



September 2008 At a Glance - Women's Literacy

Issues

- Being literate is more than just the ability to read and write—it affects poverty, childhood mortality, population growth, gender equality, sustainable development and much more.
- Women account for more than two-thirds of the world's more than 771 million illiterate adults. That's over 500 million illiterate women worldwide.
- There are many contributing factors than can explain lower rates of female literacy, such as not having money to pay for school associated costs, cultural factors that devalue girls' education and structural barriers like lack of water and sanitation services in schools.
- Despite the obstacles that exist, women's education is a vital component of sustainable development programs.
- Studies have shown that improving girls' access to education leads to improvements in health, hygiene and nutrition. Increased education for women leads to healthier children and children who are more likely to go to school themselves.
- Literacy helps women earn and manage money. Literate women are more likely to make use of savings and credit groups and to utilize new, more effective agricultural technologies.

World Neighbors Solutions

- Literacy is a key piece of World Neighbors program in places like West Africa and South Asia, offering the opportunity to integrate other issues, like HIV/AIDS prevention, nutrition and hygiene.
- Through program work, World Neighbors works to address the interrelated challenges to women and girls' literacy.
 - In some communities, like the village of Amauja in Bihar, India, World Neighbors has, through its partner organization, helped to establish non-formal schools specifically for girls, and worked with parents to increase support for girls education.
 - A desire to participate in literacy efforts often arises out of women's participation in savings and credit growups, where women see the importance of literacy in making and managing money.
 - World Neighbors helps lessen the burden of unpaid labor faced by many women and girls, giving them the time needed to attend classes or school.

www.workofwomen.org

WORK OF WOMEN | 4127 NW 122nd STREET | OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73120 | 1.800.242.6387