

For these moms, Operation Blackboard comes home

In Telangana, 41,000 women learn the Telugu alphabet from their own children and clear exam

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Over 41,000 women in Telangana's Sangareddy district can now feel the power of the written word after learning the alphabet for the first time. What is more, they were home-schooled by their own children.

The women have cleared the examination conducted by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).

The NIOS exam is normally taken by 4,000 to 5,000 neo-literates from each district annually, but

that number exceeded the norm ten times, thanks to the Sangareddy programme for female literacy initiated by the then District Collector, Manicka Raj Kannan, in 2017. The district was carved out from Medak.

The Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM) imparts functional literacy and numeracy, but faced a shortage of coordinators. Mr. Kannan then decided to rope in school children.

In 2017, the district administration developed 'Ammaku Akshara Mala' (alphabet garland for



Children enthusiastically prepared their mothers for the literacy test. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

mother) and roped in students in Classes VII to X. They were asked to teach their mothers to read and write the Telugu alphabet at home. Most women were

part of Self-Help Groups but not literate. The administration identified 52,000 women as eligible to take the exam and sent the list to the Central government. The women got books developed by the district administration. "We drafted volunteers from the Indra Kranthi Patham, a rural poverty alleviation scheme, to give worksheets to the SHG members," said V. Venkateswarulu, Sangareddy District Panchayat Officer and Project Director in-charge, DRDA.

Of 48,000 women who took the exam in March 2018, 41,000 passed in writing, reading and numerical skills. In a 15-day literacy module, the women were taught four letters of the Telugu alphabet in a day.

Mr. Kannan, now Collector of Hyderabad, says the effort could be tried in Hyderabad and other districts. Yadamma (40) from Indrakaran in Kandi mandal of Sangareddy said, "My son Vikas and daughter Mounika taught me. I am happy I lived up to their expectations."