

Case Study: Women's Literacy Program

Living in one of the narrow alleys of Naveen Shahdara is thirty five year old Darkasha, with her four children and husband who makes a living by selling little delicacies for children at a nearby shop. Darkasha joined the Women's Literacy Program (WLP) supported by Nai Raahen in December 2008. She always wanted to learn how to read and write but could not afford it. When she learnt that she could join the WLP class in her community without any expenses, she decided to join. When asked about why she joined the class her answer was simple. She said that she saw many pictures in books, newspapers and Television but always wanted to know what was written beneath them.

When Darkasha joined the class, a baseline test in Hindi and Maths was conducted. Her recognition of alphabets (both oral and written) and recognition of numbers was found to be poor. In the three months that followed both Hindi and Maths were taught.

Afternoons (2-4pm) were dedicated to this program. One Hour was for Hindi while the other hour was for Maths. Darkasha's teacher Shahina used Hindi letter cards to introduce alphabets. Familiar words beginning with each letter were chanted and discussed. The phonetic chart (barakhadi) was then introduced and taught. Short and simple four line paragraph cards were used. Later, one story book was distributed to Darkasha and each person in the class and activities carried out in class were linked to the book. Hindi workbooks were used to practice writing and Saturdays were allotted for special activities. One such activity included a discussion on the great women leaders of India, another involved writing out a recipe and then cooking the item as a group.

In Maths, number recognition with the help of number cards, simple addition, simple subtraction, followed by addition with carry over and subtraction with carry over was taught. Every topic was linked with daily activities like marketting, the price of vegetables, how much was sold and bought. False currency notes were used to bring concepts like addition and subtraction to life. In the special activities section, the class learnt to fill up bank slips for withdrawals and deposits.

The post-test (after the teaching intervention) conducted in March, revealed that in the space of four months, Darkasha had learnt to read a simple story in Hindi, she was able to think and write in Hindi on her own and was able to recognize numbers, do addition and subtraction with carry over in Maths.

Darkasha can now go to the bank and market independently. She can also supervise her children's homework. She feels she can really help her youngest daughter who is yet to enter school because she already knows the first steps that need to be taken. Darkasha's dream of being able to read about all the pictures that she sees in books, newspapers and television has now been fulfilled.