

Seminar on Education for the Tribal Girl Child in KBK Districts of Orissa: Policy Interventions and Awareness Campaign for Expanding & Sustaining Access and Opportunities

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Venue: Nabarangapur

The Seminar on *Education for the Tribal Girl Child in KBK Districts of Orissa: Policy Interventions and Awareness Campaign for Expanding & Sustaining Access and Opportunities* was supported by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt of India.

Introduction:

Education is a 'powerful determinant of an individual's life choices and opportunities'. It enhances human capacity and capability to exercise choices at the social, economic and political arenas. Exercise of choices may be to become creative, productive and empowered or to enjoy self-respect with dignity. Literacy and education are significant indicators of development in a society. Literacy and education are generally associated with essential traits of today's civilization such as 'modernization, industrialization, communication and commerce'. Literacy is one of the essential indicators of development of a society. It provides an important data source for formulation and implementation of policies and programmes of Government and numerous voluntary organizations. The definition to describe a person as literate is "A person aged 7 years and above who can both read and write with understanding in any language is to be taken as a literate". Education enhances a person's knowledge about the immediate environment, understanding of various socio-economic and political issues, and capacity to comprehend and take decision concerning her/him in the society.

However, the abysmal low level of educational attainment among the girl children in the KBK districts* (* Nomenclature for the eight districts of Sonepur, Balangir, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Rayagada, Koraput, Nabarangapur and Malkanagiri carved out from the districts of Kalahandi, Balangir and Koraput), coupled with familial and social neglect inhibits the human resource growth potential of the society thus slowing the overall developmental process. The KBK districts of Orissa is a classic case of opposites, of rich natural resources with high level of economic backwardness and human poverty, and of rich human resources potential with low level of capacity and capability building. The economic backwardness of the region is inbuilt with the lack of capacity utilization and capability development of the human resource development potential. There are several public policies and measures to arrest the situation, yet the region ranked lowest in terms of over all literacy and more particularly female literacy not only in India but also in Asia. There are several policy measures and initiatives by the government but the situation is still grim particularly in the KBK region of Orissa. Something has gone wrong somewhere and the problems need to be tackled on urgent priority basis in order to stave off from the grim scenario and to develop a healthy and educated human resource base of the society. Focus should be concentrated, besides public policy interventions, on community partnership and raising the awareness level of the people, particularly among the tribal communities and the under privileged strata of the society.

The average literacy rate of Orissa was 64 per cent and female literacy was 51 per cent, as per the 2001 census, less than the national average of 65 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively, during the same period. However, the average literacy rate of the KBK districts was 43.5 and female literacy 29.3 as per the Census of 2001. The district wise literacy figure for the KBK districts for the same period as follow:

Objective:

The objective of the seminar would be two fold: (i) to identify the basic issues on low level of literacy in the KBK region, i.e. tribal female literacy; and (ii) to suggest remedial measures for increasing the educational and literacy potential of the human resources and more particularly of the tribal female section of the society.

(i) **Basic issues:**

- (a) The socio-economic issues at the level of individual, household and society:
- Status of tribal girl child, gender bias;
 - Level of education and literacy, particularly of the tribal girl child;
 - Level of economic independence of women (In India the share of women in the adult labour force was 31 per cent in 1997 and in Orissa much lower, as the women population use to attend to the domestic chores and indicative from the low female literacy);
- (b) Accessibility of the tribal girl child to basic educational and literacy related services including formal and non-formal:
- Physical accessibility, i.e. distance of the educational centre and time taken to reach there;
 - Financial accessibility, i.e. the basic capacity of the people to pay for the education and related services;
 - Cultural accessibility, i.e. gender bias for the girl child, if any;
- (c) Existing quality of educational and literacy related services and infrastructures, including availability of school building, teachers, books, etc.;
- (d) Access to non-formal education and literacy;
- (e) Nature of free or subsidized educational services for the tribal girl child;
- (f) Prevalence of gender bias within households, community and society at large in the allocation of resources for literacy and education, if any;
- (g) Lack of organized focus to tap the benefits accruing from the frontier areas of technology for tribal girl child education, e.g. information and communication technologies.

(ii) **Suggested remedies:**

The prescribed remedies may be attempted at the level of *Public policy interventions, awareness campaign and community partnership* to address the low level of tribal female literacy in the KBK region of Orissa.

- (a) Public policy interventions involve:
- Reducing the access/barrier to literacy and educational related services for the tribal, physically, financially and culturally;
 - Strengthening and improving basic literacy and educational services, particularly for the tribal girl child, including formal and non-formal;
 - Changing the orientation towards basic literacy and education for the tribal girl child by improved outreach activities, formally as well as non-formally;

- Providing competency based training to teachers and others involved in imparting education and literacy;
- To increase the collaboration between public and private sector for management and delivery of services for education and literacy:
 - (i) To supplement the logistic, finance and educational expertise of the private sector with that of the public sector so as to develop the required synergy to deal with the low level of tribal girl child education in the KBK districts of Orissa, and
 - (ii) Building managerial capacity to address service delivery provision;
- To tap the benefits accruing from the frontier areas of technology, e.g. information and communication technologies;
- The policy development, financing, regulation, monitoring and evaluation of tribal educational programmes and related issues.

(b) Awareness campaign:

- Promoting tribal female education campaigns aimed at improving knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Involving professional groupings like teaching communities, community groupings, religious and philanthropic bodies in the promotion of tribal female education and literacy related issues. Media, both electronic and print media, play a vital role in the awareness campaign which need to be channelised in the areas having a bearing on the girl child education.

(c) Community partnership:

- Encouraging and facilitating for the involvement of community and non-governmental voluntary organizations in developing institutional mechanisms for the tribal girl child education and literacy. These organizations have some experience and operate at the field level and can be involved in an interactive mode of relationships with family and government and private educational initiatives within the national educational policy framework.

Participants:

- Chairpersons and Members of the Panchayat Samitis and the Zilla Parishads of the KBK Districts.
- Representatives from Teaching community, Kanyashram Schools, local NGOs in the KBK districts.
- Women Self-Help Groups, Anganwadi Workers, Legal community, Media.
- State Government functionaries: Educational planners and administrators, Community and child development officials, Teachers, Women & Child Development officials, District Collectors and Project Directors of DRDA in the KBK Districts.
- Representatives of Political Parties, Professional Organizations like Lawyers, Local chambers of commerce, Community based organizations, and Cooperatives in the KBK Districts.
- Co-ordinators of DPEP and Co-ordinators of Total Literacy Campaign in the KBK Districts.