools.

There are many lessons that can be learned from these two initiatives. In July there will be a workshop at which experiences are exchanged and new insights forged as different *dvv international* projects in the country report from the field.

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*In Laos, as in many other countries, there is a contradiction between the broad needs of informal career-oriented and income-generating education and the vanishing, comparatively small, formal education sector, as well as the non-formal and informal education area for which the goals and methods must yet largely be explored in order to get accurate data for decision-making and the setting of educational priorities. Mana Chanthalanonh and Dokham Xomsihapanya are program coordinators at dvv international South and Southeast Asia; Heribert Hinzen is Director of dvv international and now directs dvv international's regional office for South and Southeast Asia; Mathias Pfeifer works as a Junior Consultant in Laos.*

**Mana Chanthalanonh/Heribert Hinzen/Mathias Pfeifer/  
Dokham Xomsihapanya**

## **Non-formal Education, Learning Needs, and Skills Training in Lao PDR**

### **1. The Country and Its People**

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) was founded in 1975. It has 17 provinces, 147 districts and 8000 villages. Laos has a population of six million. The country's capital, Vientiane, has nearly half a million people. Eighty percent of the population live in rural areas, a larger share in hard-to-reach villages with little access to roads, health services, and education facilities. Laos has a predominantly young population: 40 percent of its people are less than 15 years of age. The rate of population growth is around three percent. There are 49 officially recognized ethnic groups representing a variety of spoken languages. Lao is the official language.<sup>1</sup>

Laos ranks 123<sup>rd</sup> out of 168 countries in the annual global Human Development Report compiled by the UN Development Program. Poverty in the country is widespread; the annual per capita income in 2008 was only 770 US\$. The situation is improving as the country benefits from a yearly economic growth rate of around eight percent. It aspires to graduate from its current 'least developed country' status

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<sup>1</sup> The areas of work mentioned in this article received strong support from a good number of people on national, provincial, district, and village levels. We are very grateful to all of them. As this version of the article was adapted especially for the present volume, we wish to inform readers that a more detailed text, including a list of references, can be provided via <[www.dvv-international.la](http://www.dvv-international.la)>.

by 2020. Rapid socio-economic development is mainly driven by the exploitation of natural resources. The intensification of agriculture and agroforestry holds huge potentials for economic development. Income from hydropower export and tourism are major foreign-exchange earners.

Laos is the most heavily bombed country per capita in history – more than Germany and Japan during World War II combined. Approximately 80 million unexploded bombs, so-called Unexploded Ordnance (UXO), remain scattered throughout the country. People are killed or injured every day and the victims are often children while playing, searching for fire wood, or collecting scrap metal. Development projects often have to start with UXO clearance of forests and agricultural land. In response to the problem, Laos has declared UXO clearance as a ninth Millennium Development Goal in addition to the eight internationally agreed MDGs.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Education Policies and Practice

Laos's National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES) lays out a comprehensive development plan. In reference to the education sector, the NGPES cites the Education for All (EFA) goals which seek to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. The Education Law recognizes the right to education as a basic human right. Laos dedicates 12 percent of its State expenditures to education, a figure of around two percent of the country's GDP. At a recent handing-over ceremony of literacy primers, the figure of 0.35% of the education budget for non-formal education (NFE) was mentioned. The intake into primary schools has already been considerably enlarged: up to 81% for girls and 84% for boys. These figures are anticipated to reach almost 100% by 2015. However, it is estimated that around 40% of the adult population has never attended school. For the northern provinces, this figure is even higher, reaching up to 60% in some areas. And with 20%, the dropout rate from primary schools is still very high. There is a rising number of youths and younger adults enrolled in secondary schools, vocational training centres and universities, although figures are still well below the level needed to fuel social and economic development of the country.

Data from 2005 reflect a literacy rate of 72.7% for people aged 15 and above, and indicate that 82.5% of the country's men and 63.2% of its women are literate. However, the Lao National Literacy Survey 2001, implemented by the Ministry of Education and UNESCO Bangkok, arrived at very different results: *"a tested functional literacy rate [of] 45.2%, with 53.7% for male and female 36.9% for the age group 15-59."*

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2 Helpful country information is available at <<http://liportal.inwent.org/laos.html>>.

The Education Sector Development Framework 2009 – 2015 (ESDF) calls for *“increased enrolment in non-formal education programs with an increased investment in village-based community Lifelong Learning centres.”* The draft of a new document on non-formal education policies of the Department for Non-formal Education (DNFE) of the Ministry of Education (2010) supports the NGPES *“... by providing literacy and continuing education and vocational skills training and Lifelong Learning opportunities”*. A total of 16 policies were developed to govern the implementation of relevant programs. Policy 7 is designed to *“create the opportunity for individuals and groups for persons with learning and skills needs to develop self-reliant productive and empowered citizens through engaging in income generating and life skills related activities.”*

The *“Education for All: National Plan of Action”* of Lao PDR for 2003 – 2015 (EFA NPA) already calls for *“expansion of the provision of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults”*. It proceeds with a description of a reality which for many parts of the country is important to consider:

*“Poor families in rural remote areas are severely suffering from problems associated with access to and quality of basic education and rural skills training. Parents probably have had little, if any, education themselves, which is a factor explaining the low level of their incomes and the consequent need for their children to contribute to household income... The magnitude of school dropouts is increasing but, in contrast, the capacity of existing NFE programs is limited and*

Village in Nong District

Source: dvv international



*target group participation levels are decreasing. The trend in youth migrating to seek work, particularly those going from rural to urban areas, underscores the need for improved design of NFE vocational and rural skills training programs”.*

### **3. What Do a Baseline Survey and Activities in Nong Tell Us?**

In 2010, *Welthungerhilfe*, two non-profit associations – NORMAL (Non-profit Association for Rural Mobilisation and Improvement) and LADCA (Lao Development and Cooperation Association) – and *dvv international* launched the “*Poverty Reduction and Food Security Project*” in Nong District, one of the 47 poorest districts of Laos which is situated in the Southern Savannaketh province at the border with Vietnam. The overall aim of the project is to strengthen the livelihoods of the villagers, thus reducing poverty while improving food security and the overall quality of life. Various measures are taking place to achieve this goal, including the development of skills and materials to enhance agricultural productivity and to create new sources of income, the improvement of water supplies, and the creation of non-formal Adult Education opportunities. As the region is located in the vicinity of the former Ho-Chi-Minh Trail and is littered with unexploded ordnance, UXO clearance is also planned.

An initial activity which was undertaken within the framework of the project was a baseline survey in 20 villages to ascertain data on food security and livelihoods as well as the needs and development priorities of villagers. The survey provides a wealth of information on learning needs. A small selection of the results is presented below. Data were gathered on livelihoods, poverty and education, literacy and communication issues. Combinations of quantitative and qualitative methods were applied. A representative statistical sampling of households (around 280) was chosen for the baseline survey, and discussions with village authorities and groups of men and women were undertaken. In some of the group discussions quantitative participatory methods were tested. The large number of individuals who took part ensures that the results from these group discussions are statistically representative.

In the face of complex problem situations and diverse but fragile livelihood strategies of the villagers, a wide range of activities which take place within the framework of the project are designed to directly tackle the main problems of food insecurity and poor health. The creation of new paddy land for rice production is underway, and rice bank committees have been trained. Plans to further strengthen food security include small-scale irrigation schemes, fish ponds, home gardens, and training in improved methods of animal husbandry. The development of skills to cultivate cash crops aims at generating income for villagers. In addition, revolving village funds will be established. Training in nutrition has been conducted,

boreholes are being constructed to ensure water supply, and feeder roads will be improved or rehabilitated.

### 3.1 Livelihoods and Poverty

In the 20 villages, around 49% of the households are considered very poor, 37% poor and only 14% better-off. Farming, especially upland rice cultivation, is stated as the main occupation in the vast majority of households (85%). The main income of the households derives from the collection of and commercial trade in various non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as rattan, mushrooms, cardamom or bamboo shoots. The main expenditures, on the other hand, include the purchase of rice and other foods (43%) as well as medicine (19%), which reflects the overall problem of food insecurity and disease. Other major expenses are the costs incurred for formal education (16%), e.g. school uniforms. Different problems were also identified. Group discussions, the outcomes of which are reflected in Figure 1, revealed that the major problems result from rice shortage, animal diseases and human diseases:

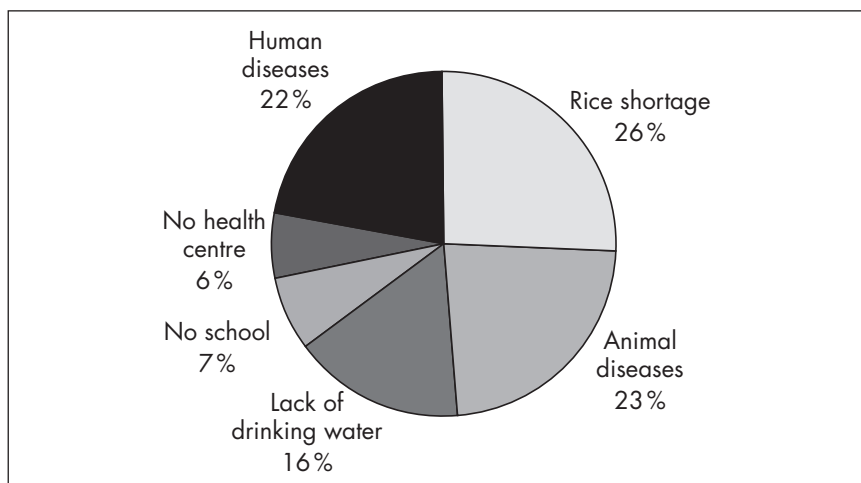


Figure 1: Main problems faced by population

Rice shortage is considered the most pressing problem in all villages, followed by animal diseases. Human diseases, insufficient road access and low agricultural productivity due to lack of technical support were frequently identified as the third most important problem. Education-related problems were specifically mentioned



*Literacy Course*

*Source: dvv international*

in only five of the 20 villages. Illiteracy and the lack of a primary school were included among the problems mentioned in two villages, but in both villages illiteracy was only ranked in fifth place, which means that it is perceived as the least pressing of the problems identified. The 280 respondents of the household survey on education-related issues were also asked what they consider to be their most pressing problems. Results from the household survey offer a similar picture: more than 50% of respondents stated that food insecurity is a major concern, while 9% of respondents indicated a lack of knowledge and skills.

## **3.2 Literacy and Communication**

### **3.2.1 Adult literacy rates in the target villages**

According to the District Education Office (DEO), the adult illiteracy rate reported in Nong in 2009/2010 is 42% for men and 59% for women aged 15-40, figures which are well below the national illiteracy rate. In group discussions with male and female villagers, self-reports of participants indicated that 65% of the men and 97% of the women are illiterate. The 106 respondents who stated they were

literate were asked to give a self-assessment of their skills level. Their answers reveal that almost a third admitted to being able to read and write only “a little bit”, while roughly half claimed to have fairly good reading and writing skills. Since the vast majority of the respondents in the household survey were male, we also asked for their assessment of the literacy skills of female household members. Responses indicated that more than 90% of the women in these households cannot read or write at all. Illiteracy is also likely to remain a challenge in the future. Formal school attendance in the district is low. We did not collect data on primary school attendance. However, in 2010, in a survey conducted in 47 villages of the 73 villages in Nong within the context of the Ministry’s non-formal education mobile teacher’s project for out-of-school children, it was revealed that 86% of the children in the 6-14 age bracket do not attend school. The risk is therefore large that the next generation of children in the district will become non-literate adults.

### 3.2.2 Literacy skills

In an effort to gain a better understanding of how literacy is practiced in the villages, we asked all 280 respondents in the household survey whether a household member had attended an adult literacy class during the past 5 years. The 45 respondents who answered in the affirmative were asked about the benefits of attending the NFE course, or of acquiring literacy skills. Their responses are depicted in Figure 2.

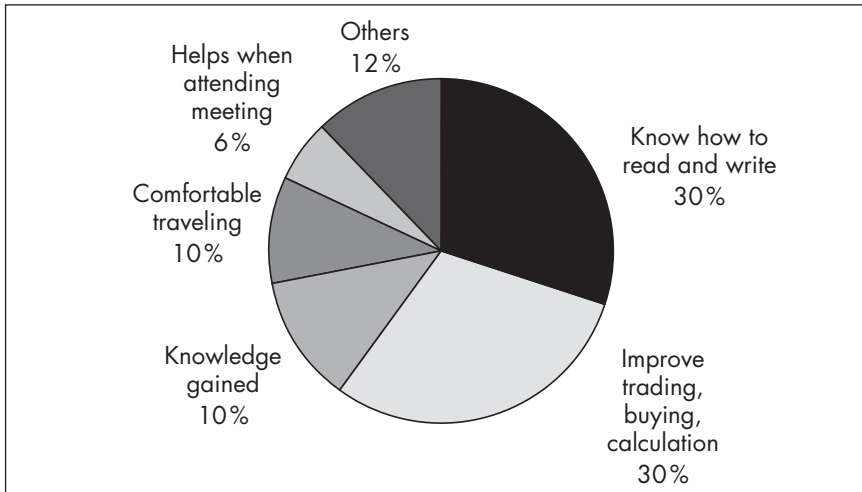


Figure 2: Benefits from attending NFE courses (household survey)

To determine how existing literacy skills are being used in the given localities, we asked those survey respondents who had indicated that they were literate what they had read during the past 30 days. Roughly half of the respondents said that they could not remember having read anything during the past month. During the group discussions with both men and women we inquired about the occasions in which literacy skills are considered necessary or are actually used. The responses are shown in the following graph.

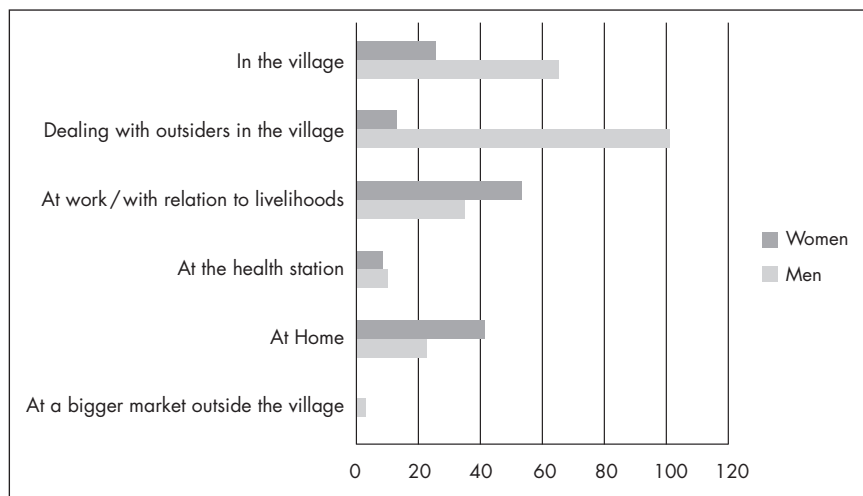


Figure 3: Perceived literacy need/areas for application (group discussions)

These data allow some observations to be made on gender differences in literacy needs. Men primarily need and employ literacy skills when dealing with outsiders, and in second place during village meetings and other events that take place in the village. Women, on the other hand, see much less need for literacy skills when dealing with outsiders. Women traditionally interact less with outsiders. As a consequence, far fewer women understand the Lao language. Women need literacy skills primarily to support their livelihood strategies. These findings underline the fact that Adult Education and literacy classes targeting women should not merely focus on strengthening their domestic roles in health, sanitation, nutrition and child care. Further investigations will help to illuminate precisely which aspects of their livelihoods could be enhanced with reading, writing and numeracy skills. The use of literacy skills in the village is also an important area for women. Literacy skills as well

as Lao language skills may help women to put themselves in a better position when participating at village meetings, on committees, or in other community structures.

### 3.2.3 Language skills

While illiteracy was seldom reported to be a significant difficulty by the villagers themselves, various studies indicate that the inability to comprehend spoken Lao poses a crucial problem for many of the country's indigenous and ethnic minority groups. The Participatory Poverty Assessment of the ADB in 2006, for example, found that villagers in some areas *"do not sell things at the market because they are ashamed of their difficulty in speaking the Lao language... No doubt Lao language problems account for their poor school enrolment and attendance figures."* Similar challenges exist in Nong. The target villages are populated by the Makong ethnic group of the Mon-Khmer ethno-linguistic family. The Makong speak Bru as their mother tongue – a scriptless language. Many Makong villagers have only rudimentary Lao skills or completely lack oral skills in Lao altogether.

Considering that in most cases being able to speak Lao is a prerequisite for being able to deal with scripted Lao language materials, this may be an important factor. In Laos, a one-language policy applies for the entire education system – only Lao is supposed to be taught – although minority languages may be used for oral communication in NFE classes. Using local languages is very important. An in-depth research study on gender and ethnic issues in Laos conducted by Thomas and

*Literacy Course*

*Source: dvv international*



Louangkhot (NUOL, UNFPA, 2007) shows that to be accepted, life-saving health messages should be conveyed in local languages. On the other hand, where Lao is spoken and required in areas such as trading and dealing with local authorities or with institutions such as health stations or formal schools, the ability to speak the Lao language is also necessary. Strengthening oral skills in the Lao language, particularly among women, could constitute a major aim of future adult literacy classes.

Gender differences in the ability to speak and understand Lao are striking. Roughly half of the male villagers speak and understand the Lao language well; the other half speaks and understands only a little. Almost no men admit to not understanding or speaking any Lao. The majority of women in the target villages, on the other hand, do not understand or speak Lao at all. Only a third of the women are able to understand a little. In the group discussions with men and women, participants were asked about the occasions when the Lao language is spoken. Not surprisingly, the results indicate that a command of Lao is most important in interaction with ethnic Lao, for the most part in the commercial sector and with government authorities. It is noteworthy that the Lao language is apparently also very important in the context of village meetings. While meetings amongst community members are held in the Bru language, the Lao language is used when “outsiders”, particularly government officials, attend the meetings. When important information is provided and negotiations take place within the context of such meetings, those individuals who are not able to understand Lao are most likely to be sidelined and excluded. This particularly places women at a disadvantage.

### 3.2.4 Literacy training

As a measure to promote non-formal youth and Adult Education, project partners decided to launch a literacy class to test the *Reflect* approach in 10 villages. The aim of this approach is to go beyond the 3R's (reading, writing, arithmetic) and to emphasize participatory learning processes to strengthen various life skills. After participants analyze a specific problem, they select topics for discussion in which opportunities are created to practise literacy and numeracy skills.

Toward the end of 2010, *dvv international* and the Nong District Education Office started to recruit suitable facilitators for literacy classes – a search that proved to be very difficult. Most volunteer teachers that could be identified have hardly finished primary schooling. Some have difficulties speaking and understanding the Lao language. A major concern is that almost all candidates are men. Training of facilitators (TOF) was conducted at the end of 2010. Due to delays, it was only possible to begin classes a few months later. Problems which became apparent at a very early stage included the lack of lighting for evening classes and the poor quality of teaching in some villages. Solar panels have meanwhile been

purchased and installed, and a number of pilot Community Learning Centres are being constructed to provide better learning facilities. Plans exist to set up village libraries by the end of 2011 in order to remedy the poor literacy environment in the villages. Another Reflect TOF has been scheduled to strengthen the skills of facilitators, and plans exist to establish a number of women groups and to conduct pilot programs in basic vocational training once the rainy season ends and crops have been harvested. Future plans and challenges include linking literacy classes with other project components and addressing livelihood issues such as health, nutrition, hygiene and income-generating activities.

### 3.2.5 Basic vocational skills

Programmes in vocational education and training (VET) offer a chance for youth and adults to improve and strengthen existing livelihood strategies or to learn skills which prepare them to pursue additional income-generating activities. In Nong, or in neighbouring districts, however, there are no institutions which offer VET. The nearest VET schools and colleges are at least five hours by bus from Nong. These and other non-formal vocational training institutions in other southern provinces are virtually inaccessible for most rural dwellers in the Nong district. Almost all of the villagers lack the means to attend such institutions. Often they are not able to fulfil entry requirements (e.g. Lao language proficiency, lower secondary education certificates).

We were unable to find evidence in Nong of any relevant community-based training to develop basic vocational skills or rural skills.

During the group discussions, NFE field staff asked respondents what type of skills/skill training they would consider relevant in order to improve their livelihoods. Respondents were further requested to identify the three areas of skills that they considered most valuable: Their responses are shown in Figure 4.



*Vocational Training*  
Source: *dvv international*

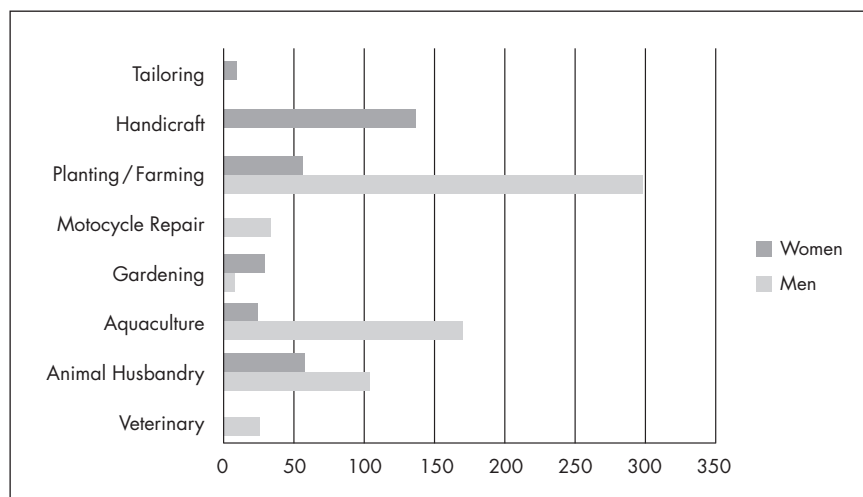


Figure 4: Vocational training interests (group discussions)

Results indicate that particularly male participants consider planting/farming, aquaculture and animal husbandry the three most important areas of skills. Women, on the other hand, are most interested in learning or improving handicraft skills. Discussions with villagers revealed that weaving skills are among the handicraft skills that women most want to develop. Some women who already know how to weave wish to improve their skills. In other villages women have not yet acquired weaving skills. Other possible training courses include “*small enterprise management*”. For those few villagers engaged in some sort of commercial activities, training in this area could be combined with efforts to improve literacy and numeracy skills. The idea was also introduced in village discussions that banana processing might be a potential area for training. While no respondents of the baseline survey and needs assessment mentioned any interest in learning skills for processing foods such as bananas, some of the village authorities explained this is simply due to a lack of knowledge. They ensured us that if training opportunities were to be offered in this field, many villagers, including women, would be highly interested in participating.

Apart from identifying learning needs, it is also important to gain a better understanding of skills which already exist in the target group as a starting point for organizing measures to build on existing know-how. The EFA NPA, for instance, suggests that “*local knowledge and traditional skills of target groups must be explored, promoted and effectively utilized.*” This approach, however, is hardly ever

implemented. In a number of villages we made initial attempts to determine what skills people possess. We learned that know-how exists in basket-making (men and women), weaving (women), blacksmithing, carpentry, house construction and small-scale motorcycle repair (men).

#### 4. Survey and Course Results on Vocational Skills

As part of the effort to obtain background information based on robust data in what the DNFE calls “*basic vocational training*”, and what villagers see as their needs and interests on which they base their requests for training from potential providers, the opportunity was taken to engage in training needs analysis and tracer studies as well non-formal vocational courses in the context of the new Integrated Vocational Education and Training Centres (IVET) which operate within the framework of GIZ cooperation. The word “*integrated*” calls for the integration of formal and non-formal approaches, thereby asking what the IVET centres can do for the formal as well as informal economic sectors. This question will be especially related to the contribution they could have on skills development beyond the provincial level, including in the various districts and villages.

Weaving

Source: dvv international



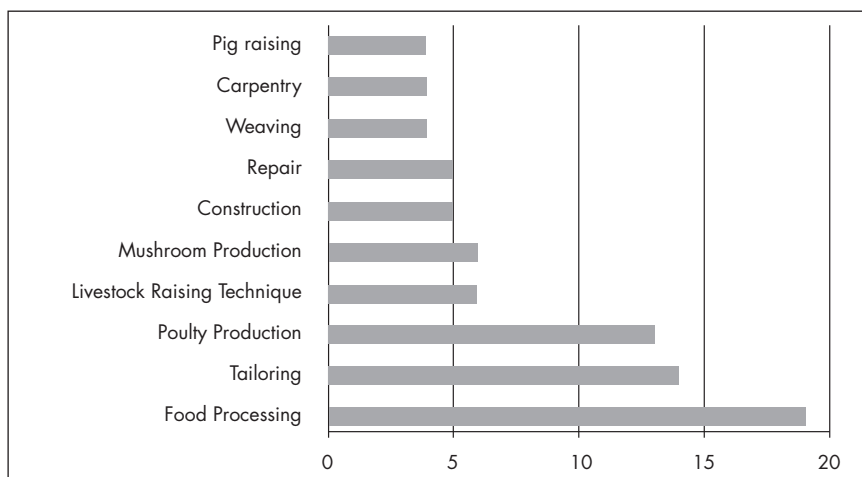


Figure 5: Training Needs – by specific training

#### 4.1 Training Needs Analysis

A training needs analysis was conducted for IVET schools in several provinces to identify the training requirements of remote target groups. The results from 24 villages in Xieng Khouang Province in Northern Laos, as reflected in Figure 5, give a first impression of the kind of courses which are most needed there.

There is, of course, a need for much deeper and broader research into learning needs, and the given surveys allow only a first glance at the subject. Be that as it may, findings already point toward the diversity of learning needs in different areas of Laos and within given communities. Non-formal vocational training in Laos, which seeks to respond to the needs of the rural population, has to be highly flexible and adapt to specific contexts. Detailed information on livelihoods and learning needs of the target groups for IVET Centres and other non-formal VET programmes are therefore essential.

#### 4.2 Survey on Non-formal Vocational Courses

A survey which was conducted on non-formal vocational courses in northern and southern Laos allows a better understanding of the realities within this training sector. A total of 248 persons in six provinces participated in the survey. Table 1 gives an overview of the results:

	Item	Venue (IVET, Province)	Date	Participants		
				Total	Female	Female (%)
1	Tailoring	Sayaboury	08.-19.11.10	20	20	100
2	Cookery	Saravan	15.-26.11.10	15	14	93
3	Cookery	Saravan	24.1.-4.02.10	15	14	93
4	Mushroom breed.	Sayaboury	28.2.-11.3.11	14	11	79
5	Chicken raising	Oudomxay	28.2.-9.3.11	20	9	45
6	Mushroom breed.	Oudomxay	28.2.-9.3.11	21	8	38
7	Fish, frog farming	Oudomxay	14.3.-23.3.11	20	8	40
8	Fruit tree grafting	Oudomxay	14.3.-23.3.11	20	7	35
9	Chicken raising	Xekong	23.5.-27.5.11	16	11	69
10	Chicken raising	Attapeu	23.5.-27.5.11	18	3	17
11	Mushroom breed.	Xekong	6.6.-10.6.11	16	10	63
12	Mushroom breed.	Attapeu	6.6.-10.6.11	16	4	25
13	Electrical install.	Luang Nam.	20.6.-24.6.11	20	2	10
14	Fish, frog farming	Attapeu	20.6.-24.6.11	17	13	76
<b>Total</b>				<b>248</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>50,4</b>

Table 1: Course overview

According to the collected data, 60% of participants belong to ethnic minorities and 87% have not earned any previous professional qualifications. Roughly half of the participants are between 20 and 30 years old, while 21% are between 31 and 40 years of age. Approximately 10% are less than 20 years of age. In addition, the vast majority of graduates reside relatively close to the IVET centre or other non-formal VET venue (43% less than 10 km, and 43% between 11 and 50 km). Participation is difficult for individuals who do not live close to an institution that offers such courses. The available data indicates that 35% of graduates are farmers, 38% work in family businesses; only 16% are self-employed and less than 10% are employed. A total of 60% of participants stated that they earned an equivalent of less than 20 Euros (in Lao Kip) per month prior to attending the training courses. Another 34% earned an equivalent of between 20 and 50 Euros. Only the remaining 6% indicated that they earned more. When asked about their satisfaction with the courses, around 50% stated that the course was very good, 40% said it was good, and merely 7% considered that the course met their expectations only to a moderate degree. To elicit more detailed information about the effectiveness of the offered courses, participants were asked to describe more precisely what they found helpful. The responses are shown in Figure 6.

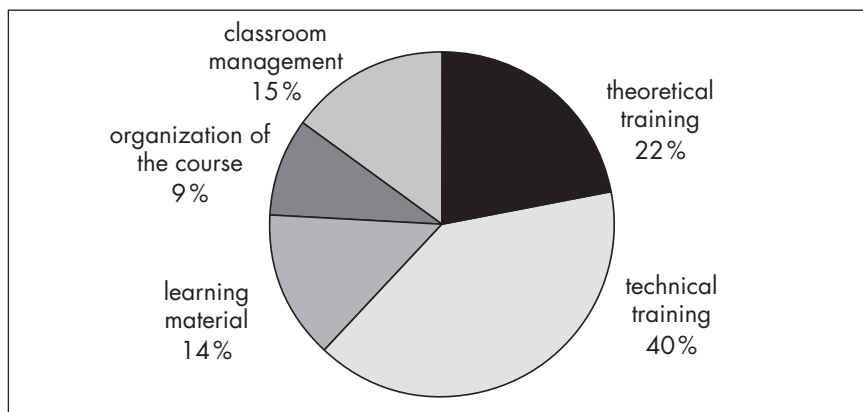


Figure 6: "What has helped you the most in the current training course?"

These results indicate that the non-formal education offer seems to be on the right track. What is urgently needed is to expand coverage, offer more courses, and provide training opportunities to those who are in most need. Here again, the great diversity of learning needs is illustrated by the answers provided by participants regarding the areas in which they would like additional training (Figure 7).

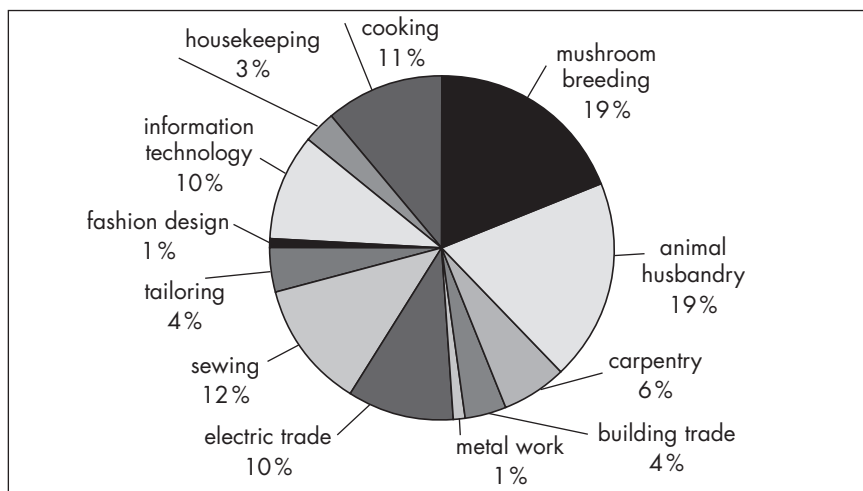


Figure 7: "In which subject areas would you want additional training?"

## 5. Skills for Life: A Look at the Modern, Informal and Traditional

The village baseline survey clearly shows that the key problem faced by villagers is food insecurity, which is manifested in rice shortage and animal disease. Human health, insufficient agricultural productivity and poor infrastructure (road access, water supply and schools) are considered to be other major problems. Hence, it is not surprising that community members do not regard illiteracy as one of their main problems, and that they generally do not expect the provision of adult literacy training to bring about significant changes in their food security. As adult educators have pointed out elsewhere, *literacy is not a bowl of rice*. On the other hand, there are areas where literacy skills are very useful, most notably in dealings with government officials, at village meetings, and in conducting commercial transactions with ethnic Lao. It is certainly true that many villagers would be very happy to be able to read, write and improve their numeracy skills. However, acquiring these skills takes time, and given the often poor skills of NFE facilitators, the poor learning environment and the problems with the Lao language as well as the overall urgent problem of food insecurity facing almost half of the target households, a great many villagers are unlikely to attend classes regularly or to invest much time and energy in learning over a longer period of time. Findings also show that very many illiterates already have established practices in dealing with literacy tasks and frequently resort to help from others.

With respect to basic vocational skills, there is apparently a huge demand for the farm-related skills that are provided under the banner of agricultural extension with support from *Welthungerhilfe*. In the non-formal education sector, on the other hand, resources, expertise, trainers and materials are too limited to effectively implement training at the village level. A notable exception to the demand for farm-related skills is handicraft training for women as well as training opportunities for skills required for food processing or for running small business enterprises. Plans are envisaged to set up women groups and to organize training measures combined with on-the-job numeracy and literacy learning. What also seems to be needed is a better understanding of what people know and can already do, and more information about how they acquired their knowledge and skills. The survey reflects the diversity of the livelihood strategies pursued in rural settings. Rural dwellers produce subsistence level crops and generally have some form of cash income. Most are full-time farmers. On the other hand, there are also people with additional skills required for farm-related work, construction, production, or other activities in social and cultural life. A more detailed mapping of these skills would be very helpful. At the same time, it would be interesting to know how these people learn, how they acquired their skills, and how they apply and modify them. Do informal apprenticeship arrangements exist? How important is learning by doing? What

kind of respect, recognition and income is associated with the different skills? How closely are the skills related to recognized professions? Finding out what can be learned from these and other questions would benefit the development of teaching and learning activities in other areas. The findings reported in *“Skills and Literacy Training for Better Livelihoods. A Review of Approaches and Experiences”*, a study in which *dvv international* was involved for the Human Development Sector of the World Bank (2002), could serve as a useful guide in the selection of approaches for non-formal education work. One possible approach would be: Literacy first, followed by livelihood or income generation activities. But is this the best one? Or should the project try the other way around, and introduce literacy training as a second step after income-generating activities are organized. Or should the two steps be integrated? Or would it be better to organize them parallel to one another, but separately alongside all the other project initiatives in nutrition or agriculture?

It is a well-known fact that the TVET system in Laos is *“under-funded, under-equipped, lacks fully trained teachers, is expensive to students, and is concentrated in big cities.”*<sup>3</sup> Basic vocational training has to be tailored to livelihood needs, particularly for the rural poor who are often excluded from economic development in Laos. In order to reach the rural dwellers (who comprise the vast majority of the population) new approaches will be necessary. One option, for instance, could be a mobile training concept that would offer short-term vocational training in a practical and flexible manner to develop skills that are high in demand.

Furthermore, it will be important to place a stronger focus on life skills within non-formal education, an area which traditionally has concentrated mainly on literacy learning and basic education. As the EFA NPA states:

*“The focus should not only be on basic general education (literacy and numeracy), but on practical sustainable vocational training and life skills, including useful information and knowledge about good parenting, child nutrition, family-based learning activities for children aged 0-5, reproductive health and prevention of STDs (sexually-transmitted diseases) and HIV/AIDS, the issues and risks associated with human trafficking and abusive child labour, drug abuse, environmental destruction and other facts that negatively impact the target group’s livelihood.”*

There is no doubt that a wide range of life skills are becoming increasingly important for the population to cope with the numerous challenges that life presents. Integrating this into current NFE programmes is a huge task that still remains to be done.

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3 UNDP: *“National Human Development Report: Employment and Livelihoods”*, Lao PDR 2009. Vientiane, UNDP, 2009, p. 179, referring to an evaluation conducted by MOE and UNDP 2009; and p. 184.

*The program is aimed at unskilled casual workers in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, in order to advise them during the transition to regular employment, to identify suitable areas of work and organise appropriate training opportunities for them that at least make them capable for the transition into regular work. In addition to basic education in the English language and technical skills, the ability to create their own CVs and present themselves to potential employers successfully is also included. Men on the Side of the Road cooperates in this work with local employers and training institutions. Janet Wicks is the General Manager of the organisation.*

**Janet Wicks**

## **Men on the Side of the Road**

Johannes rises early today. He washes and puts on his work clothes. He eats breakfast and says goodbye to his wife and four children, who are almost ready to leave for school for the day. He walks down the road to where a pick-up truck from his place of work collects him to take him to town, where he will spend the day working in a factory. He is pleased that he has a good job, working for a fair employer.

It was not always like this for Johannes and his family. He was out of work for a very long time. In those days he used to wonder how he was going to feed his children and pay their school fees. In those days he would still get up early, but to walk to town to wait at a job site in the hope of getting a single days work. Then Johannes joined the Men on the Side of the Road (MSR) project when they came to register people at the job site where he happened to be waiting. Through MSR he had the opportunity to gain vocational training in painting, tiling and glazing and he learned about money management and entrepreneurship. MSR then sent him for an interview for a job, the job he now does. His life, and that of his family, has changed for the better and for their future.

**The country of Namibia** sits on the southwestern side of the African continent, above South Africa and next to Botswana. Formerly known as South-West Africa, the independent Republic of Namibia was born in 1990 after a long liberation struggle. It is a young country, making astonishing progress on the one hand, but struggling with many contemporary problems.

With a surface area of 824,268 square kilometres – the size of the UK and France combined – Namibia is bound on its western side by the vast and ancient Namib Desert, reaching across to the Atlantic Ocean, and on its eastern side by the expanses of the Kalahari. The very geography of the country means great distances between towns and villages and makes travelling from place to place very difficult, particularly as there is scant public transport. It is also a country in which the power of nature is hard to ignore, not least in this year, when record rainfall has simply washed away the homes and any possible livelihoods of people throughout the country, but most especially in the northern area. Such natural disasters are rarely reported overseas. Namibia's population is a little over 2 million and the majority of people live in the far north of the country or in the capital, Windhoek. There are 13 regions, 13 ethnic cultures and, while English is the official language, there are 16 languages and dialects spoken.

**The main sectors of the economy** are mining, fishing, tourism and agriculture. However, unemployment currently stands at a little over 50%, one of the highest rates in the world. It is generally agreed amongst local economists and Human Resources practitioners that one of the main causes of this high unemployment rate is the poor skills level among young people. In fact, among the unskilled youth the unemployment rate is estimated at 70 percent, for women it is even higher. Conversely, the unemployment rate for people with tertiary education is less than 5 percent.

In common with many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, high levels of poverty, intrinsically linked with malnutrition, TB and HIV, directly affect the country's economic engine and, in a country such as Namibia, it is those people who live in rural or semi-urban areas who are most at risk as a result of lack of access to health and social care support. This life, without health and hope, is the life that leads to fear, shame, frustration, anger and despair and so to substance abuse, to crime and to a degradation within a country. Further, despite being one of the *"the most unequal countries in the world"* in terms of dispersal of wealth, Namibia is no longer considered to be a developing country, but a *"middle income"* country, by many international donors. This *"label"* does not, however, take into consideration the immediate and profoundly damaging effect on local and national NGO's who have been reliant on international donors to establish and help sustain essential support and services for those most vulnerable in the country. There is often no strategy for the immediate withdrawal of funds and so self-sustainability has not yet been achieved by those organisations. The result is that those services most needed and most used simply cannot continue. This, therefore, exacerbates the problems of survival for the many already living in poverty and attendant ill-health, with lack of hope being the most devastating of human conditions.



*Learning to write a CV*

*Source: Janet Wicks*

**With families to provide for**, even in the most basic way, and with no hope of employment in their own communities, men find their way in their hundreds to the capital city of Windhoek in the hope of finding some sort of work. There, they will join the many men without work already living in the capital, along with the growing number of those living in informal settlements on the edges of the city. These are not economic migrant workers in the usual sense. Rather they are local people who have never had the opportunity to gain the professional skills and attitudes which will lead to a job from which they can earn a living. Marginalised, impoverished and disadvantaged in this way, these men simply want a job – any job – to earn enough for themselves and their family to survive on a day to day basis. They do not think beyond getting through each day, one by one.

**Each day these men will get up at 3 or 4 a.m.**, walk for two or three hours to one of four job sites designated by the municipality in Windhoek and wait there for up to six hours, gathering in their hundreds at these sites simply waiting in the hope that someone – a contractor, a homeowner, a farmer or someone who needs only one day's casual labour – will offer them some sort of a job. If they are not picked up for any work, they will walk back to the place they live – often a tiny space in a tin shack or even under a bridge – without anything to eat or drink all day. They will do the same the next day, and the next. Depending on the time of year, this can be in the fierce Namibian sun or in the biting winter cold. Often they are wearing

only an overall and a T-shirt. They will tackle any job that comes their way. These are the *"men on the side of the road"*.

**One of the gathering sites** was to be found opposite the Dutch Reformed Church in an area of Windhoek called Eros. Nothing illustrated better the two worlds separated by a road – a world of employment, where people's comfortable homes were but a short drive away, where they would spend the day at work or meeting with the families and friends for a meal; and the men, many of whom were far from their families and home communities, deprived of even the most basic of human comforts, often scarcely able to feed themselves let alone provide for their loved ones, waiting. Just waiting and hoping for work, day after day.

**A number of individuals in the Church** decided that something needed to be done to reach across that road and to make a difference to those who waited there. This group undertook some research and discussion, but, most importantly, they talked to the men themselves about what was needed to connect them to job opportunities. They realised that the aspiration to *"get a job"* was not a simple step from one side of the road to the other. These were men who had never had the luxury of choosing a career and undertaking the necessary training to achieve professional goals. No matter how many times they said – and meant – *"they wanted a job"*, this was never going to be the way into a job market where employers seek particular and specific skills.

**Finally, in 2007, Men on the Side of the Road (MSR)**, a Welfare Organisation, (WO) was launched at that very *"job site"* in Eros, with the vision of trying to match the men with employers, while ensuring safe passage to the other side of the road. A small office was established and the small staff team included one of the men from the side of the road. As MSR began to grow, the men could register as work-seeking members and so could be linked to work opportunities. Likewise, potential employers could also access reliable, semi-skilled or unskilled men who best suited their individual needs through the register. It was a wonderful achievement to connect 86 men with job opportunities in the first year of operation. But it was quickly realized that this was not enough, as many job placements fell through because of a mismatch of expectation between potential employer and potential employee. MSR also needed to ensure that the men could have access to the practical skills which would enable them towards finding suitable – and sustainable – employment, through employability skills training and vocational training opportunities. After a number of experiments, MSR finally developed an approach that is innovative in Namibia, and which seeks to influence a change of attitude and mind-set amongst its work-seeking members. MSR developed a 6-step approach to training, which puts the ownership of the job search activity firmly in the hands of the MSR member. The role MSR plays is one of enabling, and facilitating, and the creator of opportunity.

The 6-step approach takes an individual who has demonstrated his commitment to changing his life (although he often has no idea how to accomplish this), through a process as follows. He engages in any or all of the steps, according to his need.

### **Step One: Vocational Counseling and Career Guidance**

Information is disseminated at the job sites regularly by the MSR fieldworker, and at monthly community meetings. Anyone who is a member of MSR is welcome to attend the meetings to learn more about the opportunities on offer. After the meetings, members who are interested are invited for one-to-one counseling sessions with a social worker, or counselor (often a volunteer). At these sessions, an assessment of the individual's English language skills is made, and they are made aware of the vocational training courses MSR is able to offer through its partnership working with vocational training service providers. Included in this step is discussion on what exactly each of the courses entails, as we have discovered that members sometimes choose courses based on what a brother, or friend is doing, rather than on their own interests.

### **Step Two: Basic English/English for the World of Work**

The lack of English language skills is often a limiting factor in MSR members being able to pursue formal employment, or even attend vocational training. MSR works with its members to assist them with improving their language skills. MSR has offered Basic English literacy classes in the past, with limited success, and is currently re-evaluating this to include *"English for the World of Work"* and more in-depth and appropriate materials.

*Learning to write*

*Source: Janet Wicks*



### **Step Three: Vocational Training**

After undergoing the MSR process, which includes the above steps, as well as being required to create a basic CV, working on a one-to-one basis with an MSR staff member, the work-seeking member will be registered to undertake a basic vocational training course at one of our partner organizations. By this stage, work-seeking members will have chosen the course that best suits their interests, and this training will be financed by MSR, with a very small stipend being made available. Without this stipend, a high dropout rate was experienced, as the need to survive in the short term took precedence over the relatively long term benefits derived from completing training. (If you are hungry today, you are not interested in being told you will get a better job in 3 months time).

### **Step Four: Entrepreneurship/Money Management**

MSR works with partners to provide money management and entrepreneurship activities, both as formal courses, and through informal sessions and motivational talks from local entrepreneurs. Money management skills are particularly important for people whose income fluctuates greatly from week to week. MSR encourages its members to create income generating opportunities for themselves, using their skills and resources. It is unfortunate that the Namibian attitude to informal sector workers is that they are “unemployed” and working in the informal sector is a survival mechanism, rather than applauding these people for taking ownership of their lives and generating an income (however small) through their own efforts.

### **Step Five: Mentoring**

MSR develops a relationship with its members, who benefit from advice and guidance from MSR staff and other volunteers and local business people, especially when members have ideas for income-generating activity. MSR is always looking for role models in the community who can share their knowledge with our members.

### **Step Six: Employment**

The ultimate aim of MSR is to enable its members to develop all of the skills, aptitudes and attitudes required to enter the formal employment sector, or to embark on the path of self-sustainability, depending on their choice.

This aim is supported and nurtured through the creation of an environment and an atmosphere where men can regain their dignity, and take ownership of their job search, using the tools and facilities provided by MSR.

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At the office, men can look through daily newspapers for job vacancies, type their CV under the guidance of a staff member, make photocopies of important documentation, make telephone calls or send and receive faxes related to jobs. Each man is given a “*job search starter pack*” which includes a plastic pocket for the safekeeping of documents, a pen, a ruler and a notebook. From time to time, donations of shirts and ties or other clothing items were distributed from the office, to be given only following a period of job search, so as to discourage dependency or making the men feel patronised. All the men have access to one-to-one support – and finally a chance to tell their unique story. These basic activities remain fundamental to MSR, as does developing the ethos of supporting and enabling the men to make a commitment to, and to take responsibility for their own employment future. All learning has constantly been integrated into the evolving service.

This means that MSR has to act almost as an employment agency, widely marketing its service and engaging in partnerships with local business, central and local government and individual employers to offer ready-to-work members to them, while seeking the commitment of the men to engage with training opportunities and learning the skills, aptitudes and attitudes necessary to make the transition from the casual labourer on the side of the road to the world of formal employment or self-employment.

For example, one of such needs was for trained and qualified truck drivers. As a result, in 2008, MSR formed partnerships with DED (German Development Agency), Jowells Transport Services and EMS Driving Academy, based in Windhoek, to add some 10 Code CE license holders to the pool of potential truck drivers available to Namibian companies. This represented a 100% success rate for its trainees. Each of these men remains in fulltime employment in their new profession.

The men also had the opportunity to undertake training in basic money management skills and budgeting to ensure those men who did not have a regular income can manage their money effectively through periods when there is no further work available, particularly those who also have families living in other parts of the country and wholly reliant on money being sent to them.

In 2009, MSR continued to recognise the increasingly competitive nature of the workplace in a global financial downturn and the need for the men to be able to offer more and varied skills within the workplace and strove towards opening up more opportunities. The first 11 trainees attended The KAYEC Trust, a local vocational training centre. Again, all of these men are now either employed or self-employed, directly using the skills they learned on the course.

MSR registered as a welfare organisation in Namibia (WO348) and, in March of 2009, MSR relocated to an office in Katutura, the “*township*” close to Wind-

hoek, bringing it into the heart of the community it mainly serves. Recognising its operational requirements also need to keep pace with growth, the staff and trustees of MSR also worked to consolidate its operations and to ensure it developed a stronger strategic focus to its work. Marketing of the service and attracting continuing sponsorship were also central to future strategy.

The donation of computers in 2010 for use by members meant that the men on the side of the road now had access to a tool to create their own CVs, as the staff of MSR had already realised that a lack of a CV – and the lack of the means to acquire one – was one of the greatest hurdles faced by the men. In response to this, MSR began to run a basic CV writing course. This achieved much more than a credible document. It achieved a huge sense of achievement and boost of confidence and self-esteem as each man took “ownership” of his own skills and abilities.

In 2010, MSR also became a partner in the EnviroChance paper-shredding job creation project, funded through the United Nations Development Programme Integrated Sustainable Land Management fund. This project has enabled some of the men to earn an income, which has been sustained, through the shredding of used office paper, a waste material. The shredded paper is further resold as a packing material, ensuring those men working with this project have also gained a business skill and a valuable awareness of recycling and environmentally friendly business practice – an excellent marketing tool. More recently, the shredded paper is being compressed and fashioned into briquettes, which, when burned, can be used as an alternative source of heat. This is not only a wonderful practical contribution to the local community, but also contributes to preserving the environment, a central theme in Namibia.

It was recognised that some men were being greatly limited in their employment aspirations as a result of their lack of English language skills. MSR responded by piloting a basic adult literacy class, initially for ten men, in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Sadly, but perhaps understandably, as lack of literacy and language skills can cause acute embarrassment, this class suffered from a high dropout rate. However, MSR have always embraced the idea that lessons are often best learned from what does not work and the learning has now been developed into new classes, “*English for the World of Work*”, to begin in the very near future.

MSR was also joined for six months by a volunteer social work student from Germany, who worked specifically on one-to-one vocational counseling with potential KAYEC trainees. Again, based on the idea of each man having his own story to be heard, this resulted in much improved self-confidence for this group of men, all of whom went on to be successful in their chosen courses. Two of the men who attended KAYEC returned to MSR after they had completed their training, realising



*Participants with their certificates*

*Source: Janet Wicks*

they were only at the beginning of their journey and, through their own efforts, were accepted by Windhoek Vocational Training Centre for further training in their respective trades. Their acceptance was on the basis of their achievements with KAYEC rather than their meeting the usual educational requirements.

Partnerships with local businesses and training centres continue to provide opportunities for the men to receive training in a wide variety of valuable skills, including truck driving, carpentry, bricklaying, plumbing, tiling, painting and small engine maintenance and repair. Likewise, the successful completion of training courses continues to lead to men finding jobs or being offered internships where they gain both work experience and jobs or go on to further education.

By the end of 2010, it became obvious that the premises MSR occupied, was becoming too small to meet the increasing demand for the service. An application to move into a large workshop within the same site as the existing office was granted and the move took place in March of this year. It is currently being upgraded to meet better the requirements of the organisation. With considerably more space to run in-house meetings and training courses, it is both practical and cost-effective, while giving a greater sense of “safety” for the men themselves to attend both formally and informally and still having the facility of one-to-one support.

The men asked that the community meeting be re-introduced to include any member, rather than just a small representative number from each site, due to lack of space and these are now being held on a regular basis, with an attendance of

30-50 men at each. These meetings serve as a forum for the men to bring ideas and suggestions and criticisms, all of which are considered and integrated into the work of MSR to ensure the service and support continues to be of the highest standards and appropriate to meet the needs of both the men and the potential employers. To support this, a variety of local businessmen, entrepreneurs and motivational speakers are often invited to share time, information and knowledge with the men.

Workshops are offered on what joining the workplace really needs from each individual man and his self-responsibility. These are based on a model of delivery appropriate to the masculine culture and tradition of the country, rather than simply on a Western model of what a workshop should be. These have proven to be highly effective as they encompass the complex and challenging issues of what it means to be a man in a country that is young and not so far from a very different perspective of masculinity.

Much more than this, with a sense of purpose and a sense of self-worth and a sense of community, these are men who will live healthier lives in every way and bring a vibrancy and productivity to the part they play in the economy and future of Namibia.

The potential for growth of MSR and a rolling out of its work nationally is without question. It is a huge task, however, and all those involved with MSR will continue to seek ways to raise the profile of the organisation and improve and adapt the support offered to the men in the hope that this will be the focus for the future. Capacity-building and securing funding to do so, continues to be the greatest challenge, as there is still a long way to go before there are no men on the side of the road.

Inspired by the men themselves, MSR remains both optimistic and ambitious and hopes in the long run to effect enormous change – on an individual level for every man and all those who rely on him within the local communities and nationally – through extending its work. It will continue supporting the men on the side of the road to reach the other side – and to be able to stay there. The opportunity that MSR provide the men on the side of the road to work and to provide for themselves, their families and communities, is not just about numbers, about reducing the unemployment statistics of Namibia. It is about restoring the dignity and the self-worth that goes with having a job and providing for your loved ones.

MSR has taken a conscious decision not to charge fees for their work and, as a consequence, are dependent on financial and other support from Corporate Namibia, international donors, civil society and government institutions.

*After the massive flooding in 2010, new livelihoods had to be found and developed for 20 million flood-ravaged people. In Punjab province, Community Learning Centres were established in which literacy training is connected with marketable and income-oriented skills and the Punjab Literacy and Livelihood Programme (PLLP) was developed. The success of this approach, which combined literacy with the transmission of Life Skills, surpassed the previous projects in which literacy had been developed in isolation. Dr. Allah Bakhsh Malik is Secretary to the Government of the Punjab, Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department.*

**Allah Bakhsh Malik**

## **Adult Literacy with Vocational Skills for Adult Illiterates in Punjab: An Effective Intervention for Skills Development**

Education is the basic human right and quintessential pre-requisite for social capital formation, social and economic empowerment. Pakistan has a population of 192 million people and 92 million are living in the largest province of Punjab.<sup>1</sup> More than 33% people are living below the poverty line and the overall literacy rate is 57%, whereas it is 45% for females. Punjab now has 3.8 million school-age children out-of-school and 80% of them have never been enrolled in a school. 40% of students drop-out before they reach Grade-IV and 77% of the total enrolled children drop-out while climbing the ladder of Grade-IX.<sup>2</sup> The Gender Parity Index is 0.65, which is one of the lowest in the world. The real challenge is 100% enrollment and retention of the enrolled children in the formal school system. The Government of Punjab has chalked out a roadmap and adopted a strategy for 100% enrollment of school-age children and their retention.<sup>3</sup>

The real challenge for the Government is the gigantic task of educating 40 million adult illiterates in the province. Various models of adult literacy were tried in

1 National Institute of Population Studies, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad – 2010.

2 Pakistan Economic Survey, Government of Pakistan Islamabad 2009-2010.

3 Punjab School Roadmap, Government of the Punjab, Chief Minister Secretariat, Lahore 2010.

the past but the target could not be achieved due to a variety of reasons. One of the major arguments, preferred by the adult illiterates against adult literacy programmes of the Government have been the economic and social utility of being literate since millions of graduates are unemployed in Punjab and literacy is not a guarantee for employment and panacea for alleviation of abject poverty.<sup>4</sup> There were also institutional limitations for the skill development of the adult male and female illiterates, since all the technical and vocational institutes, both in the public and private sector, require matriculation qualification (Grade-X) for admission in technical courses, and illiterates were automatically excluded.

## **Functional Literacy with Vocational Skills Programmes**

In 2010, after the unprecedented devastating floods in Pakistan, the major challenge was the rehabilitation of 20 million flood affected people. The homes and businesses were destroyed, and all of a sudden, the flood affected were homeless and penniless. After the flood emergency in Punjab, a new programme was launched combining adult literacy with vocational skills for adult illiterates in Punjab. The initiative had been a huge success with an incessant demand by adult illiterates, expressing their keen desire to join literacy programmes with skill components.

The Government of the Punjab took many initiatives for rehabilitation of flood affected people, and the following two initiatives proved to be the most successful, focusing the adult illiterate population and imparting them literacy with vocational skills simultaneously.

## **Community Learning Centers – CLCs**

Punjab has 36 Districts, and the Muzaffargarh and D.G.Khan districts rank as the lowest in terms of literacy and highest for incidence of poverty.<sup>5</sup> Due to the prevalent socio-cultural milieu of the area, the society is rural and tribal, and there are societal barriers for females to access schools. As a consequence, the literacy rate for females is less than 30%.<sup>6</sup> Distance to school is a major obstacle, and with an increase in distance to school just by 500 meters, the enrollment of girls is substantially reduced.<sup>7</sup> The Literacy and Non Formal Basic Education Department

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4 Government of the Punjab, Literacy and Non Formal Basic Education Department: Five Year Strategic Plan – 2010-2015.

5 Annual Status of Education Report – Pakistan 2010, Punjab Social and Livelihood Survey PLSM 2008-2009, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2008.

6 Economic Survey of Pakistan 2009 – 2010.

7 EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010, UNESCO Paris, France.



*Literacy Course*

*Source: Allah Bakhsh Malik*

(L&NFBED), with the support of UNESCO Pakistan, opened 30 CLCs in the flood affected areas for female illiterates in the age cohort of 15-45 years.<sup>8</sup> The target population was the females who were worst affected by the inundating floods. The vocational skills identified were demand-driven and market-oriented like sewing, stitching, designing clothes and embroidery. A three-month cycle for literacy and vocational skills was designed for each learner; keeping in view the best international practices of CLCs around the globe, shared by the experts of UNESCO with the planning and implementation team. Learners were provided literacy kits and requisite technical material and equipment, free of cost, to learn the basic literacy and the prescribed skills. Local qualified teachers for literacy and skill development were identified and employed by L&NFBED for a class of 30 learners, in the closest vicinity of the homes of learners.

Since 2002, the Government has launched a massive literacy programme in Punjab, opening 9000 adult literacy centers and 560 centers in the same districts, at the cost of PKR 2000 million.<sup>9</sup> The Adult Literacy Centers (ALCs) were home-based with provision of free textbooks and stationery. Despite a good design and implementation strategy, the adult literacy programmes were only partially successful. During a period 2002-2011, L&NFBED opened 25,200 ALCs, but the interest of the adult illiterates in basic literacy and numeracy has been half-hearted, and the public response has not been enviable. Despite advocacy campaigns, time and again, there were marginal improvements but the endeavors remained far from achieving the target of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).<sup>10</sup> Consequently, progress

8 UNESCO Pakistan Implementation Partnership Agreement No. 45129466 for PKR 3.27 million.

9 PKR means Pakistan Rupee. The parity of PKR with US dollar is 86:1.

10 Malik, A. B. (2007). "Freedom of Choice: Affordable Quality Education in Public Private Partnership."

towards the goal of halving adult literacy rate by 2015 has been disappointing at the best and desultory at the worst.<sup>11</sup>

Contrary to the traditional adult literacy programmes, the initiative of the CLCs was a huge success primarily due to community ownership, convenience for female learners and the social acceptability by the communities living in backward rural and tribal areas. During three cycles, at thirty CLCs, with thirty participants at each center, 2700 females were equipped with literacy and vocational skills. The literacy and skill empowerment enabled female learners to be self-employed, working in their own homes with a commercial clientele from nearby villages and neighborhoods, and earning decent livelihoods ranging from PKR 10,000 to 15,000 per month per learner. The immediate benefits to newly literate and skilled females were self-employment, social and economic empowerment, getting-out-of the vicious circle of poverty and demonstrating a replicable model to be followed by other adult illiterate females. The initiative helped them to become self-reliant, improving their quality of life, and contributing towards the development of the respective communities as responsible citizens.

### **Punjab Literacy and Livelihood Programme- PLLP**

The stellar performance of CLCs in Muzaffargarh and D.G.Khan Districts created awareness, culminating in an incessant popular public demand. The public representatives and parliamentarians from Southern Punjab called for scaling-up CLCs in eight districts of Multan and D.G.Khan Divisions, having the lowest literacy rates among 36 districts of Punjab i.e. Rajanpur (20.7%), Muzaffargarh (28.4%), Lodhran (29.9%), D.G.Khan (30.6%), Vehari (36.8%), Khanewal (39.9%) and Layyah (38.7%).<sup>12</sup> Accommodating the pressing public demand, the Government allocated an amount of PKR 135.71 million for PLLP.<sup>13</sup> The specific purpose of the intervention was to replicate the model of the CLCs and provide basic literacy and vocational skills to 7500 adult illiterates, both males and females. In order to provide incentive and attract adult illiterates towards basic literacy and vocational skills, a stipend of PKR 500 per month per participant was also introduced. The target group was economically disadvantaged adult illiterates in the age cohort of 15 – 45 years. The gender ratio of the beneficiaries in PLLP was 50:50.

A special Project Management Unit (PMU) was created with qualified managerial staff with an independent impeccable system of monitoring and evaluation. In order to implement the organic incipient initiative, PMU entered into a partnership

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11 EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011, UNESCO, Paris, France.

12 National Education Census 2005, Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad 2010.

13 Annual Development Programme, Planning and Development Department, Government of the Punjab 2010.

with the Punjab Vocational Training Council (PVTC), an autonomous specialized agency for imparting vocational skills in the public sector, having an extensive outreach with adequate institutional arrangements for effective service delivery. Need assessment for demand-driven vocational skills for learners was carried out, and PVTC institutions located in different districts and towns in Southern Punjab prepared customized programmes according to market-oriented local requirements. Keeping in view the engagements of male learners; working as unskilled labour during daytime, and females engaged in household chores in the afternoon, flexible and convenient timings were notified in consultation with the learners and local communities. For males, vocational skills like electrician, plumber, pipe-fitter, mechanic, machinist, etc., were identified. In the case of females, vocational skills like beautician, fashion-designer, sewing, stitching, embroidery, leatherwork, cottage-industry artisanship etc., were introduced. Now up to 7500 adult male and female illiterates have been empowered with basic literacy and vocational skills through PLLP.

The endeavor has been acknowledged as a hallmark of achievement by the communities and civil society organizations in eight districts. Keeping in view the success of PLLP, the Government has expressed a firm commitment with stoic determination to scale-up the programme of adult literacy and vocational skills, throughout the province of Punjab, targeting the entire population of 40 million adult illiterates. The political and professional leadership of the province is positively poised to allocate adequate resources for this purpose, enabling the unskilled illiterate people to become skilled and literate, earning their livelihoods through employment or self-run trades.

*Literacy Course*

*Source: Allah Bakhsh Malik*





*Sewing Course*  
Source:  
*Allah Bakhsh Malik*

## Conclusion

No country can thrive in the new millennium without skilled and literate human resource and social capital. Punjab, the largest province of Pakistan, is crippled by an education emergency that threatens millions of people. The emergency has the potential for disastrous human, social and economic consequences, with the background of a wave of terrorism in the country. The initiatives for promotion of affordable education in the formal school system, and literacy and vocational skills, through customized skill development programmes for illiterates, genuinely deserved the highest priority on the political development agenda.

In the past, the slow pace of progress towards the goal of halving illiteracy reflected a low level of political commitment with meager resource allocation. The adult literacy efforts suffered for decades primarily because of the reasons that the Government has been concentrating on adult literacy as a stand-alone initiative, without the essential component of imparting a vocational skill that promotes Lifelong Learning. The adult illiterates were reluctant to join literacy and numeracy programmes launched by the Government since they desired to be literate and skilled simultaneously. The combination of literacy and vocational skills together helped the adult illiterates to improve the quality of their lives and families, by virtue of income generation through value addition in human resource. The aforementioned initiatives also helped the adult illiterates for better adjustment in the socio-economic system, becoming useful members of society and earning decent livelihoods. The programmes have the potential to become definite contributions towards achieving MDGs and meeting the emerging demands of skilled workers in the job markets in developing countries like Pakistan. The blend of literacy and vocational skills together is promising, because they ensure employment and amelioration, thus impacting positively on the reduction in poverty, especially for the less-affluent, marginalized and disenfranchised sections of society.

*As in other countries, a high proportion of prisoners in Macedonia have not completed school and have had no professional training. Remedial education is therefore a critical element of rehabilitation, coupled with offers of professional qualification to assist their integration into the labour market at the end of their incarceration. As described in the Tetovo project, computer skills, language training and health care are included just as much in the training package as the craft of wood carving. Not only technical skills are important for the prisoners. On top of that, the gain in pride and self-esteem helps them to endure imprisonment and increases their chances of rehabilitation. Maja Avramovska is the Director of the dvv international office in Macedonia. Britta Schweighöfer is the desk officer of dvv international for Southeast Europe.*

**Maja Avramovska/Britta Schweighöfer**

## **Where Time Doesn't Pass – Skills Training in Tetovo Prison in Macedonia**

### **The Tetovo Prison**

The city of Tetovo is in the northwest of the Republic of Macedonia and is the fourth largest city in the country. It has an area of 262 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 86,580, and if one includes the surrounding villages then there are approximately 200,000 people. Tetovo is a multiethnic city with Albanians (70.32%), Macedonians (23.16%), Roma (2.72%), Turks (2.17%) and other ethnic groups (1.61%).

The Tetovo prison is located in the immediate vicinity of the most visited attraction in the city – the colourful mosque on the Pena river. The prison is among one of the partially-open institutions. Here, prisoners are housed with sentences of up to three years as well as recidivists with a prison sentence of up to 6 months. The Tetovo prison is a prison for men from the Tetovo and Gostivar region, with a capacity of 48 prisoners. Currently, the number of inmates is nearly twice as high. 90% of the prisoners are ethnic Albanians, most of the others are Macedonians and Roma.

The building is in need of renovation. In recent years, only the kitchen and dining room have been renovated. Management and security rooms are located in

one building, only a door separates the offices from the cells of the prisoners. The cells themselves are small and 5-6 prisoners share about 14 square meters. The overcrowding is clearly visible. In the courtyard there is a small sports field where the prisoners spend a lot of time – at least during good weather – playing football or chess. A few extra rooms are available, including classrooms for computer applications and languages as well as the woodcarving workshop. The equipment in the classrooms was procured, for the most part, with financial support and as part of the *dvv international* project.

## Rehabilitation Programs

After a prisoner has been admitted, classification follows according to the Prisons Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 2, 09.01.2006). Factors such as the type of offence, personality, lifestyle and educational level are considered. Particular attention is paid to the question of whether the prisoner seems prone to violence and whether he is a drug addict. Both are the exception in Tetovo prison. The prison psychologist regards this classification as a useful tool. From the first day of detention, she directs her attention to individual prisoners in order to be able to better prepare them for their day of release. A life in freedom, without crime, is to be thought of from the start. Other forms of sentencing – for example free forms of accommodation in juvenile detention or house arrest with locator beacon – have not yet been used in Macedonia. The instruments are too new and competent judges too insecure to use these options.

A doctor and a nurse look after the health of prisoners; a small pharmacy is available. Drug-addict prisoners are under the special supervision of the medical centre in Tetovo, where the appropriate treatment is prescribed. Currently there are 14 inmates participating in a methadone program. The prison staff emphasise the difficulty of working with such prisoners. They are striving for a separate section for drug addicts, alcoholics and other ill prisoners; additional investment in this area is not foreseen.

The rehabilitation program is implemented by two teachers/psychologists and tries to communicate to the prisoners the will and the ability to lead a responsible life. Conceptually, the rehabilitation program also includes training and employment of prisoners. The actual conditions for this are modest. A regular employment within the prison is possible for only a few prisoners, for example, in the kitchen area. 2-3 inmates are in an open prison, so they can work outside during the day in a company. However the interest in such cooperation is limited. Due to the poor economy and an unemployment rate which is over 30%, only very few companies are willing to employ a prisoner.

## Training Needs and Legal Framework

The training needs in this as in other prisons is colossal. In Tetovo, the majority of prisoners have a primary school education, but only a few with qualifications beyond that. In other prisons, the average is still significantly worse. The Prison Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 2, 09.01.2006), Article 135 stipulates that prisons are obliged to organise the basic education of prisoners, while the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the funding. The institutions can also offer other forms of vocational education for the prisoners. The reality is somewhat different. In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science started an initiative which should have facilitated and financed remedial elementary education for every prisoner, but due to lack of funds the project was not realised.

The relevant Department of Justice seeks to improve the general conditions in the prisons. This reform of prisons includes two components: improvement of accommodation capacities and strengthening the capacity of staff working in penal institutions. In recent years, several prisons, or parts of them have been renovated with funds from the European Union and with the support of other international organisations.

Recommendation No. 89 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on education in prisons, adopted in 1989, according to Article 15b of the statute of the European Council, maintains that the right to education is basic and the prisoners should be given the opportunity to be educated. The Republic of Macedonia aspires to EU membership and will therefore take all the necessary steps in this area.

## Course Conducted

In 2008, *dvv international* started a project to train prisoners in collaboration with the Tetovo prison. Before beginning the project, a training needs analysis was conducted to determine the knowledge level and the training needs of the prisoners.

The objectives of the project are:

1. To increase the education level of prisoners so that their path to integration in society is made easier. A contribution is thus made to protect society from further criminal offences.
2. To provide the same opportunities to disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities for personal development. A contribution is thus made toward an active anti-discrimination policy in education.

In this cooperation, five training courses for prisoners have been carried out. In March 2008, the first two training courses, which lasted 10 months, began. A total of 24 prisoners who attained key competencies in the areas of computer applica-

tions and foreign language (English) were trained. The participants had a large and growing interest for the computer and English courses. Therefore, in 2010, with a similar educational approach, two more training courses in the same areas were carried out for 22 prisoners. A computer course encompasses 120 hours, an English course 100 hours. The prisoners were already in possession of a primary or secondary school education and were taught in Albanian.

Content relating to health care was integrated in the courses. Lectures by experts were given or films were shown which covered, for example, topics such as AIDS, prevention of hepatitis, tuberculosis and drug prevention. Following the lectures or films, discussions were held with question and answer sessions. The substantive issues were also directly linked to the computer lessons, in which the learners created Power Point presentations with photos and text about the previously discussed topics. The training sessions were completed successfully by all participants.

The lessons took place in a room used for these purposes, renovated and provided with several computers, tables, chairs, a blackboard and the necessary materials. In addition, even a small library was set up for the prisoners. The computer room is of course also still available for use during free time. The prison educator however also openly acknowledges that it is not easy to motivate the inmates for learning outside the formal course framework. Listening to music and playing computer games are the most common applications that are used when they are free to choose.

In 2011, on the basis of a needs analysis, 20 prisoners were taught skills in wood-carving. The classes last for 3 months (10 lessons per week). An additional room was adapted for this purpose and changed into a workshop with the necessary equipment for the practical part of the course. In the practical part of course, the prisoners design, model and carve the workpieces with the assistance of an experienced instructor. This results in products like chess pieces and boards, boxes for wine bottles, small chairs and decorative pieces. A group of prisoners modelled a mosque. The project was presented with pride during our visit to the project, followed by a good-humoured assurance that they could at any time also make a church for the guests.

Trainers and lecturers who teach in Tetovo, are trained to work with prisoners and dealing with professional standards, and there exists a close cooperation and technical exchange with other institutions of Adult Education, especially with the Workers' University in Tetovo. Above all, the development or adaptation of curricula for all courses is discussed intensively and professionally coordinated.



## Beyond the Curriculum

As elsewhere, beyond the curriculum, much is learned or practiced. Some examples are: maintaining a daily rhythm, finishing what has been started, dealing responsibly with tools and organising themselves in groups. One of the occupants, tool and workpiece in hand, summarised it so: *"This is how time flies by."* He speaks German and immediately took the opportunity to talk, because any change is welcome. In the woodcarving group we encountered an inmate who was perhaps learning or mentally disabled. He draws assembly plans with passion and has status in the group. Apparently Integrated Learning takes place here naturally.

The prison psychologist reported that the courses offer the prisoners the opportunity to focus on something other than their imprisonment. She describes a general calming effect stemming from the course offers on the overall climate in dealings among and with the prisoners. She finds it hard to state this effect clearly, nevertheless the relief is plainly visible in her face. Part of her work is with groups and individual interviews with the prisoners, sometimes with up to eight talks in one day which often centre around conflicts between the prisoners. This work also makes demands on her psychologically and emotionally. She stresses that this has improved since the courses have been on offer. The prison director confirmed this unburdening effect of the course offerings on daily operations. Although not planned, even this effect is important in the context of the country of Macedonia. The public sector is often characterised by lack of initiative. Dedicated staff members, like in the Tetovo prison, are not to be taken for granted. It is therefore even more important that positive effects from such initiatives can also be drawn for their own work.

## And after that?

A major weakness of the rehabilitation programs lies in the inadequate or total lack of cooperation between prison and Social Services. In theory, the released prisoners should have a contact person in Social Services who is already familiar with the prisoner's life history. This would be particularly important for the prisoners in the methadone program, but also in the areas of housing and education more

*Products of woodcarving workshops*

*Source: Maja Avramovska/Britta Schweighöfer*



advice or care would be useful. The question of further schooling, or a remedial education qualification should be addressed immediately after release. So far, such cooperation is a future pipe-dream.

So, the ex-prisoners disappear into the army of other unemployed and welfare recipients. It is therefore difficult to determine, even for *dvv international*, to which extent the released prisoners have been able to use what they have learned and to actively employ this knowledge in finding a job. A systematic survey has so far not been made and is confronted by the particular problem that many participants have neither an address nor telephone number at the time of release and have not attended the courses in the framework of an existing social context.

The available responses are therefore more likely due to chance, because Tetovo is not a very big city. The prison psychologist reported that she now and then meets an ex-inmate on the street and then a conversation results. She recalls a prisoner who attended the computer course and now works in a computer store. Another described more concretely that the skill he got about how to write a good CV (part of the computer course) was able to be translated directly to a job search which was successful. He found employment with a Greek company. A third was able to get his middle school certificate and reported that knowledge of English he acquired while in prison was crucially necessary in this.

We asked the prison psychologist how she assesses the impact of her work and evaluates the training and get a clear answer: *"Whoever who doesn't come back is a success."*

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*After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly independent Central Asian countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan plunged into a deep crisis in their economic and political structures. The education system also experienced a steep decline from which it is gradually recovering. The labour market cannot absorb the available workers, who now have to rely largely on temporary employment in Russia. Through different approaches in non-formal vocational education, based on labour market analysis, an attempt is being made to close the gaps. These also take into account what skills are required in Russia by the migrant workers. Kamol Jiyankhodjaev works for Islohotkonsaltservis Consulting Ltd., an Uzbek company.*

**Kamol Jiyankhodjaev**

## **The Case of Central Asia: Non-formal Skills Training as a Tool to Combat Poverty and Unemployment**

### **Context**

**Overview of the relevant developments in Central Asia within the last decade with a special focus on poverty, employment and the educational sector**

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are the former Soviet Union republics landlocked in the heart of Central Asia. Together, they cover a territory of more than 790,000 sq. km. and have a total population of over 40 million people.

Being a remote part of the Soviet Union, these countries enjoyed relatively high levels of human development for many decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including access to education, health care, road infrastructure as well as a permanent fuel, gas and electricity supply.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 brought these countries into the deep crisis experienced by the political and economic structures and networks. The Central Asian countries experienced rapid deindustrialisation followed by deurbanisation. During almost half of the first decade of independence, the Central Asian states were mostly struggling to survive rather than to develop. Tajikistan was suffering from a civil war up to 1997.

The dynamics of the Human Development index show that countries passed through the phase of extreme poverty in early and mid 1990 when more than 80% of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and about 63% of Uzbekistan lived below the income poverty line.<sup>1</sup> Positive growth of GDP started from 1996 in Uzbekistan, from 1997 in Kyrgyzstan and from 1998 in Tajikistan. After the short break during the world crisis of 1998-99, the economies of all three countries have been steadily growing within the last decade. If in early 2000 the average growth rate was about 3–4%, it accelerated to 6–7% by 2005 and reached 7–9% in 2008. The revolutions of 2005 and 2010 brought some decline to Kyrgyzstan. The world crisis of 2008 negatively affected labour remittance in all the countries and prices for some export goods dropped, but in the following years, development restored the pace of economic growth.

According to the 2010 UN Human Development Report, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan obtained places among the medium human development countries and ranked as 109, 112 and 102 respectively. The main contribution into the HDR index was provided by the relatively high education and health levels, however, the contribution of economy (GNI) could be considered as moderate or even low.<sup>2</sup>

In different countries, poverty could be due to different local conditions, disadvantages and factors such as geography, demographics, culture, economics and politics. With these three republics, we see a combination of all these factors. These countries are all landlocked and Uzbekistan is even double landlocked. They have a tradition of relatively early marriage, big families and a high birth rate level, and their economies are suffering from political instability. Many people in the overpopulated Central Asian states find international labour migration one of the most accessible ways to destroy the chain of poverty and help their families to survive. Russia was the most attractive option taking into account the fact that citizens of CIS countries do not need an entry visa, they still have some networks from former times, they have a similar education and are able to speak in Russian.

The most recent World Bank data suggests that Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan together contribute more than half of the total annual labour migrants

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1 UN Human Development Report 2000. p. 172.

2 UN Human Development Report 2010. p. 144–145.

in Russia. Kyrgyzstan is sending about 620,000 workers (27.9% of the national labour force), Tajikistan: 820,000 (36.9%) and Uzbekistan more than 2,000,000 (17.2%).<sup>3</sup> The role of migrants' money transfers for local economies cannot be underestimated and if for Uzbekistan remittance presents a relatively modest 11% to the nominal GDP, Kyrgyzstan has 31% and Tajikistan even 41% of that indicator. These figures explicitly show how the wellbeing of citizens of Central Asian states depends on the remittance from labour migrants.

Following the economic development, the education systems experienced a deep decline in the early 90s and slowly recovered in the 2000–2010 decade. Based on their realities and political preferences, countries choose different ways to develop their education systems and respond to population and market demands. If the choice of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan was mainly to expand higher educational opportunities using private and international funds, Uzbekistan preferred to focus on developing a fully state-driven initial professional training system. The main bottlenecks in the current education systems of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are related to the low and limited level of TVET (Technical vocational education and training). In the case of Uzbekistan, this is the opposite: universal and mandatory TVET and upper secondary education is not followed by appropriate access to higher levels of education.

Non-formal education and in particular Adult Education plays a compensatory role and provides some options in the fields, which formal education currently is not able to cover. It seems that within the context described above, the choice of non-formal education and training is a natural response of individuals and businesses to the emerging demands for new skills, competences and, in broader terms, Lifelong Learning. Therefore, the development of non-formal education and in particular Adult Education should find its own rightful place in the state educational policy. This is where *dvv international* has played a significant role in the last decade.

## ***dvv international* in Central Asia**

*dvv international* started its engagement in Central Asia at the end of 2002 with simultaneous opening projects in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The project in Tajikistan started the year after. The general aim of *dvv international* is to contribute to poverty alleviation and local capacity building by introducing Adult Learning and Education (ALE) professional training programmes for unemployed and socially disadvantaged people in the context of Central Asia especially, but not exclusively.

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3 The Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011. Second edition. WB 2011. p. 3, 156, 238, 254.

Communities in Central Asia have a tradition going back a thousand years of non-formal training in the non-formal sectors of national handcraft and small-scale services like embroidery and jewellery, silk and carpets, metal and woodwork, ceramics and construction, national dressing and footwear as well as hairdressing and butchery. That training existed in the form of apprenticeships. It had no official recognition and even products of that sector were always presented abroad as a national brand.

Responding to the demand to fight poverty and unemployment, *dvv international* started the implementation of programmes with the aim of developing appropriate Adult Education systems in Central Asian countries. In order to be comprehensive, the programme had to perform a range of activities: analysis of local conditions and labour markets, selection and building capacity of local actors, establishment and institutional building of training delivery units as well as direct delivery of training courses and policy advice to decision makers.

## **Elements of Demand-driven Non-formal Skills Training**

### **Needs assessment methods: What works and why?**

Assessing training needs arising from a labour market perspective is a challenge for both formal and non-formal TVET institutions. With the help of donor projects, some models of labour market quantitative and qualitative assessments were introduced in all the reviewed countries. In Uzbekistan, it became a part of state policy and nowadays every “*Professional College*” (Public vocational training school) has to collect and update information on neighbouring businesses.

The labour market assessment methodology used by Professional Colleges mostly responds to the question about immediate availability of job places. The capacity of this methodology to predict mid-term or long-term labour market development trends will become greater if assessment is done regularly, well documented and analysed. Due to a lack of resources and access to the companies, private course providers may have the opportunity to make a labour market assessment only in the framework and with the support of international donors. Even broadly implemented, this vacancy collection methodology mostly reflects the data on formal economy in the nearest area. It is very difficult and even impossible to access the informal economy.

Due to the very high level of labour migration, training needs assessment does not only focus on the local market but also takes into account the situation in the countries of destination. This Russian labour market structure nowadays has a great influence on the perception of people and TVET providers as regards what professions should be promoted and what kind of training should be delivered to those



Vocational training in Uzbekistan

Source: *dvv international*

who seek employment abroad. In all Central Asian countries, construction-related labour profiles are the most popular among courses delivered for unemployed men. For example, the Sughd region of Tajikistan has 18 vocational schools and one Centre for Adult Education, all of them offering 1–3 month courses for adults. These schools consider the client to be a potential male migrant and therefore the majority of courses offered are welding, plastering and metal works.

### Approaches to curricula development

In order to facilitate and streamline localised development processes, *dvv international* has introduced specific technology for curriculum development. Using elements from the so-called DACUM<sup>4</sup> approach made it possible, within a very limited time frame and at a modest cost, to explicitly describe employer requirements for different jobs, which include the list of activities, functions and tasks the professional has to perform during his/her work assignment at a defined competency level. Based on this information, the curriculum developers outline the necessary knowledge and skills to obtain during training sessions and practice. They also list the necessary tools, equipment and consumables. Together, these elements constitute the standard for the profession on a certain competency level.

4 Abbreviation from Development A Curriculum. This technology of vocational curriculum development was initially introduced in 1966 in USA and Canada.

The methodology could be criticised from an academic point of view in that it heavily relies on the view of a specific small group of employers and therefore may be too narrow, reflecting the experience of only these particular employers. However, the strong point of this methodology is that it allows grassroots level industry specialists to be engaged and, in reality, connects local education to industry for TVET content discussion.

## **Case Studies (Focus on Lessons Learnt)**

### **Uzbekistan: Using VET colleges for non-formal skills training**

Taking into account the fact that contemporary Uzbekistan is investing in the development of Professional Colleges which are widely present in every district, *dvv international* decided to use them as local footholds for creating Adult Education Centres. The professional colleges in Uzbekistan have all the necessary attributes to become regional education and cultural centres. Currently, they have renovated or provided brand new training facilities, workshops, stadiums, dormitories, assembly halls, qualified general subjects and TVET teaching staff. Many professional colleges have full-scale production equipment and participate in the local economy.

Following a local labour market survey, colleges selected 10 pilot profiles that they can and want to deliver to unemployed people. These profiles were related to sewing, welding, plastering, mechanics, metal works and office administration. The availability of training equipment and in-house training capacity was the greatest factor in the selection of these profiles. By using elements of the DACUM methodology, *dvv international* assisted the colleges to develop training curricula for every profile. Every curriculum on average consisted of 500 contact hours in the classroom and workshop. On average, 10 unemployed persons were enrolled in every profile. Gender distribution was taken into account. In the second year of the programme and responding to the local economic demand, one of the most remote colleges established a new profile related to water resource management.

In 2007, in an attempt to disseminate and reinforce outcomes of this programme and establish a network of Adult Education providers, *dvv international* applied for and acquired the EU TACIS Institutional Building grant. The two-year project philosophy envisaged that colleges, which already have the capacity in the labour market survey and curriculum development, have to establish a cluster partnership with at least two other colleges and serve them as a local hub for know-how transfer. In parallel, the capacity of old colleges had to be reinforced by institution-building training activities. The overall number of networking colleges became 21 and the number of regions covered by the network increased to 10. Implementation of the

triangle system (Labour market analysis – Curriculum – Training delivery) considerably extended the colleges' abilities to offer new profiles.

At the moment, colleges allocate very little time and attention to adult courses. On average, 50 trainees pass through the 500 hours' course per CAE (Centre for Adult Education) per annum. Considering that the course at first hand is devoted to a low income and vulnerable population, the cost of the course must be kept low. Therefore, in order to sustain this activity and make it economically viable, the number of trainees has to be considerably extended together with a diversification of training products and a rationalisation of training hours.

Consultations with similar activities in the Kyrgyz Adult Education Centre in rural areas suggest that 300 trainees trained in 1–3 month courses (32–96 hours) a year is a break-even point for a small training unit. VET schools in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on average train 300 adults in 3–4 profiles a year while the school average capacity is 600 students with 8–10 profiles. The average duration of courses delivered by private providers ranges from 1 to 3 months. TVET schools in Uzbekistan also have an average capacity of between 600 and 800 students. It seems that the number of courses for adults at these centres could be extended 5–6 times in comparison with the current baseline. Taking into account the fact that Uzbekistan has 1372 professional colleges and half of them work one shift, the overall volume of adult courses could have between 60,000 and 400,000 trainees

*Training of the trainers in Uzbekistan*

*Source: dvv international*



per annum. If the average cost for training (empiric observation) can be estimated at \$30 per participant, the total volume of the Adult Education sector realised by formal TVET schools could range between 2 and 6 million USD a year.

### **Tajikistan: The PATENT Project – Poverty Alleviation Through Education and Non-formal Training**

From the second half of the 2000–2010 decade, international donors, with mostly Swiss and German origin, have placed their efforts into rehabilitating and further developing the national TVET system in Tajikistan. The first projects were devoted to analytical reviews of the national system and policy advice for the development of initial TVET for youths as well as professional education for adults. The EU and German government co-funded a PATENT project that established cooperation with 10 vocational schools from two regions. The project has a relatively small-scale but comprehensive nature, covering all the necessary points of concern: labour market analysis, curricula review and re-design, training material development, teacher training, management capacity building, establishment of social partnership, dialogue with the government authorities and installation of school training equipment. Certain attention was given to cross-cutting gender equity and monitoring issues. The primary objective of the project was to develop a professional education service for adults. However, because the prime beneficiaries were vocational schools, the project also contributed to overall TVET development. Therefore, indirect beneficiaries of the project became the students of formal TVET courses.

The labour market survey demonstrated limited additional labour demand from the local businesses. In total, 277 entities reported 1016 vacancies for more than 30 profiles. On average, each entity demanded from 3 to 4 new hands a year.<sup>5</sup> The most demanded professions were construction-related for men and sewing and office work for women. Following the identified structure of demand and given capacity of the pilot schools, the project decided to offer professional skills in welding, electrical appliance repair and sewing. Necessary production and training equipment was purchased to support pilot schools workshops and training rooms. With the aim of extending the capacities of the TVET provider and responding to demand in skills related to IT, accounting and office management, the project invested in IT labs at pilot schools.

The labour market survey mostly reflected immediate need of acting enterprises in additional labour. The survey also projected demand for the next year. Together,

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<sup>5</sup> Labour market survey and skills needs assessment for Khatlon and Sugd regions of Tajikistan. Final Report. PATENT. *dvv international*. ASTI. 2009.



*Training of trainers in Tadjikistan*

*Source: dvv international*

this snapshot and projection could be considered as a basis for the direction of school graduates and selection of next year's courses. The weak point of this survey methodology is that it does

not take an informal sector into account. Adjustment of this survey by the limited household survey would probably create a more reliable picture. The other significant information should be investment plans of the government and big businesses in the relevant location and sector. Access to that information could be obtained from the local government and Chamber of Commerce.

The strong point of this methodology is that it ensures the establishment of working contacts between the TVET provider and the employer. It would be advisable for TVET management to implement this activity at least once a year.<sup>6</sup> Becoming a regular routine exercise, the labour market survey will allow TVET providers to maintain regular interaction with the local businesses and react flexibly if the labour market situation changes.

Taking into account that up to 37% of Tajikistan's workforce migrates to Russia every year and the majority need qualifications in construction-related fields, TVET providers are making the natural choice in favour of construction profiles. At the same time, females mostly remain at home and need some skills that are useful for a household business. This situation reduces the options for women to virtually only sewing, catering and hairdressing profiles. Adding computer classes allowed TVET schools to extend their offer for women to office management, telecommunications and IT/ICT profiles. These profiles could be developed further and delivered not only as a general course but also as a number of specific products. For example, the sewing profile can be diversified into several small products: basics of sewing; tailoring; female dress; male dress; curtains; wedding dress; working dress; bedroom linen; beads and flower making; batik etc. This is the same with IT, catering and hairdressing profiles. A greater number of products together with a flexible curriculum will increase the marketing opportunities for adult courses. Of course,

<sup>6</sup> Some colleges in Uzbekistan update information from main employers on quarterly basis and use this information as an indicator for overall prognosis.

implementation of that diversity requires the teachers to develop new knowledge and skills.

The PATENT project organised 100 short-term courses and delivered initial professional skills to 2002 unemployed people including 1193 women.<sup>7</sup> Pilot school directors and ministry officials received training in management, marketing, business planning and organisation development. Teachers have been trained in labour market analysis, curriculum development and interactive delivery methodology as well as in basics of IT-based bookkeeping and accounting. These skills should create a basis of sustainability for professional courses for adults as an economic activity. In addition, the project contributed to an improvement in the social partnership relations between initial TVET providers, businesses, local governments and communities. Each locality with the TVET school in the centre established advisory boards with the primary agenda of assisting TVET schools in addressing issues of TVET promotion as well as employment of course graduates and ensuring their access to local business, banking and governmental resources.

The significance of the PATENT project for Adult Education development within the formal TVET system is that methodologies and approaches offered by PATENT make TVET activities more systemic and better equipped. With PATENT, 10 schools received a comprehensive system and in-house capacity for measuring labour market needs, developing curriculum and new products, establishing social partnerships as well as promoting TVET among employers and the general public. The experience of PATENT should become instrumental for the upcoming TVET development projects in Tajikistan.

### **Kyrgyzstan: Non-formal Skills Training in Rural Areas of Kyrgyzstan**

The EU IBPP project<sup>8</sup> “*non-formal skills training in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan*” was realised in 2008–2009. The primary goal of the IBPP programme was to build the capacities of local NGOs with the provision of social services. The project was implemented through a partnership between *dvv international* and the Kyrgyz Adult Education Association (KAEA). The project’s scope covered 36 villages in 7 regions of Kyrgyzstan and targeted the development of skills leading to employment and income generation of the poor and unemployed people in rural areas.

The project was traditionally designed: labour market analysis, identification of professional profiles, development of curriculum, preparation of training materials and delivery of training. The project was followed by capacity building activities

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7 PATENT Final Report. *dvv international*. ASTI. March 2011. p. 19.

8 IBPP is a funding line of the European Union and stands for the Institutional Building Partnership Programme.

for local training providers: training of trainers, establishment of social partnership relations and dissemination of outcomes.

In total, 554 villagers participated in the training and acquired new professional skills. Six selected training profiles were delivered: veterinary, milk processing, sewing of traditional dresses, traditional yurt building, traditional Kyrgyz home decoration and sewing of womens clothes.

Despite the traditional design, the project implementation approaches demonstrated a very creative nature of Adult Education Centres. Education providers did not wait for clients in their training centres; rather they entered communities and came closer to the end users. Labour market analysis did not just approach enterprises. Instead, it reviewed local development plans and concentrated on the needs of rural households. This approach allowed taking not just traditionally selected construction profiles but also targeting a broader area of the local economy. Another observation is that the selected training profiles addressed not just profitable professions but also traditional national crafts. With this approach, the project made its contribution towards preserving traditional society values.

Adult Education Centres demonstrated a high flexibility in addressing the training equipment issue. They established partnerships with the local businesses and

*Vocational training in Kyrgyzstan*

*Source: dvv international*



households and practical sessions were organised on farms using actual productive equipment and livestock. Mobile training workshops were organised in order to bring the education facility closer to end users. If in some locations there was no veterinary service at all, the project developed a basic local veterinary capacity and in fact restored the local service.

The pool of trainers was extended. The majority were not educators but professionals in a particular field. By participating in training they were able to acquire training delivery skills and become effective vocational subject trainers. In some cases, local schools and TVET schools were used as training venues. The training schedule was flexible and the majority of training sessions were organised taking into account seasonal work and harvest in the farms.

Local administration and village community elders took responsibility for training facilities and furniture and assisted in transporting the mobile workshops. They also provided information and promotional support for the project, informed villagers about it and assisted in selecting the course participants.

Participation in the project allowed trainees to extend their knowledge, find a job, extend their businesses and remain on the farms rather than deciding to migrate. Project reports suggest that the project made an impact on the development of the local economy. Thanks to the project, at least 25 villages restored their veterinary service. It has an implication not just on the employment status and income of those who were trained but on the local livestock sector as a whole. New competences in milk processing allowed at least 35 farmers to shift from raw milk production to products with greater added value, such as cheese and yoghurts, and considerably increase their income. At least 100 graduates from the sewing course found a job in sewing workshops of private companies.

The project's effect was greater on the veterinary, milk processing and sewing profiles. There are only a few reports that traditional crafts actually bring more jobs and income. Nevertheless, traditional craft skills are also useful in the traditional households and may contribute to the development of the tourism sector. The project experience can be used by further *dvv international* and KAEA activities as a model showing the organisation of flexible and targeted rural TVET based on community needs assessment

## **Conclusion: Evidence of the Impact of Non-formal Skills Training on Poverty Alleviation and Reducing Unemployment**

The target groups of *dvv international* projects experienced extreme poverty, remoteness from industrial centres, unemployment and a low education level. 50%



Conference

Source: *dvv international*

of the training participants in Uzbekistan were unemployed for 3 years before the project. Projects in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were implemented in remote rural villages where the local economy had been stagnating for decades.

New skills acquired from training allowed participants to find a job, try to start independent businesses, extend their income from non-formal economy and apply knowledge in household economic activities. Thus, more than 70% of the participants in Uzbekistan found a job within one month after graduation.<sup>9</sup> 45% of the trainees in Kyrgyzstan achieved immediate employment and self-employment.<sup>10</sup>

This indicator was different in Tajikistan where the project was realised when the global financial crisis hit Russia in 2008–2009. The PATENT project achieved local employment among 22% of the trained welders, while 61% of them migrated to Russia. At the same time, 20% of the women trained in accounting and IT found a job immediately after training.<sup>11</sup> Probably 100% of sewing class trainees considerably improved their opportunities to create incomes for their families working from

<sup>9</sup> EU IBPP “Strengthening the Infrastructure and Capacity of Uzbek Colleges for Training Unemployed (INSTRUCT) in Uzbekistan.” Final Report. 2008. p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> EU IBPP “Non-formal skills training in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan.” Final Report. 2009. p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> EU Project “Poverty alleviation in Tajikistan through Education and Non-formal Training” PATENT. Final Report 2011. p. 39.

home, which is important especially to those who have children and a household to take care of and are often the only breadwinners present in Tajikistan when their husbands have left for labour migration.<sup>12</sup>

In the case of Kyrgyzstan, women employed in a sewing workshop could earn up to USD 400 a month in 2010. In comparison with the cost of living, estimated for Kyrgyzstan in 2010, this money allows a family with 3 members to be fed. Therefore, conversion of USD 60 into sewing competences could be considered as a good investment with high and quick return.

Participation in welding and sewing profiles promises a high level of post-course employment due to boosting construction and textile sectors both in Central Asian countries and in the Russian Federation. On the other hand, participating in the veterinary and milk processing courses was just in line with the needs of rural households in Kyrgyzstan where the main local economic activity is cattle breeding.

The benefit from training was also reported in non-monetary forms. Participants in the veterinary class no longer need to purchase the expensive service of an external veterinarian. Sewing skills allow seamstresses to serve their own families. The economy of household monies contributes to overall household welfare improvement. More trained people can now offer services to their neighbours and that helps raise the entire sector productivity.

Training has made an impact on individuals. It raised their self-confidence level. It established and broadened their competences in a particular area. Projects allowed them to establish networks with local training providers and businesses. As regards migration, acquired skills and certificates made them better prepared for jobs in other countries. In many cases, the training of one household member had a domino effect on the other family members and close neighbours.

Non-formal education and training contributes towards alleviating poverty and increasing the overall quality of life. The role of NFE becomes vitally important if opportunities of formal education are not accessible or limited in size and quality.

In general, the role of NFE should be understood in the framework of a social partnership concept as civil society's assistance to the developing countries of Central Asia to maintain governmental commitments to ensure universal access to education for all individuals, regardless of their nationality, age, physical condition, gender, region and level of income.

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12 Thekla Kelbert, Sherali Toshmurodov. "Poverty Alleviation in Tajikistan through Education and Non-formal Training (PATENT)." Final Project Evaluation Report. 2011. p. 6

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*Based on the work done in a boarding school in the remote rural area of the state of Puebla, which has a strong indigenous population, the goal of the Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Rural (CESDER) is to create for the people of the region the conditions for a "good and decent life". The basis for this is joint learning and action in the community, in which the development objectives are defined, learned along the way and then alternately put into practice. General learning, farming skills, vocational skills, life skills, citizenship skills and intercultural skills are dealt with together in the project. Feliciano Aguilar Hernández is the Director, Irma Estela Pérez Aguirre, the President of the Board of CESDER.*

**Feliciano Aguilar Hernández / Irma Estela Aguirre Pérez**

## **CESDER: Meeting, Encounter and Dialogue – Creating Other Worlds of Hope**

At the Centre for the Development of Rural Studies (CESDER), we understand that education is a process closely linked to organisation; since our arrival in this region of Mexico we decided to bring this proposal to the community reality, articulating theory and practice, school and work, participation and self. Our goal has always been that people find common solutions to their needs and build their own ways of achieving them, their own ways, autonomy. In those years, the mid-eighties, we were talking about development, improving living conditions in this "region of extreme poverty" in the Sierra Norte de Puebla. Today we know that development does not improve life, and that poverty in the region is fundamentally material, not human, not cultural, not spiritual, so we do not talk of development but of a good life, the forms of life that the people have here, which we have learned about, we the promoters, educators and teachers. So do not speak of educating individual students but of beings worthy of recognition and knowledge, people and groups acting, managers, with their own words, with a cultural and social heritage to care for, to recreate, to express.

What, then, is the role of the educator according to this vision? Our role is to support and go and search for people in these remote communities far from large cities and close to heaven, to get closer to families who live between hills and mountains where clouds pass by and find their way into their houses with enough humidity to freeze bodies large or small, but not enough to penetrate far enough into the soil hardened by erosion and germinate maize seeds and beans that are planted year after year. We walked a long time in these mountains to meet with women who want more food for their children, who want to know about health care to take better care of them; with them and with young people who want work to help their families and asked them what they want for them, how to do it, what to do together.

In CESDER, we do education inside and outside of school, have a degree course in Rural Development Planning, and have plans and projects working with producers, with youth, children and organised groups in the communities. We carry out education by meeting people in their villages, in their community houses or under a tree, we just need a place to talk, to share our concerns and what we are doing, so they can hear us and feel us and think about solutions to the needs of each person in the group, the interests of all. From the shared needs arise the points that bind our actions: food production, a need which is always present with many challenges to achieving local self-reliance and national sovereignty; income generation with the starting up of small family businesses; the creation of spaces for dozens of students studying in the formal system with little hope of entering the labor market; and the need to recognise them as citizens with social, economic, cultural and environmental rights.

It is from each of these realities that we do our education work and training with children, youth and adults which we address below.

### **Food production for family self-sufficiency as a strategy for a good life, more dignified, for farming and indigenous families in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, Mexico**

In the CESDER we consider it essential that any educational activity performed with the subjects, youth or adults, has the effect of or results in the production of benefits that serve to improve the most basic needs of the participants, whether for food, clothing, shelter or health, to name just a few. Thus in our model of formal and community education, one of the strategies is alternating production and education that seeks to establish a continuum between theoretical and methodological training in community workshops or schools and practical production on the land. It makes



*Production of organic fertiliser*

*Source: dvv international*

it possible, in a simple and practical way, to spread technologies, agricultural and livestock procedures, and use of natural resources that are applicable in the conditions of the region; starting from their own production, the participants generate new knowledge about natural resources such as soil, water, climate and planting techniques, harvesting, processing and food preservation, as well as local seeds, in order to improve their nutrition, health, family and group welfare.

When new technologies are proposed which can be adapted to local conditions and have a low or minimal impact, there is an attempt to reassess and recover the cultural practices of the community in relation to production, those that have allowed the survival of the farmers, a strategy that we call *a dialogue of knowledge*. Starting with the exchange of experiences and the socialisation of achievements and the difficulties that each farmer has experienced individually in garden and family plot, between farmers from the same communities and other regions, through visits and meetings, it has been possible for them to accept and approve knowledge and technical knowledge for food production. In other words, they have learned from the expertise of every farmer with whom they interact and share.

With these instructional strategies we have been able to realise activities for training and education for farmers in rural communities and to improve food production, and have achieved the following results:

- a) Provided capabilities for the farmers to increase food production in home gardens through the revaluation and recovery of traditional crops, such as cactus, *quelites*, zucchini, field tomatoes, chile and cilantro;
- b) Incorporation of new crops, mainly vegetables such as radishes, beets, spinach, carrots and lettuce;
- c) Stimulated the production of organic vegetables and grains, from use of the resources available in each of the family production units such as livestock manure and field waste from mainly agricultural parcels of land that belong to the families. With these production practices, they have improved properties and soil conditions, specifically the arable topsoil which is of most interest to agricultural production.
- d) It has revitalised food production for family consumption from the kitchen garden, integrating the production of meat and eggs from small animals such as poultry, rabbits and pigs; vegetable production in open fields and in micro-tunnels; alternative crop and grain production like amaranth, wheat and rye.

The greatest achievement is that it has allowed and encouraged improvements in the diet of families, with increased access and availability to food like organic vegetables and higher quality food as compared to those commonly available in town squares or regional trading markets.

The training and education of farmers corresponds to a curriculum designed by our experience with the people, their needs and interests and the pursuit of knowledge that responds to local environmental (climate and resources) and social (migration, market access, overloading of women) change; it is organised through thematic workshops that are conducted in sessions of 6 to 8 hours of work during which both theoretical and practical task activities are organised. Topics included in the agricultural/livestock training program are:

Topic	Sessions
Conservation and soil and water retention	I & II
Handling and care of fruit trees	I & II
Vegetable production and management	I & II
Handling and care of backyard livestock	I & II
Production of organic fertilisers	I & II
Eco technologies I: construction of tanks with the ferro cement technique for water catchment and storage	I, II & III

Topic	Sessions
Eco Technologies II: construction of wood-saving stoves	I
Eco Technologies III: construction, management and use of ecological dry toilet	I
Inorganic waste management	I
Preparation of vegetables for food	I
Canning seasonal fruits	I
The bio-intensive unit: reorganisation of the family unit	I
Forest management	I

For the development of each workshop topic there is a written description containing the following: general purpose, specific objectives, sub-topic, technical procedure to be followed, resources or materials needed, time required for completion, and those responsible for coordinating each activity. Each one of these aspects must be very well developed and structured so that we ensure that with each of the activities to be developed, the specific objectives and overall goal is reached.

After the completion of the workshops, each participant farmer is committed to implementing it in the family production unit (FPU) during the intervening time to the completion of the following workshop, as a reminder and ratification of the learning achieved; for this they can count on home visits from the CESDER promoters, to support them in case of doubts or information gaps that prevent them from confidently developing the techniques involved, and if they can provide assistance in obtaining some materials that are difficult to access through an alternative intervention strategy, education or organisation which we call *revolving funds* and which respond to our line of dynamism of the local economy.

This program of training and education was developed over two years, during which participant farmers, in addition to learning



*Winter garden for the cultivation of vegetables*  
Source: *dvv international*



*Selection of fruits for the production of syrop*  
*Source: dvv international*



*Training centre in Tamachtini*  
*Source: dvv international*

how to improve food production in their FPU, gradually and continually develop some skills. Among those that are noteworthy are:

- The sociability or conviviality of the peer group, which improves as they get to know each other and frequent the different workshops.
- Facility of expressing themselves in public to contribute their ideas and views on the topic that is being addressed in each workshop and other issues that, as a group, over which it necessary to exchange opinions.
- Analyse the various factors which affect, whether positively or negatively, the performance of different production techniques and making adjustments to improve the final results by implementing them.
- Creativity or the implementation of innovation to different techniques used in their production units, always looking to improve results and end products.

In educational work with farmer/producers, like that which is done with youth and children, dialogue, careful listening, for sharing and knowledge generation is our method of working, to in some way achieve a community, a learning community and a community of new beings, transformed and transforming, creators of other worlds, more sustainable and dignified for everyone.

# ADULT EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

