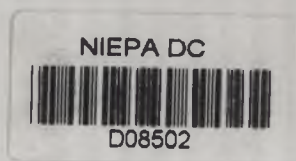


*Literacy and  
Vocational Education*  
–The Narendrapur Experience



*National Literacy Mission*

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Narendrapur  
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# P R E F A C E

*Sri Ramakrishna (1856-1886), said, "Jabat bandhi Tabat Sikhi" (I learn as long as I live).*

Since the transformation of society from the stage of 'orality' to that of 'literacy', literacy has meant different things to different people and to different societies. Since ancient societies could hand down knowledge and skills orally with considerable proficiency, literacy only evolved in the modern industrial age when, with the advance in knowledge, the transmission of scientific knowledge and skills was no longer possible only through oral channels. In the modern age, literacy became synonymous with education. Later, when education became an inseparable limb of modern society, literacy also began to be seen as a programme for the left-outs and those who did not or could not cope with the march of society and economy. Thus, in addition to the literate societies of the

underdeveloped world, the developed societies also made provision for literacy programmes for their marginalised citizenry. In these societies literacy connoted basic elementary education based on the 3 Rs, i.e., reading, writing and arithmetic. On the other hand, in developing countries literacy was designed as functional literacy. Here, literacy was not conceived as a mere programme to bring the left-outs at par with other members of society, but as a deliberate movement to make them partners in national reconstruction.

In India, the introduction of the Total Literacy Campaign under a specially constituted National Literacy Mission has been a watershed in the half a century old literacy movement. This campaign, besides providing basic skills in literacy has a profound ideological content. According to a document recently published by the Mission, functional literacy implies :-

- i) achieving self-sufficiency in literacy and numeracy;
- ii) becoming aware of the cause of one's deprivation and moving towards its amelioration through organisation and through participation in the process of development;
- iii) acquiring skills to improve one's economic status and general well-being;
- iv) imbibing the values of



national integration, conservation of environment, women's equality, observance of the small-family norm, etc.

The document has also indicated desired levels of competencies in the 3 Rs. The NLM designed a 200 hours learning course based on the principles of Improved Pace and Content of Learning pedagogy expected to deliver the goods within the stipulated time period. The Campaign generally takes a whole district as the unit of operation and attempts to eradicate illiteracy at one go with the help of a highly motivated volunteer force.

A little more than four decades ago Ramakrishna Mission realised that before anything else people must first be educated. Education would make them conscious of their own situation, problems and potential and would empower them with the confidence necessary for facing life's

challenges. It would embolden them to fight against injustices, and forced deprivations. It would free them from the shackles of superstitions, fear, and sense of inferiority. It would infuse in them a sense of dignity, and impart them skills and competence. With this end in view the Ramakrishna Mission jumped into action in 1952 with a small adult education programme for a notorious slum in Calcutta. This Adult Education Programme, ultimately became the focal point for integrated development leading to striking improvement in the quality of life not only in one slum, but in several of them, including thousands of villages. **Adult Education** taken to the doorstep of the so-called illiterate people proved to be the most primary and major component of **DEVELOPMENT**. The pages that follow present a lively account of this experience. Though conceived long before

the National Literacy Mission's nationwide movement of literacy, Adult Education propagated by the Ramakrishna Mission falls in line with the objectives of N.L.M, making an indelible imprint on the history of national reconstruction.

I am grateful to the National Literacy Mission and the Directorate of Adult Education for generous support in bringing out this publication. I am particularly grateful to Shri A. K. Basu, Director, Directorate of Adult Education, who initiated this whole process and made the production of this document possible. I owe my thanks to Shri Ranjeet Mukherjee and all other colleagues in Lokasiksha Parishad who have generously contributed to this volume.

S. S. Chakraborti

30.8.1994

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# LITERACY WITH A DIFFERENCE : A PROFILE OF RAMBAGAN IN ITS PURSUIT OF PROGRESS

## PROLOGUE

“Education is the panacea of all social evils”, so said Swami Vivekananda more than a hundred years ago. He saw India and “saw it whole”. He realised that at the root of all impediments to growth of man and community, such as subjugation and exploitation by the vested interests and power centres, poverty, casteism, fundamentalism or fanaticism etc., is the ignorance of the people. This ignorance of the people is, in turn, the result of illiteracy, though our people neither were nor are uneducated. The vested interests had capitalised upon the



The adult education centre among the Dom community in 1952- the seed of development sown

“ignorance-due-to-illiteracy” and had themselves consciously grown by utilising their knowledge, wisdom and experience. Swami Vivekananda was probably the first to have drawn our attention to the fact that no positive change is possible if one lays emphasis on the negative aspects of Man. It can be brought about by highlighting and utilising the

positive aspects alone. Education for him meant the regeneration of man. In other words “education is the manifestation of the perfection already in Man”.

Swami Vivekananda while placing education above all other necessities, also very consciously emphasised peoples’ own priority. He said, “education must go to the plough”, meaning that we must educate people without the slightest distraction of and disturbance in people’s own priorities. A peasant tilling land for the sustenance of his family would never be attracted to education if his essential work was disturbed. People’s need, time, choice and priority must be taken care of as part and parcel of the education we intend to impart. Similarly, those who live in slums have certain occupations necessary for their sustenance and the process of education should not by any means hinder the smooth go of the same. Another important aspect hinted at by Swami Vivekananda was that for the toiling masses the so-called “formal education” would be of no use. According to him education should be of use to them in other ways, besides enabling them to learn the three R’s. It should help them acquire greater skill and efficiency so that their performance is improved and their sustenance guaranteed. Education of the informal type was more suitable to their conditions.

Blooming of the flowers- the children in the school at Rambagan



## THE BEGINNING

With this in mind, the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama (established in 1943), located in the Northern part of Calcutta, in 1952 began working in a slum called Rambagan, popularly known as DOMPARA. Swami Lokeswarananda, the then Secretary of the Ashrama initiated an Adult Education programme with the help of some of his very dedicated and energetic students.

## A LOOK INTO THE SLUM

Calcutta, as per the last census, is the third largest

city of the world in terms of population. Its population is nearly 90 million of which nearly 60% live in slums of various kinds, the squatters colony, traditional slums etc. More than 40% of the total population of Calcutta lives in traditional slums like Rambagan. There are nearly 3000 slums in the city.

Rambagan is located in the Northern part of the city beside Chittaranjan Avenue and behind Rabindra Kanan. It is located in an area where the ancestral homes of the two great sons of India- Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda- are situated. In the midst of the growth of the city this slum, about 300 years old, has existed with all the pitfalls of poverty, unhealthy environment, ignorance, high rate of child mortality, outrages of the flesh hungry upstarts of the city, robbery, thieving, etc.

Among the oldest inhabitants of the city of Calcutta, the dwellers of Rambagan were looked down upon by the then caste-conscious people and were isolated by the British administration as anti-socials of a redlight area. Hated and ignored these people too cursed their lot and resigned themselves to the whims of the moneyed power-centres of the area. They lived in dingy cells measuring 8'x5' without air and light. Inadequate mobility of children, scanty or no educational facilities, unlimited country liquor,

trading, uncontrolled families, scanty and unhygienic sanitation system and similar other problems had made their lives sub-human.

## ASHRAMA — RAMBAGAN LINK

During the post independence period our Government initiated various development activities in Calcutta slums through various programmes called Slum Development Schemes like IDA Phase-I, IDA Phase-II and CUDP Phase-III. Ramakrishna Mission, in its own way has been serving Calcutta slums from as early as Swami Vivekananda's time beginning with plague relief work in 1889. During the subsequent period the Mission organised relief work in different slums of the city in relation to famine, communal troubles, refugee influx, etc., both during pre and post independence periods. But in an organised and sustained manner the slum development work was initiated by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, formerly at Pathuriaghata at Calcutta, in early fifties.

Prior to 1956-57, the Ashrama used to run a Student Home near Rambagan. Swami Lokeswarananda, on being approached by the slum dwellers, requested some senior students of the Home to initiate welfare programmes on a voluntary basis to fight poverty and social vices like prostitution, gambling,

illiteracy, etc. In May 1952, an Adult Education Centre was set up and the Mission people regularly began visiting the slum. Eventually a comprehensive social welfare centre called 'VIVEKANANDA SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE' was established with different kinds of welfare and economic programmes for the slum dwellers.

### ADULT LITERACY

During the early part of 1950, Swami Lokeswaranada, much against the will of many, personally visited the area and surveyed the deplorable conditions of the slum. Whereas all others had for so long discarded these people branding them as antisocials, the Swami came back with a different impression. He discovered in them tremendous potential which, he thought, should be realised in order to make them good citizens. He wanted his students to do something for these unfortunate people. They were highly efficient in cane, bamboo and paper crafts, painting and drawing, and in music.

As an entry-point into the slum the students in May 1952 launched the programme of 'ADULT LITERACY'. Many of the adults accustomed to whiling away their time doing almost nothing, after a good deal of persuasion, found it worth while to join the centre of Adult Education. It was a difficult task, almost

formidable, because of, among many reasons, the stiff resistance of the vested interests who wanted them to remain ignorant so that they might continue to be used as cheap labour. In spite of all these difficulties the students continued with the adult education programme. There were some adults who volunteered to be literate and following their example a few others joined later. When this programme was launched the following was the situation of the slum :

No. of families	—	251
Population	—	2908
Male	—	1600
Female	—	1308
No. of Children	—	1155
Male	—	602
Female	—	553
Major occupation	—	Daily labour Cane and bamboo work Collection and sale of old clothes
Percentage of literacy	—	± 5

Very slow to begin with, the Adult Education Programme gradually gained momentum and a centre for education of women had eventually to be established. By the end of 1954 the Adult Education programme began to yield positive results. The impact thus created can be spelt out

This is how and where the unfortunate people lived for more than 300 years— without light, air, sanitation



as follows :

- i. the adults felt increasingly inspired to educate themselves;
- ii. the adults began to see the importance of getting their children educated;
- iii. the learners learnt to regard their own vocations with a sense of dignity;
- iv. the students also felt inspired and understood that mere literacy would not be of much use if their skills and efficiency could not be enhanced.
- v. Ramakrishna Mission also appreciated that Adult



Literacy should be made the vehicle for integrated development of the slum.

These perceptions ultimately led to the introduction of many other programmes which strengthened literacy and in addition brought about a positive change in the outlook and attitude of the people. Ramakrishna Mission introduced the following programmes, one after another, to make these gains lasting. All the programmes as part and parcel of the educational pursuits of the Mission date from the late fifties.

Children in a creche in Rambagan



1. **Vivekananda Junior Basic School** has 230 students on the rolls. All education and extra-curricular action programmes (e.g., games, sports, drama, dance, music, painting and drawing, social services) are free.
2. **Vivekananda Pre-basic (Nursery) School** for age group 3 to 5 years, established in 1955, has 80 students on the rolls and the education here is free.
3. **Special Nutrition Programme** Through two distribution outlets 320 children are daily given milk and bread.
4. **Charitable Dispensary** Established in 1955, the dispensary is now working in shifts catering to the medical needs of 80-90

people on an average everyday. Medicines, and in some cases, diet are free of charge.

5. **Weaving/Tailoring Training Centre** This offers 3-year stipendiary training course to 30 Harijan ladies per batch. The production unit of the centre offers the pass-outs work on piece rates and thus helps their families in earning regular additional income.
6. **Stipendiary 3-year training course in painting** is organised for 30 young boys per session every year.
7. **Social Education Centre for ladies** About 30 girl students from the Weaving and Tailoring Centre receive free adult education under a trained teacher every year.
8. **Tutorial Classes** are conducted daily. Forty slum students of different standards; from different schools take advantage of this under the guidance of 4 teachers.
9. **Literacy Services** are also readily available to the students, adult educants and others. The library has 2000 volumes of its own and the mobile library of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, adds to its strength with a periodical supply of books.

10. **Cane and bamboo training centre** provides stipendiary training to about 40 trainees per batch. The trained people have scope to work and earn in the associated production unit on piece-rates.

11. **Celebration of National Days** For emotional development of the slum people, particularly of the children and the youth, important national celebrations like Independence Day, Republic Day, birthdays of Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Netaji Subhas, Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, and many other such occasions are observed with due gravity.

## STRATEGY

1) The basic strategy is based on the understanding that the responsibility of educating all the slum dwellers must eventually be that of the slum people themselves. To begin with the Ramakrishna Mission plans that its energies, resources and expertise must initially be channelised to make one batch of adults literate. This should be done in a manner that will enable them to be initiators of education for the next batch of adults and the children of the community.

2) It is strongly felt that education would fail to bring

about a lasting impact on the community if its women were not involved. So Adult Education for women will also be carried on simultaneously. The lessons would be prepared to suit the needs and aspirations of women.

3) The youth in the area would be made aware of their problems and potential, rights and responsibilities, through study circles, discussion forums, etc. The youth would thus grow with the sense of responsibility of taking upon themselves the duty of motivating the children, women and adults to become involved in education and other programmes for their own betterment.

4) Though initially Ramakrishna Mission will mobilise resources from various sources, the ultimate

Junior Basic School- they pray for a better life



Proud of being one of  
Vivekananda Palli



responsibility for it will be with the people themselves. Literacy will be programmed to enable them to locate and utilise usefully whatever resources they have with themselves.

5) For the fulfilment of the above, it would be necessary to help the people organise themselves formally. People's organisation is an all important factor for development. These people had suffered for more than 300 years at the hands of the foreigners and vested interests primarily because they were unorganised, and unable to utilise their own strength to face the challenges of life. They remained unaware of their own potential and possibilities. So, one of the major goals of Adult Education will be to help them unite and activate their strength through a formal organisation.

6) The slum people are full of skills. Adult Education should aim at helping them upgrade their skills so that they may be economically self-reliant in the long run. It was therefore resolved that at a convenient time vocational training would form a major part of the Adult Education Programme. Skill development, upgradation etc. will involve all categories of slum people — the male and female adults, youth and children.

7) The socio-cultural environment of the slum is terrible. At the instance of the power centres of the area human flesh business had

thrived in a few areas close to this slum. Besides, there were many immoral acts in which the people engaged willingly or unwillingly. The result was very damaging as even the children got involved in these acts. There was little scope for the normal moral growth of the children and the youth. This was the greatest impediment. So to begin with, the Ramakrishna Mission adopted the strategy of bringing about a positive change in the physical environment of the area and the mind set of the people by organising study-circles, discussions, and man to man contacts. One of the media envisaged for doing this is the people's natural talent for singing, dancing, playing various musical instruments etc.

8) The basis of all development initiatives would be Adult Education and Informal Education for children. Education creates a different ethos and every Indian looks upon an education centre as a temple and holds it in high esteem and reverence. In an educational centre (here adult education centre) people would learn to think for themselves. They would be taught/motivated to look upon their own trades as part of education. Help would be sought from the Monks and Brahmacharins of Ramakrishna Order and from the eminent persons of Calcutta for the purpose.

## BACKGROUND

For the last three decades, the Lokasiksha Parishad of the Narendrapur Ramakrishna Mission in South 24-Parganas of West Bengal, is engaged in a literacy drive among the rural community. Apart from eradicating illiteracy the major objective of the programme is to make people aware of the social issues and to inspire them for higher education. Today, in different parts of rural Bengal, neo-literates, semi-literates and even illiterates are forming associations with a view to developing their villages; and this can be attributed to the fact that literacy projects have come to be associated with allround developmental programmes. Earlier, agriculture was the main economic activity in Narendrapur region; now power driven cottage industries also flourish there. Today, people of different vocations are integrated into the still largely agrarian social fabric and the basic objective of the night school is skill development for the different sections of the productive force – agricultural labourers, technicians, industrial workers. The objective includes vocational training for the unemployed. Keeping the socio-economic milieu in view, the school has adopted a successive three-tier pattern of education:- Literacy, Lower Secondary and Secondary level.

In the formal school system, it takes ten years from the first to the tenth standard, to get

secondary level education. But in the present set up, children of the poverty-stricken rural families have to shoulder the responsibility of earning a living at an early age, and for most of them ten years of continuous schooling remain a dream. The approach adopted by the night school was to condense the ten year course into six years : six month semesters for the first to the eighth standards, followed by a year each for ninth and tenth standards. Although by no means easy, efficacy of this approach is evident in the results of the final secondary examinations in recent years. Of late West Bengal Board of Secondary Education has modified and enhanced the curriculum of English, Mathematics and Science and it was no longer possible to cover the course in six years. So the Night School also had to make a corresponding increase of one year. The changed approach now covers first to sixth standard in half-yearly semesters, and from seventh to tenth standards in

## ADULT NIGHT HIGH SCHOOL – AN EXPERIMENT IN DEVELOPMENT

yearly semesters. This still means a substantial saving of three years for the students who are largely agricultural labourers, factory hands, rickshaw pullers, tailors, small shopkeepers or shop assistants, office peons or domestic servants, in the age group of 10-25 years and above. Starting with a handful of 50 students, today the enrolment stands at 212.

Table : Age wise status of our students of Adult Night School

Age (Yrs.)	Culti-vators	Agril. labourers	Domes-tic servant	Industri-labour	Rick-shaw puller	Office work-ers	Small trad-ers	Assis-tants in small trades	Un-em-ploy ed	Total
10-14	02	06	03	-	01	-	-	05	14	31
15-18	12	05	04	05	03	-	-	04	08	42
19-25	20	16	-	17	03	-	05	04	04	71
26 & above	28	06	-	08	12	2	09	03	-	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>212</b>

## **NUTRITION SCHEME**

Students from the lower sections of the rural society are often victims of mal nutrition. Lok Siksha Parisad, with UNICEF assistance, provides select 60 students with free nutritious meals everyday. The relatively well off students can avail themselves of this facility against a nominal charge. Every year these underprivileged 60 students are also given some clothing or winter wear. Poorer students are also entitled to financial assistance for purposes like house repair, medical treatment and trade. Under the vocational training schemes there are courses in Carpentry, Plumbing, Photography, Electrical and Electronic Trades, Poultry, Dairy, Horticulture and so on, and apprentices are given regular monthly stipends.

## **BOOK BANK**

From the very beginning the school has been developing a book bank. All the students are provided with the requisite study materials from this bank.

## **ATTENDANCE/RESULTS**

After the day's hard work in their respective jobs, students can hardly spend much time in the evening. Teaching - learning, therefore lasts for two hours and forty minutes, four periods of forty minute duration each. Yet, the rate of attendance and scores are encouraging. For the last

twelve years, the final secondary examination has shown a steady success of 80% to 100%.

## **RECREATION**

Caught between their daily work and evening studies, the students are left with very little time to relax. The school provides the students with healthy, educative recreation. Film shows, musical soirees, recitals and other such cultural programmes are periodically organised. Under excursion programme the students have visited Durgapur steel plant, Bakreshwar, Shantiniketan, Murshidabad, Sargachi Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, Mayapur, Nabadwip, Bishnour, Mukutmanipur, Digha beach resort and fishing harbours at Shankerpurand and Junput.

## **TALENT SEARCH**

In 1993 the young students of the school first participated in the International Painting Competition for children, organised jointly by Taiwan Republic of China International and CCF, International of the USA. The participation in the same still continues, and quite a few students of the school have won a number of gold and silver medals and certificates. All India Radio and Doordarshan have given wide coverage to these achievements.

## **FESTIVALS AND EXHIBITIONS**

The annual Festival of the Lokasiksha Parishad is a great

attraction for the students. It provides then a platform for creative expression. Students participate in an exhibition with their artifacts. Science, language, history, politics, economics and geography come alive through models created by the students under the guidance of the teachers, and it is a great source of inspiration for visitors.

## SUCCESS STORIES

An illiterate worker in a restaurant enrolled himself in this school. After years of studies and training in catering, he has been able to get a job at a government canteen with a handsome salary. A class IV employee went on to college from this school, and presently has secured a prestigious job with the LIC through competitive examination. Many ex-students are placed in banks, firms and other institutions and offices, and also in the armed forces and police service. Many are studying at colleges and polytechnics. Swapan Nasker and Ashraf Ali are among those who came to the school, mastered power tools and are doing well in business and industry. What is important here is that hundreds of young boys who were out of school or had no opportunity whatsoever to be in a school and were compelled to work in different sectors from early childhood to support their families are now interested in academic achievement, in going in for higher education. All of them are leading a dignified life. Their mind set has

changed. This has in turn brought about a qualitative change in the attitudes of the parents. Students are now coming to this night school from a distance of 35 km from Narendrapur.

Performance of the students in the Secondary Examination conducted by the -

### WEST BENGAL BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Year	Total No. of Examinees sent up	Pass-	1st Div.	2nd Div.	3rd Div.	Passed % of in success Compartment
1960	07	06	-	04	01	01 88%
1981	04	04	-	02	01	01 100%
1982	05	05	-	04	01	- 100%
1983	06	06	-	01	05	- 100%
1984	08	05	03	03	01	01 100%
1985	08	07	01	03	03	- 87.5%
1986	06	06	03	-	03	- 100%
1987	07	07	-	-	05	02 100%
1988	04	04	-	-	02	02 100%
1989	06	05	-	01	04	- 83.33%
1990	04	02	-	-	02	04 50%
1991	05	04	-	-	05	01 80%
1992	05	02	-	-	02	- 40%
1993	04	02	-	-	02	- 50%
1994	05	04	-	02	02	- 80%

## OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

1. The students have not only improved academically, they show positive attitudinal change
2. They have acquired greater skills and improved their efficiency and performance

3. They feel their earnings too have increased because of better performance
4. Their accountability has increased and they have become more responsible.

5. Majority of them are honourably settled in life
6. The members of their families are now willingly going in for education.

Dreams soaring high—built with participation of slum dwellers



# METHODOLOGY ADOPTED TO MAKE THE PROGRAMMES CONTINUOUS AND SUSTAINABLE

## DEVELOPMENT OF COMMITTED LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE LOCALITY

According to Swami Vivekananda even the entire wealth of the world would prove ineffective and inadequate for the development of a small village if the people are not prepared to work for their own development. Swami Vivekananda therefore advocated the preparation and development of committed youth leadership and their own organisation to take upon themselves the responsibility of their own development. The youth who got exposed to formal education after the adult literacy programme formed their own organisation Janakalyan Samity. (a registered body with its own objectives, memorandum of association and programmes) to work hand in hand with the Ramakrishna Mission.

## CREATION OF A SLUM DEVELOPMENT UNIT OF RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

The Ramakrishna Mission also felt the need for building slum development units of its own which, from within the slum, would continue with the various integrated

developmental programmes and add many more, and get extended to other slums through various services offered. Thus came the 'VIVEKANANDA SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE' which is still responsible for slum development work in collaboration with the local youth organisation.

## DEVELOPMENT OF A LOCAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

Adult education was considered and is still considered by the Ramakrishna Mission as a major component for integrated development. But as elsewhere, here too dearth of resources was a major constraint. From 1952 to 1956 the Ramakrishna Mission raised funds from various persons and agencies in order to run the programmes. But as the local people became conscious of their own situation and potential the programmes gradually turned into people's own programmes.

From the very beginning the Ramakrishna Mission made the people conscious that no real and sustainable development is possible with imported leadership and resources. Local efforts with local support (men and



Transformation begins with exposure to education from NFE in Rambagan



materials) are essential for development. The Ramakrishna Mission therefore made "Development of local support system" a major component of the integrated development programme. Once the local people come to appreciate this approach they began to contribute their mite towards developing a community fund for community welfare and development. It is almost a

After attending classes they pick up skill so important for their future



self-sufficient support system that the slum people have now developed.

### **INTRODUCTION OF AN IN-BUILT SYSTEM OF DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP**

The Ramakrishna Mission, besides imparting adult and non-formal education, also introduced training for the youth to help them realise their leadership potential. The objective was to prepare the slum people for leading the whole development process for themselves.

### **INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN**

Women, besides being exposed to education, were also imparted vocational training and leadership training. Although this was difficult initially because of the taboos within a closed scheduled caste community, gradually the community understood its importance and women began to take part in the programme in large numbers.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PROGRAMME**

Adult Literacy was thus designed as a multidimensional programme aimed at the development of full potential, for a total awakening. ADULT EDUCATION as a major component for this type of development gradually

assumed the multidimensional character in the following manner :

## ADULT EDUCATION

1952

(Nursery) 1956 Pre-school education		Vocational training 1954
(Junior basic) 1958 Primary Education		Cane work Bamboo work Paper work Drawing & painting Lathe operation etc.
Middle level education 1960		Marketing of products 1954
Coaching classes 1960		
Development of local organisation (Janakalya Samity)	Integrated Development work  Health, Nutrition, Immunisation Medical Facilities, Family Welfare Environmental sanitation, Economic programmes for self- employment, Income generation programme/ Employment generation, Cultural programmes, Games and Sports, Re-housing programme	Development of local support system

## SLUM RE-HOUSING PROGRAMME

Adult Education which began in 1952 gradually gained momentum leading to the introduction of various other

programmes of integrated development. These enhanced a positive change in the physical and other areas of the life of the people. The literacy rate went up to 80%, every child of school-going age

now attends school, child mortality has come down to as low as 14. Besides, the employment opportunities of the slum dwellers also brightened considerably. After having achieved this the Mission felt that to make all its developmental programmes sustainable the physical environment of the slum including the housing situation needed to be radically changed. Sometime in 1983–84, workers of the Mission and the representatives of the slum dwellers had a series of meetings and discussed the possible ways and means to meet this challenge. Ultimately a consensus was arrived at that participation of a number of agencies working in unison can alone solve this gigantic problem.

Consequent upon this the slum re-housing project was

taken in hand by the Mission in collaboration with the local people and their organisation. It was a gigantic task involving crores of rupees. It was the inhabitants of the area who first came forward with their contribution of more than one lakh rupees. This was possible because the Ramakrishna Mission had educated them first, raised their consciousness and developed in them a sense of dignity—all of which began with Adult Education. This housing project which is looked upon as the culmination of all developmental efforts made through Adult Education was possible because, as explained earlier, there was a change in the whole slum-scenario including their assessment of themselves. The entire area now has a dignified look and houses for every one.

The change— a symbol of modern civilization



## STATUS OF THE PEOPLE AT RAMBAGAN

Year	Literacy percentage	Income (monthly)	I M R	Employment
1952	5%	Rs. 150-200	110	Day Labourer
1961	50%	Rs. 700-800	64	Day labour + crafts
1971	65%	Rs. 900-1200	50	Cane, bamboo, paper crafts & drawing & painting.
1981	75%	Rs. 1500-1800	14	Crafts, employment in private and/or Public Sector.
1993	80-89%	Rs. 2000-3000	11	-do-

What is worth-mentioning here is that there is no unemployment in the slum. All women are self-employed and all men are self-employed or employed in schools, private companies or are in small trades. There is no child or mother not immunised and there is no child that does not go to school. Those who are not literate are septuagenarians. The income growth as shown on the table does not include the income of women each of whom today earns between Rs. 150/- and Rs. 300/- every month. Every family now has a flat of its own measuring 259 sq.ft. having two living rooms, one toilet, a kitchen and a working space.

Another important achievement of the literacy efforts of Rambagan has been the tremendous enhancement of their skill and efficiency in the trades of cane and bamboo

crafts, paper-pulp crafts, drawing and painting and music. The children grow in the midst of a cultural process which has helped many of them achieve excellence in performing arts.

Thus, Rambagan, once a notorious DOMPARA, has undergone a tremendous transformation. All these are the results of Adult Education initiated by a band of dedicated but inexperienced students in the early half of fifties.

### THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

By the beginning of the 70's the impact of Rambagan was felt in the neighbouring slums like Goabagan, Kasba, Belgachhia and a host of other slums. The people of these slums approached the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama authorities at



A creche centre for the children in the slum

Narendrapur to initiate activities in their areas on the Rambagan pattern. In the meanwhile, the West Bengal Government also requested the Narendrapur Ashrama to initiate a pilot project on Child Health Programme as a research project in Calcutta Slums. On being pressed by both the people and the Government, the Mission initiated a project called the Integrated Child Health Scheme from mid 70's in the slums of Goabagan, Kalabagan, Kasba, Monoharpukur etc. The basic objective of the scheme was to develop the slum people through service to the children.



Non-formal education centre in a slum

To achieve these basic objectives the instrument was once again education. The entry point was the child and the target was the whole community in a slum. The Mission, therefore, initiated a literacy programme through the setting up of 48 Non-formal Education centres for more than 2500 children, besides several creche centres. Children were imparted formal education through these N F E centres to enable them to pursue further education. More than 175 of the children educated through these centres have completed their secondary level education and many are pursuing higher education. Because of the introduction of literacy programmes based the experience at Rambagan, 22 slums in the city of Calcutta now have integrated development programmes

leading to the qualitative and quantitative change in the life and living conditions of the people.

The methodology adopted in these slums is the same as in Rambagan. Every slum, including Rambagan, now has a people's organisation and their own support system. Every woman has a bank account and every slum has a community chest formed with the contribution of the slum people. They no longer have to go to moneylenders in distress. They can get loans out of the funds built up by themselves.

Based on education these 22 slums now have programmes like-

1. Creche
2. Pre-school education
3. Non-formal education
4. Adult literacy
5. Health, nutrition
6. Recreation
7. Vocational training and income generation projects for the women in general and for the youth in particular
8. Leadership training, and
9. Integrated child care services including mother care.

More than 30,000 children and their families are participating in and drawing benefits from these programmes. It is because of these programmes as part of literacy that all the communities are gradually

becoming self-reliant. Women who were pushed aside by menfolk in slums, are coming forward not only to participate in but also to lead most of the programmes. Literacy raised the awareness of mothers and it is the mothers who transformed the communities into enlightened ones where nobody is ignorant or illiterate or subjugated by any exploiting force.

Sri Pannalal Manik is a resident of Vivekananda Palli, erstwhile Rambagan. He was a small child when Adult Education was initiated in the slum. His father was an adult educator. He grew up in an environment where the anti-social forces were in force and the efforts of adult education were in progress. It was he who passed through the non-formal education process and was later exposed to formal education. A graduate with honours in Chemistry, he is presently a teacher in a Higher Secondary School in North Calcutta. Today he earns a dignified sum and could have gone away from the slum. But Sri Manik did not shun his community. He stayed on and took upon himself the responsibility and leadership of the slum and its development. He is now the organising secretary of the local organisation Janakalyan Samity. Sri Manik is a product of the Adult Education effected in a regenerative environment. Sri Manik is one of the many who struggled hard to change the environment into a positive one.

Shri Manik says, "We are indeed grateful that the Ramakrishna Mission got into our area (I hate to call it a slum) with an educational programme. This brought about a positive change in the attitude of my forefathers which actually lay at the root of all the changes our area has today. It was through this programme of adult and non-formal literacy that the development of our area has been possible. Women who were locked within homes and kept under tremendous stress could be liberated from the shackles of ignorance and from unnecessary stress and strain. Our community is educationally, socially, economically and in every other respect self-reliant because our community was exposed to informal education and because the process is continuous. All our children are now attending schools and pursuing further education without ignoring their own traditional occupation. I can very assertively say that our community is no longer at the receiving end, we have been able to shoulder the responsibility of our own development to a great extent. Once it was a community of total have-nots, today it is a self-reliant community. We no longer allow our selves to be labelled as Scheduled Caste or our living area a slum. We are a changed lot and we feel ours is a community as dignified as any other in the city of Calcutta, in fact the whole country. Thanks to the literacy programme."



Sri Pannalal Manik, organising secretary, Jan Kalyan Samiti, Rambagan

A young girl is now a student of Class IX. She is also a trainee of a vocational training center. She also undergoes training in cultural activities. She is a good singer. She is an expert dancer. She belongs to a DOM community. Her parents are educated. Her father is a teacher of a formal school, her mother is a teacher of a non-formal school. She was once in a creche and later in the non-formal education centre. Now she has her own sense of dignity and cannot be looked down upon. Her family is able to provide her with necessary nutrition and educational facilities. Academically and socially she is growing up not as a DOM, but as Sutapa Manik, the inhabitant of Vivekananda Palli of Calcutta.

## WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT PROGRESS IN THE SLUM

Shri Benoy Krishna Chowdhury, Minister-in-Charge, Land and Land Reforms, Government of West Bengal, commented, "Ramakrishna Mission has taken up a very good and noble project of bringing about a qualitative change in the life of the slum dwellers by providing them with good houses, light, water, etc. We also want slum development but there are many bottlenecks. This project will serve as a successful example for what we want to do. On behalf of the Government of West Bengal, I thank Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission".

Shri Kamal Basu, the then Mayor, Calcutta Municipal Corporation said, "I do not know whether such a joint project was ever implemented in Calcutta or anywhere else. Calcutta is a city which grew up without any definite planning. Every Calcuttan will now believe that Calcutta can be really beautiful with the help of such projects. Those who are living in the slums of Calcutta have every right to participate in a development programme. The Ramakrishna Mission has involved these slum dwellers in this unique development programme which, I am sure, will lead to positive social change. Ramakrishna Mission has faith in man and above all an ideal of service. I am confident

Women's vocational training in tailoring— a source of additional income



this project will be thoroughly successful”.

Dr. Purnendu Jha, Member, Mayor-in-Council (Slum Development) Calcutta Municipal Corporation, said that he associated himself with the project. He remarked, “This is a project of those people who were exploited and forced to live in slums. Ramakrishna Mission helped them in education, health and in other areas and now they are helping them for their complete rehabilitation. The active involvement of the common people is the most unique feature of the project. I hope, Ramakrishna Mission will come forward to help the people of other slums in Calcutta in this way”.

Shri Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of West Bengal, remarked, “It is a matter of great satisfaction that Ramakrishna Mission is

working for the complete development of the slum and its people. Ramakrishna Mission works with a definite objective and their continuous effort to achieve that objective leads them to success - whether it is in the field of education or in self-employment or in re-housing. What is unique is they involve the people from the decision-making stage itself. I will request every locality to organise themselves in the way these people (or Rambagan) have done”.





# LITERACY LINKED VOCATIONAL TRAINING: A PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN

This innovative programme was taken up by way of an experiment in 6 slums of South and North Calcutta. This was conceived of as a programme for women only with the conviction that women, properly educated and trained might share the leadership of the families on the economic front. Women in those slums laboured most but hardly had any economic function even though they have enough time to give to economically productive activities. Viewed from the point of view of family earning the women were "unproductive" in the sense that they were economically unemployed.

## OBJECTIVES

The core objectives of the programme are as follows:

- i. To keep the target group in touch with functional use of literacy by way of organising basic literacy programmes.
- ii. To impart vocational skills, along with literacy, to slum women with a view to raising their efficiency and increasing their productive ability.
- iii. To develop entrepreneurial attitude among them for self-employment/employment avenues.
- iv. To instil in them a sense of self-confidence and self respect to face the challenges of life.

## OPERATIONAL AREAS

Zone	Slum
North	
Calcutta : i.	Ahiritola
	ii. Bagmari Khalpar
	iii. Garpar
	iv. Goabagan South
Calcutta : i.	Monoharpukur
	ii. Tiljala

## TARGET GROUP

The concerned programme concentrated on illiterate women and young girls of working community, in the age-group 15-35 years, living in the selected slums. More precisely, the clientele were :

- (a) Women working as maid-servants;
- (b) Housewives willing to participate in the mainstream of workforce;
- (c) Unemployed young girls willing to promote their self-employment/employment potential.

## MEASURES

The measures taken for fulfilling the objectives of the programme, were as follows :

- mobilization of target group through awareness generation and sensitization by way of home visits by SVP programme functionaries, discussion meetings, simulation exercises, use of A.V. Aids, etc.

- organisation of target groups on a common platform in each slum.
- Orientation to volunteer/resource persons for promoting a clear understanding and approach for running the literacy linked vocational education programme.
- Literacy drive and skill orientation in trades identified by the beneficiary population.
- Community participation and co-operation from local youth organisations.
- Supervision and monitoring.

## PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

### (a) Coverage

It was planned to cover 750 slum women and young girls identified based on a bench-mark survey in the area, but the programme could enrol only 618 (82.4%) beneficiaries in two phases

I Phase (January-June)	380 (50.7%)
II Phase (July-December)	238 (31.7%)
	618

The number of drop-outs was 126. The number of beneficiaries who completed the course was 492

Summary of the coverage is shown below :

Planned Coverage	: 750 (100%)
No. of beneficiaries completed	: 492 (65.6%)
Drop-outs	: 126 (16.8%)
Yet to be covered	: 132 (17.6%)

### (b) Literacy Programme

#### i. Approach:

The participants were, in general, first involved in the literacy programme. After a month or so, the vocational training courses were introduced along with the literacy drive. Ofcourse, where the participants were found more sincere and willing, both literacy and skill-orientation were introduced at the same time.

#### ii. Working hours: 3-4 hours per working day (six days

The slum-wise beneficiary coverage is furnished below :

Slum	Planned Coverage	Enrolment	No. of beneficiaries completed	Drop-out	Yet to be covered
Ahiritola	150	123	95	28	27
Bagmari					
Khalpar	150	135	101	34	15
Garpar	125	75	44	31	50
Goabagan	175	165	151	14	10
Monoharpukur	50	45	42	03	05
Tiljala	100	75	59	16	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>132</b>

a week) for literacy followed by skill-orientation.

iii. Volunteer-learners ratio:

In general, one volunteer was assigned the responsibility of imparting both literacy and skill-orientation to 20-25 participants. In cases, where the resource person in any indented trade did not come from the local community, the literacy programme for the group was conducted by a local volunteer. Of course, he/she kept close contact with the technical resource person regarding the progress of the

learners in the literacy drive.

- iv. Literacy Kit: Literacy kits were provided by the Mass Literacy Wing of the Ramakrishna Mission, Lokasiksha Parishad.

For literacy, the primer used for the participants has been developed by the Mass Literacy Wing in Bengali, based on IPCLmethod-

PARICHAY : Part-I  
Part-II  
Part-III  
(bridge-course)

- v. Learners' Performance: In-built tests in IPCL books became the basis for evaluation.

Based on the learners' performances, three categories of achievement, as A,B,C, were given.

'A' stood for 'excellent' when all the three books were comple-

ted and 'C' for 'weak' when the first book was completed.

Based on the categories above, the learners' performance is rated thus-

Category	Number of Learners
A	329 (66.0%)
B	136 (27.6%)
C	27 (5.5%)
Total:	492 (100%)

It was observed that most of the learners who were enrolled during the first phase and continued their learning, completed all the books while those who were enrolled in the next phase mostly completed the books No. 1 and 2 and a few could not go beyond the first book.

(c) **Self-Orientation**

Along with literacy, a total of 492 learners had undergone the skill-oriented courses in the following trades :

Sl.	Trade	Duration (in days)	No. of learners completed	Performance Gradation		
				A	B	C
1.	Fruit Preservation	15	111	67	34	10
2.	Detergent Making	30	79	31	27	21
3.	Machine Knitting	90	67	39	28	—
4.	Tailoring	180	137	87	34	16
5.	Collage Card Making	15	43	17	19	07
6.	Aya-cum-Governess Course	180	55	16	29	10
TOTAL			492 100%	257 52.2%	171 34.7%	64 13.1%

The performance gradation was done based on the range of marks obtained by the participants, in theoretical, practical and viva voce.

Category	Range of Marks	Remarks
A	60% and above	Good
B	40% and above	Average
C	Below 40%	Below average

## CONSTRAINTS

1. During the December'92 turmoil, Tiljala slum was adversely affected and it took some time before the adverse effects of that situation could be overcome. As a result it was not possible to implement the programme in full swing in this slum though constant efforts were made to regain the confidence of the slum dwellers and to somehow develop a good rapport with them.
2. Motivation of target population to the programme varied from slum to slum. In Monoharpukur and Goabagan, motivation was strong in participating groups; but moderate in Tiljala and Ahiritola and weak in Garpar and Bagmari Khalpar. The drop-out/non-participation was also more marked in areas where motivation was weak.
3. After initiation of the concerned programme, it was found that some beneficiary groups did not

show interest in some of the identified trades although these were selected after a series of discussion meetings with the beneficiaries in their respective slums. They shifted their interest to other trades viz. Tailoring, Knitting & Greetings Card making (i.e. Collage making), etc. Consequently a few other trades as wanted by these groups, were introduced for skill orientation.

4. In the concerned Projects budget there was no provision for resource support or follow-up services. For utilisation of their acquired skills the trained women and young girls depend on their own resources and/or are being somehow assisted by the local youth organisations as well as the Lokasiksha Parishad.

## SOME STRIKING OBSERVATIONS

1. As a Pilot Project, the programme achievement is satisfactory. The

programme could achieve around 66% target coverage.

2. In literacy, 66.9% learners were graded to Category 'A', 27.6% to Category 'B' and 5.5% to Category 'C'.
3. For skill-orientation, the trades identified by the beneficiaries were not technically more complicated ones. The technical instructors also took great care to impart the necessary knowledge and skills through simple expression and practical demonstration, based on the extension approach of 'seeing is believing - learning by doing' to

enable the neo-lettered participants to easily acquire the skills. Further some guide books on certain identified trades were developed for the neo-lettered, with a view to making the learning of the skills easy by the participants.

In skill orientation, 52.2% learners were graded to Category 'A' (Good); 34.7% to Category 'B' (Average) and 13.1% to Category 'C' (Below average).

4. Co-operation and support from the local youth organisation helped the Programme functionaries in the supervision and followup of the programme activities.

Lathe operation- acquisition of Technical skill by slum youth



## SCHEMES FOR CHILDREN

### **“INTEGRATED CHILD HEALTH SCHEME” AND EDUCATION CUM TRAINING CENTRES AS BASES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ENTIRE COMMUNITY**

It was felt that if children were targeted as focus of literacy and health they could become the entry point for the development of the entire community through the involvement of the families in their children's well-being. The experiment has been very successful we give here three case studies.

#### **A. MONOHARPUKUR : EDUCATION PAVES THE WAY FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT**

On being approached by the slum dwellers in 1978 a pilot project called “Integrated Child Health Scheme” was initiated in Monoharpukur slum with the participation of three agencies viz. Health Department of the Government of West Bengal, CARE and the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur.

Under the scheme a creche and a pre-school education unit were established. The basic object of the scheme was to help growth and development of the slum people through service to the children. The basic idea was to utilise the children as the entry point and subsequently to involve the whole community in a process of development. It was felt that the parents of the children would automatically become automatically involved in all the programmes and their role would be that of partners in progress. Association of mothers were formed with the object of (i) giving them responsibilities of looking after the day to day affairs of the children's programmes, (ii) involving them in some creative and productive work so that the mothers could grow economically independent to some extent and (iii) motivating and involving the local youth to take upon themselves the responsibilities of all these activities. The scheme was basically for children below 6 years. Several evaluation studies were conducted which showed that the project had a very positive impact on the children and the community as a whole. The project achieved considerable progress in child health, child mortality rate and

women's participation in the community development. The project continued until 1983 by when the objectives were almost fulfilled and it was felt that a different approach was needed. Therefore by the end of 1983 with assistance from 'The Save the Children Fund' sponsorship committee and all Bengal Women's Union, Calcutta, the Mission converted the unit into an education-cum-training and general welfare service centre for the slum children. It aimed at the delivery of all services relevant for the all-round development of the girls between 9 and 17 years of age. While working with slum dwellers it has been experienced that the women are worst sufferers in the slum situation and hence different programmes with newer thrust and approach were initiated for the girl children.

The aim of the programme is to extend all possible help to the child to begin with and then to the family and ultimately to the community. The centre provides facilities with regard to education, supplementary nutrition, health, clothing, vocational training, sanitation and medical aid, etc. General education is imparted to the children so that they may get higher education. Vocational training is given so that they

may be self-supporting in future. Arrangements are also made for their mental development, special awareness and recreation. The children are selected for enrolment at the age of 9 on need-cum-merit basis and continue up to 17 years of age. Besides the services referred to above, the children of this slum also receive special assistance under the sponsored programme of the 'Save the Children Fund'. Efforts are made to help them to manifest their potential so that they might be self-reliant. Monoharpukur slum (locally known as Laker Math) is a

congested slum in South Calcutta (Ward No. 84) with a population nearly 3500. The slum dwellers were landless people of different neighbouring districts of Calcutta. The male members are mainly day labourers, fish sellers, vegetable sellers, fruit sellers and engaged in other small trades. A considerable section of the women work as domestic helpers which involves hard work of 8 to 12 hours duration. As a result the children remain neglected. They are unable to earn enough to maintain a moderate standard of life. The people have to live here in mud and thatched huts of 5½' x 8' with extremely poor ventilation and light. To bring change in this situation the Mission took up the following programmes with participation of the local people and particularly of the local youth:

### EDUCATION

In most cases the children in this slum are first generation learners. To provide the children with scope of education, a non-formal education unit for the non-schooling ones had been started to impart non-formal education up to class IV. Those with aptitude are sent to local secondary schools for further education. The centre bears all expenses up to the Degree Course. Thirty five such non-schooling girls attend classes regularly.

Assistance with regard to school fees, text books, exercise books and all sorts of teaching

aids are provided to the children. At present 75 girls are receiving the benefit of the centre of whom 45 are getting special assistance for pursuing higher education.

In 1990, 2 girls, in 1991 one girl, 1992 one girl and in 1993 one girl passed Madhyamik (Secondary final) examination and three of them are pursuing their Higher Secondary (Pre-University) courses in Calcutta.

The centre through its efforts and persuasion could inspire the children to go in for higher education (Class XI, Class XII). At present 22 girls are studying in different local secondary schools from classes V to X.

### HEALTH CARE SERVICE

All kinds of curative medicines and all sorts of medical aid (such as X-Ray, Pathology etc.) are provided to the children. A general charitable dispensary for the slum functions twice a week under two specialist doctors. Cases of major ailments are referred to nearby hospitals. Though facilities for curative care have been made available, emphasis is laid on the promotive and preventive aspects of Health. With the help of the local youth discussions are organised to make people aware of personal and collective health, and regular immunization camps are organised for the children and the mothers.

## MOTHERS' MEETING AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICE

To establish a rapport between the centre and the parents and to provide supportive service a mother's meeting is held once every month. The objective of the meeting is to broaden their outlook, strengthen their confidence and ensure their participation in the child services. The main issues usually discussed at such meetings are child care, low cost nutrition, home sanitation, importance of immunisation, child education and utility of planned family. Besides, promotion of leadership among the mothers is another important goal of this Mothers Association.

## CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

The centre has a small library. 48 children are enjoying the benefit of the library. This is the only library in the slum and has encouraged the reading habit among the slum children.

## SUPPLEMENTARY NUTRITION

Almost all children were suffering from repeated illness due to malnutrition when they were enrolled in the centre. But malnutrition among children has been completely fought out as nutritious mid-day meal is supplied everyday to the enrolled children as well as other needy children of the locality. The types of food usually supplied to the

children are preparations of rice, pulses, leafy vegetables, fish, meat, egg and seasonal fruits.

## EDUCATIONAL TOUR

Every year the centre organises educational tours for the children. They are taken to the places of interest in different districts of West Bengal as an essential component of the education imparted through the Non-formal Centres.

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The children undergo training regularly in the centre along with the non-formal and formal education. In between ages 9 and 12 the girls are given a primary knowledge of vocational trades, and imparted training in phases during the year. They receive training in tailoring, embroidery, knitting, cutting and other crafts. The age limit for trainees is 13 to 17 years. The training materials and other teaching aids during training are also provided by the centre. Two girls found employment and 12 girls started earning through the piece wage system.

The Mission through its polyvalent Adult Education

Unit organises short term training programmes for senior students and their elder siblings and for unemployed women willing to enhance their skills for better earning prospects. The following courses are conducted for this purpose :

Sl.No.	Title of course	Duration	No. of participants in each batch
1.	Knitting (Advance)	90 days	15 running their business
2.	Ayah	180 days	20 to be employed soon.



## MUSIC AND DANCE CLASS

For cultural and emotional development of the children vocal music, dance and drama are taught in the centre. Some proficient individuals in dance and music take part in cultural functions organised by the Ramakrishna Mission and local organisation on different occasions in various places of Calcutta. The parents of the children feel proud and happy to see their children perform in public functions which was beyond their expectation. This has also led to the elimination of caste and communal feelings among the children and the elders of the slum.

## EXHIBITION

To encourage the trainees the centre exhibits and sells the training-products through exhibitions arranged by the All Bengal Women's Union, the Ramakrishna Mission, the Lokasiksha Parishad and other well-known organisations in Calcutta.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The local people take keen interest and help the workers of the centre in running the programme. In 1953 the programme started in a room measuring 7' x 12'. Later realising the utility and importance of the activities of the centre the local people provided 320-sq.ft. of land for expanding the class-rooms. From the very beginning the

centre was fortunate in securing help and co-operation the local Youth Club - "Amra from Club", located in the slum. The club organises cultural programmes involving the children of the centre at their own expenses. The involvement of the club with the programme of the centre has also helped to improve its image in the community. In most cases the mothers are domestic helpers so they cannot participate actively in the day to day activities of the centre. In spite of this limitation, many mothers come forward to help the workers.

## CONCLUSION

More than 80% girls were illiterate when they joined the centre. Gradually they learn the alphabets and after completing the equivalent of class IV they began attending formal schools for classes V to X. Quite a number of the first generation learners are now pursuing the Higher Secondary course. Their present standard of education as well as the acquired skills in different handicrafts through training in the centre have been of great help in the negotiation of their marriages. Marriage for a poor slum girl equipped with minimum education and vocational training in different trades is an indirect rehabilitation of a girl who was illiterate and unskilled. This programme ensures for them a dignified place in the society and in addition has changed their outlook for the better. \*In so far as the target group



During a regular dance training centre

### Municipal Ward No. 84, South Calcutta

Year	Popula- tion.	Male	Female	Child M+F literacy	Wo- men's	Occupa	IMR	Monthly income of a family.
1983	3500	1879	1621	1500	7%	Day labour, 92 domestic servant.	92	Rs. 600.00
1988	3750	1981	1769	1750	60%	Domestic servant, tailoring and allied trades.	54	Rs. 1500.00
1993	3901	2078	1823	1801	*92%	Domestic service, tailoring and allied trades, small business.	27	Rs. 2000.00

is concerned the rate of literacy is 100%. But 8% of the taking the entire female population are illiterate primarily because they are over-aged and do not see any interest served in getting educated.

### B. TILJALA (MUNICIPAL WARD NO. 65), SOUTH CALCUTTA REVOLUTIONISED

In the middle of the 1970's, the dwellers of Tiljala slum approached the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama at Narendrapur to initiate some welfare activities in their area. In response the Mission initiated the Integrated Child Health Scheme. The basic objectives of the scheme and the strategy adopted was on the same pattern as Manoharpukur, and the succes story too

was similar.

As in Manoharpukur by the end of 1983 here too with assistance from various agencies, Indian and overseas, the Mission upgraded the centre into an education-cum-training programme and general welfare service unit for the girl children through which it sought to deliver all services aimed at the all-round development of the children of the locality, particularly girl children between 9 and 17 years of age, and finally the entire community. Tiljala slum is located near Lohapur in South Calcutta, with a population of 3100, and the centre is housed at 7/ B, Tiljala Lane, (Ward No. 65) Calcutta - 700019. The specific features of this slum are that the

## IMPACT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN MONOHARPUKUR



Medical assistance- health check up for all children and women

residents here are mainly Urdu speaking Muslims and some are Bengalee speaking Muslims. The occupations in the area are mainly tailoring, fish and meat selling, fruit vending and day labour.

The centre functions in much the same way as in Manoharpukur, providing various facilities, including general education to qualify them for higher education, and vocational training to make them self supporting. The targeted age group is 9 to 17. Besides the general social work related to the children of this slum, 50 children receive special assistance under the sponsored programme of the Save the Children. Fund. Efforts are made to help them express their talents so that they might become better citizens.

The following activities are being carried out through the slum centre :

### **FORMAL EDUCATION THROUGH INFORMAL CHANNEL**

Here too more than 80% of the beneficiaries were illiterate when they joined the centre and majority of them were first generation learners. The method followed was again that of bringing them to formal education through the informal channel by imparting general education that will

qualify them for class IV in the formal stream. The programme showed steady progress. In 1990 two girls, in 1992 two girls and in 1993 one girl passed the Madhyamik (School Final) examination. In 1994, 18 girls of the Non-formal Education Centre are preparing for the final Secondary Examination and one for the Higher Secondary Examination. Among those who passed out of the NFE centre one has been appointed an N.F.E. teacher in the centre itself.

### **VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

The girls undergo training regularly in the centre along with formal and non-formal education. They are given training in tailoring, knitting, embroidery and other related trades. This centre imparts special training in tailoring ladies' garments. The age limit for this training is 13 to 17 years. The training unit of the NFE centre is well equipped with all aids necessary for making the training complete and meaningful. Ten girls are self-employed after completing the training. Two girls got jobs as teachers in the tailoring training unit. To exhibit and promote sale of the products of the trainees the centre from time to time takes part in exhibitions arranged in Calcutta and elsewhere.

### **FUNCTIONAL LITERACY CLASS**

Ramakrishna Mission Lokasiksha Parishad, Narendrapur, is also making



Emotional development through drawing and painting

efforts to conduct a functional literacy programme in the slum. 30 women in the slum are receiving the benefit of the programme. The class is held in the evening by experienced instructors. It also organises short term training programmes for unemployed women willing to participate in the mainstream of the work force. Along with the literacy class different training courses as enumerated below are also conducted for the women of the slum, mothers and elder siblings of the sponsored children :

Medical care unit and a Leprosy care unit also function in the centre under the local youth club, Tiljala Noblemen's Union, to provide general medical care. Regular immunisation camps for Polio, Triple Antigen etc. are also organised by the local club. Besides, the local club and the Ramakrishna Mission organise discussions, and audio-visual shows to make the people aware of personal and community hygiene, environmental sanitation, child-upbringing, home and community cleanliness etc.

Sl.	Title of the course	Duration	No. of participants
1.	Orientation on personal hygiene and child care	3 days	27
2.	Orientation on need-based training for bustee dwellers	3 days	26
3.	Tailoring (Advanced)	180 days	22
4.	Orientation to working women in Home Management.	1 day	80
5.	Orientation to slum dwellers on community participation	1 day	35
6.	Health & nutrition education	6 days	30
7.	Knitting (Advanced)	90 days	16
8.	Fruit preservation-preparation of Jam, Jelly etc.	30 days	15
9.	Yoga	90 days	20

## NUTRITION AND HEALTH

As regards supplementary nutrition and health facilities, the success again compares with Manoharpukur. Apart from the general charitable dispensary one Homeopathic

## GENERAL AWARENESS AND RECREATION

The educational tours, as well as the music, dance and drama classes have helped the girls broaden their outlook, develop their personalities and have, in addition, contributed

to feelings of communal harmony and national integration.

## PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The local organisation where the Child Welfare Centre is located takes keen interest and extends all possible help in running the centre. Tiljala centre started in a dingy cell in 1983. Later, realising the importance and



Cultural programme form a part of their daily growth process

utility of our activities, the local people made a door to door collection and constructed a small two-storied building where our activities are presently conducted. Mothers of the children and the youth members of the locality come forward to help our workers and take part in the different social functions held at the centre.

### **MOTHERS' ASSOCIATION**

As in the other slums here too the mothers have been

motivated to participate in community development through the non-formal education programme. To make their participation effective an association of the mothers of the slum has been formed with the active help of the youth club. The association members while thinking seriously about the well-being of their children also devote a lot of their time and energy to enhance their own growth and development. The functional literacy programme has been well accepted by the mothers and the result has been that most of the elderly women (86.14%) are not only literate but are also productive in terms of earnings. The Association and the local youth club are now planning to initiate a training-cum-Production unit to be run by the women themselves.

### **CONCLUSION**

Tiljala is a slum inhabited primarily by the Muslims. They confined themselves to their own community and lived an extremely orthodox life. To begin with, it was extremely difficult to evoke response from the women. With a secular approach the Mission went from door to door and made them understand the importance of education for the amelioration of their suffering. With great reluctance a few joined the education centre. Nobody was pressed or forced to join. Slowly but steadily as the centre progressed, a larger number of them began to come out of their shell to join the

centre. Today every one of the community is emotionally involved in the process of development. Orthodoxy is gone. Even when the whole country was under the grip of tension the people of this slum were peaceful and no communal tension existed there. The Muslim girls are pursuing higher education, performing on public stages, proving their worth and merit in every way. This has been possible because of their meaningful exposure to education.

### **C. GOABAGAN: A CHANGE IN THE OFFING**

One of the Child Welfare Centres run by the Ramakrishna Mission is "GOABAGAN CHILD WELFARE CENTRE", at Goabagan slum in North Calcutta (Ward No. 16), Calcutta-700006

The project for 'Integrated Child Health Scheme' was initiated in Goabagan in the 1970's with the co-operation of the slum dwellers and financial assistance from the Government of West Bengal. The basic objective of the scheme was to improve the health of the children below 6 years of age. As elsewhere the project achieved remarkable progress in child health, child mortality rate and women's participation in the community service. In the second phase, the Ramakrishna Mission began organised welfare and developmental activities in collaboration with several

agencies including the local youth club. From 1984 delivery of all services aimed at the all-round welfare and rehabilitation of the children of the locality were undertaken in close collaboration with the local people. The residents of Goabagan are mostly day labourers. A considerable section of the female population works as domestic helpers and paper packet makers in order to supplement the family income. About 2900 economically deprived people live in this crowded slum, in dingy mud and thatched huts, badly ventilated and poorly lighted. Given the ground reality in a slum situation the women were the worst off. Hence, the programme was initiated for the girls of the slum, the basis of which was, of course, non-formal education.

By extension the programme was targeted, through the girl-child, at the entire community.

In keeping with the pattern elsewhere, centre includes services in the following areas:

### **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES (FORMAL EDUCATION THROUGH INFORMAL CHANNEL)**

A non-formal education unit imparts an all-round education equivalent to class IV. On completion of this those who are interested and have the aptitude are sent to the local secondary school for further education. The centre is by now

in a position to bear all expenses for those who wish to continue their education upto the Degree Course. In most cases the children were first generation learners here as well.

At present 85 girls are with the Centre, among whom 40 are studying in classes V to X in the morning section of different local Secondary Schools. In the morning they attend the local Secondary School for formal education and later in the day attend the centre. Three passed the

Sanitation and safe drinking water were scarce for a long time



Madhyamik (School Final) Examination in 1994 while one girl is at the degree level. Six are on the verge of completing their Higher Secondary course this year.

### **LIBRARY FOR CHILDREN**

The Centre has a small library. Fifty members of the library are enjoying its benefit. This is the only library in the slum and has encouraged the reading habit among the slum children in

particular and among the adults in general.

### **VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

Along with non-formal education the girls between the age of 9 and 12 are taught different trades according to their choice and ability. They receive training in doll making, soft toy making, wall hanging making, tailoring, knitting and embroidery. The age limit is 13 to 17 years. Three girls found jobs in a doll making shop after completing

aware of the family environment for healthy growth and development of children, mothers' get-togethers are held in the Centre once a month. The main issues usually discussed at such meetings are:

- i. Child care
- ii. Low cost nutrition
- iii. Habit of small savings
- iv. Environmental hygiene
- v. Home sanitation
- vi. Importance of immunisation
- vii. Child education, etc.

Mothers' meetings have become very popular here.

aware of the importance of good health and utility of planned family. The centre has also been able to educate the children and their family members about the hazards of pollution and unhygienic surroundings. This is being done to promote family consciousness about hygiene and pollution and its relationship with health.

## HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Supplementary nutrition in the form of mid-day meals has helped in eradicating malnutrition among children. All kinds of curative medicines and all sorts of diagnostic aids (such as X-Ray, Pathology etc.) are provided to the sponsored children as well as very poor children and other weaker members of the community. The common communicable and infectious diseases are cold, diarrhoea and other stomach troubles. Due to repeated advice on personal hygiene from the staff members of the Centre and because of their awareness through education these diseases have been minimised. Immunisation and preventive care too have been taken in hand by the centre.

## GENERAL AWARENESS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

General awareness and personality development are promoted through educational tours and classes in music,

The children in the library



this training. Many of them have taken these up as their regular occupations and are contributing substantially to their family incomes.

## MOTHER'S MEETING & SUPPORTIVE SERVICE:

To strengthen their confidence and to make the mothers

## FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION & SANITATION EDUCATION

The centre imparts family life education to the parents and elder siblings of the children. The response is quite encouraging. It has been possible to make the parents

dance and drama. They also give them opportunity for self expression. Some girls who excel in dance and music are invited to take part in cultural functions in and around Calcutta by different professional groups. This has helped to bring the children closer to other cultural groups and sections of society.

### **PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

The local organisations where the child welfare centres have been located take great interest and help in running the centres. A child welfare centre functions only where the accommodation is given by the local people. Mother's meetings are held regularly on health and nutrition and to encourage the mothers to take an interest in the activities of the Centre. In most cases the mothers are working as day labourers or domestic helpers and cannot therefore always participate actively in the day to day activities of the Centre. In spite of this limitation, many mothers come forward to help our workers. The people of the slum actively take part in Saraswati Puja, Sri Ramakrishna Jayanti, picnics and other social functions held in the Centre from time to time.

### **CRAFT-CUM-HOBBY AND GAMES**

It is a crowded slum and there is no space for out-door games for the children of the Centre.

So they have to play various in-door games and undergo physical training within the class-room. Some girls attend craft-cum-hobby classes where regularly drawing, painting, coloured paper cutting, garland making etc. are taught.

### **FUTURE PROJECT**

Existing working space in the centre is too inadequate to initiate additional activities for the community. To strengthen the vocational training and health programme for the children and their families it is proposed that the following activities be taken in hand when sufficient space is available:

- a. Medical unit for the children and community people
- b. Training. cum-production unit for handicrafts for the mothers and post trainees for income generation.

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Women often meet to decide upon their course of action in the slum



## SMALL SAVINGS— A STEP TOWARDS SELF- SUFFICIENCY

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One of the many major impacts of the education imparted to the slum dwellers is their commitment to self-sufficiency, not only of the individuals, but also of the community as a whole. Every slum exposed to adult education or non-formal education has thus started a movement of SMALL SAVINGS to build up their own support system. In fact, most families were in debt up to their ears. Education brought to them a strong desire for freedom from the bondage of exploiting money lenders. Interestingly the leaders of this small savings movement are the women who were so long confined by the ways of the slum. They had no say in their own families, leave alone in the community.

Educated and enlightened, aware about their own problems and talents, able to foresee their future, these women have motivated themselves to save whatever was possible out of the income generated by themselves. In one area the mothers created a community chest of Rs. 67,930,80. In one year alone (1993-94) they saved Rs 17,764,00. As an amount this is not large, as a movement this is full of force and prospect. Out of this small sum they extended loan facilities to members of the mothers association, an amount of Rs. 19,700.00 for self-employment of mothers, and pecuniary assistance worth rupees two thousand to fellow compatriots. The pace with which it is growing, it may be said that within the next five years the women would be able to form their own bank with the prospect of eliminating the exploiting forces altogether. What they had received is education, what they have presented is a challenge-challenge to the threats of life.

### CONCLUSION

The flowering of the personality is what matters most. Swami Vivekananda said, "Your duty is to restore man's faith in and respect for himself", the rest will be taken care of by man. This can be best done through education, education of the informal kind. Education unfolds one's personality, widens one's outlook, expands the vision

and endows one with that confidence which inspires one to face any challenge of life, venture to surmount problems which earlier seemed unsurmountable. The people of the slums had lived in an environment of deprivation and hatred by others who saw them as anti-socials and untouchables. For generations they lived in that condition and began to believe that they were worthless. Exposed to education through simple adult education centres run by inexperienced student, they at once sensed their own worth and set about achieving their goal of a meaningful and dignified life as citizens of Calcutta. Today one cannot imagine the sea-change that has taken place in Rambagan, and subsequently in most other slums over the years through adult and non-formal education. In an open meeting the slum dwellers refused to be called "slum-dwellers" and "scheduled castes" and in a bid to revolutionise the very thinking of the people they renamed the area as Vivekananda Palli. Once their hidden potential was realised they were a completely changed lot. Today their life is secure, they are economically sound, educationally ahead of many other areas, and culturally they are highly advanced. All this is the impact of education—adult and non-formal education—imparted and being imparted to their coming generation by themselves with assistance from the Ramakrishna Mission.