



CIDA Photo: Dilip Mehta

India's literacy rate for ages 7 and above went up from 44% in 1981 to 65% in 2001. The gap between male and female literacy rates decreased from 29% in 1991 to 22% in 2001. In Bihar, which is one of the poorest and most overpopulated states, the population growth rate is 2.3% and the literacy rate is the lowest in the country at 47%. A multilateral project involving UNICEF and the governments of India and Bihar was established in 1991 to focus on castes and women; the 1994 review of the Bihar Education Project noted positive improvements through village education committees and non-formal education through NGOs. Similarly, Pakistan, whose literacy rate for women is a mere 24%, but whose population growth rate is over 2%, has announced a plan to educate 200,000 women by 2002.⁵

There is a strong correlation between the well-being of families and the educational level of women. Indeed, the southern states of India are proof of this cause and effect. Kerala was one of the first states to commit to literacy and now has a literacy rate of 90%. It is currently reaping the benefits: it has the lowest population growth rate (1.4%), the highest number of women per 1,000 men (1,058), and a household income higher than that of other states. With literacy comes a decline in the birth rate; with a decline in the birth rate comes an improved standard of living; with an improved standard of living comes better health and longer life.

- Children in the labour force, of 10-14 age group: 26%
- Net primary enrollment, of relevant age group: 77%
- Net secondary enrollment: 55%

(top photo) Bangladesh
CIDA Photo: Roger Lemoyne

(bottom photo) India
CIDA Photo: David Trattles

