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Project on Radio Education for Adult Literacy (PREAL) was among a few experiments where women were exclusively focused, in which use of community radio was considered essential for learning language. Four Hindi speaking states were chosen for the project having a great deal of dialect variations in each State. While course content was the responsibility of Directorate of Adult Education, programme production and transmission was the responsibility of All India Radio (Akashvani). Formative process and summative research inputs were provided by ISRO. A number of other agencies also helped in the implementation of the project.

The experiment was carried out between December 1990 and June 1991. Approximately 3600 women education centres were set up for about 1,08,000 adult women learners. One of the basic assumptions of the experiment was that the learning takes place through listening. The other assumption was that women learners had the ability to listen with attention in a community radio listening session. Since the total number of adult women listeners per centre were 30, it was thought that they would be able to listen, interact and understand the radio programmes produced in local dialects.

In this paper, attempts have been made to highlight the major findings of the evaluative studies which attempted to understand the extent to which radio helped accelerate the learning process, improve the quality of learning, increased the learner – instructor interaction and the extent to which such community radio programmes can be utilised in future for adult literacy.

It was observed “that radio broadcast acted as facilitator in improving the teaching and learning situation and also help increase interaction between learners and the instructors”. However, due to high rate of attrition of women learners, nothing can be said authoritatively to the extent of contribution of community radio in improving learning.

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