

THE LEGAL LITERACY PROGRAMME

The twin aims of the programme are to create rights awareness amongst the masses and encourage other organisations to include legal literacy as a continuous and regular activity in their organisation. This is achieved in two ways:

- by preparing manuals that demystify the laws which relate to the lives of ordinary citizens.
- by conducting legal literacy workshops with workers of various grassroots level NGOs, and with school and college students.

Legal Literacy and Literacy

Promoters of adult literacy learning programmes argue that literacy is a tool for empowerment. But literacy alone is not sufficient. Empowerment is not created automatically by being able to read but it is created by being able to read relevant information and using that information. To give an example: Ganesh and Gopal are very good friends. Ganesh can read but Gopal cannot. However, Ganesh reads only film posters, and both are unaware of their minimum wages or equal remuneration. This is not empowerment.

One of the vital areas on which people want information is their legal rights. MARG's Legal Literacy Programme gives them new information which builds on their existing knowledge base. It is this information that enables them to take action. **This is empowerment.** During the evaluation of our workshops, we have found women who are willing and able to use their past experience and their new knowledge to assert their rights.

'Adult education' and 'adult literacy' are not synonymous. One can exist without the other. First, adult literacy is the process of helping

adults to learn literacy skills. And this process needs to be attractive to the potential adult literacy learner. Often, adults do not wish to learn like five-year olds do. They do not need a literacy curriculum that entails 'the cat sat on the mat' routine. They need teaching-learning materials that are appropriate to adults. Secondly, after learning literacy skills, it is necessary for the participants to have something interesting and useful to read. Otherwise, they will not use their literacy skills. This we see as the process of 'adult education'. MARG's Legal Literacy Programme can help with appropriate material for adult education.

The most important contribution of the Legal Literacy Programme is to provide adult education materials for both literate and non-literate persons. A non-literate adult may still be educated and empowered. Non-literate persons, like literate persons, are not ignorant. They have often built up a large amount of knowledge through their own experience, which they can use for their own purposes. To that knowledge, the Legal Literacy Programme can add additional information which enables them to make more effective decisions. MARG's Legal Literacy books meet the requirements of both groups of people.