



Education For All

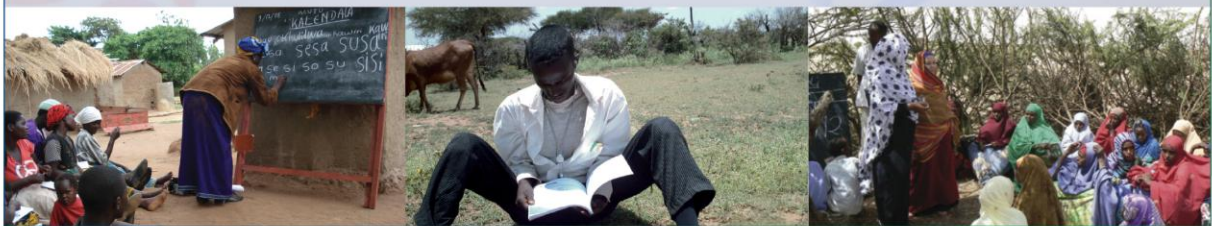
Strengthening UPE through Family Learning

A Conference to Share African Experiences of
Developing Family Learning Programmes

12 & 13 February 2010

Freetown, Sierra Leone. Venue: The British Council

A collaboration between
The British Council, Sierra Leone,
the British Association for Literacy in Development,
the African Family Learning Action Group,
Adult Education Department at the Ministry of Education,
Freetown Teachers College and local NGO partners in Sierra Leone



Education For All: Strengthening UPE through Family Learning

A Conference to Share African Experiences of Developing Family Learning Programmes

Why the need for this conference?

The Education For All 2000 Assessment reported that Universal Primary Education continues to fail the most disadvantaged children and at least 875 million adults, mostly women, remain illiterate.

Family learning approaches offer the opportunity for governments to build vital momentum in the countdown to 2015 by strengthening UPE provision, and meeting current policy commitments to reach the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. Effective parallel approaches to formal education are urgently required to ensure that the most excluded and disadvantaged individuals and communities benefit from appropriate basic educational provision. Education is the right of every adult and every child. Approaches which address the needs of adults and children simultaneously have a double benefit. They also address the impact of a non-literate home environment on a child's education and take steps to halt the cycle of illiteracy which sees children of non-literate parents quickly becoming the next generation of non-literate adults.

Family learning approaches have been used in a number of African contexts to enable parents and other family members to develop their own skills and support the vital learning that takes place at school. 'Joining the loop' in this way enables whole communities to engage meaningfully in the educational process and builds sustainably on the considerable achievements of UPE.

As part of BALID's work to promote the importance of literacy in development, and to contribute to the Education For All goals, the Association is organising a series of events to demonstrate the role of family learning methodologies in strengthening existing primary education and adult literacy programmes.

A conference will be held, in conjunction with the African Family Learning Action Group and local educational partners in Sierra Leone, with the aim of identifying and sharing best practice in family learning methodologies. The conference will:

1. explore how family literacy can strengthen existing primary education and adult literacy work
2. explore current & recent family learning models, including from Sierra Leone and Uganda
3. discuss how these models might perform on a larger scale and in different African contexts
4. evaluate the benefits of the models from a financial perspective
5. identify ways in which governments can integrate Family Learning methodologies into their existing education plans

The conference follows on from an initial one day conference in London in 2007 at which key speakers gave perspectives on Family Learning in the UK, Family Learning in Uganda and Family Learning from the perspective of funders. This has generated substantial interest amongst NGOs and others responsible for delivering basic education provision.

Conference Summary

The conference will be jointly hosted by the British Council, the British Association for Literacy in Development (BALID), African Family Learning Action Group (AFLAG), and local partners in Sierra Leone, including the Adult Education Department at the Ministry of Education, Freetown Teachers College and local NGO partners.

The aim of the conference is to learn from current African experience of family learning methodologies, and to invite practitioners, government representatives and funders to meet and discuss the potential of the approach *in strengthening existing primary education and adult literacy work*.

The conference is aimed at 80 - 100 participants, mostly local, but also from other African countries and from Europe, to be drawn from local NGOs, literacy practitioners, government ministries, INGOs, universities, and others.

References

- Family Literacy in England*, Greg Brooks, University of Sheffield, paper and presentation, November 2007
Patrick Kiirya presentation, November 2007
Literacy for Life. UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2006
Education for All by 2015. Will we make it? UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2008

Speakers and Contributors

The conference will include the following confirmed speakers, as well as a range of case studies presented by local NGOs.

Olive Musa, Ministry of Education on *'Uniting the Goals of UPE and Adult Literacy programmes'*

Martyna Foday, Freetown Teachers College on *'Support to Rural Teachers and Family Literacy'*

Rugiatu Turay, Amazonian Initiative Movement, Local NGO, Lunsar on *'Exploring a Family Learning Approach to Addressing Harmful Traditional Practices'*,

Edward Turay, Fourah Bay College, Freetown on *'Challenges and Dilemmas of Materials Development for a Pilot Family Literacy project in Sierra Leone'*,

Brian Street, Kings College London, UK on *'Ethnographic Practices in Literacy'*

Patrick Kiirya, AFLAG, Uganda on *'Family Learning: Outcomes in the African Context'*

Jan Eldred, National Institute of Adult & Continuing Education, UK, *'An overview of family learning internationally'*

Outline of Sessions

Day 1

- Introductions and Outline
- Education For All, Universal Primary Education and Adult Literacy
- Background to family learning, links with primary education and adult basic education, stopping the cycle of illiteracy
- Family Learning Case Study 1
- Family Learning Case Study 2

EARLY EVENING RECEPTION AT
THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Day 2

- Family learning & strengthening civil society
- Identifying funding for family learning programmes
- Family Learning Case Study 3
- Family Learning Case Study 4
- Family learning & the literate environment
 - Learner generated materials
 - State prompted publications
- Taking Action

Conference Background & Context

The World Declaration on Education For All (EFA) called for an end to rigid, prescriptive education systems. Flexibility was key: from now on, it stated, education should be tailor-made, adapted to the needs, lives and circumstances of learners.

Universal Primary Education (UPE) forms the backbone of EFA strategy, and in the drive to meet this key goal, quality and the complex needs of learners have often not been a priority. The EFA 2000 Assessment reported that in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, less than three out of four pupils reached Grade 5. In the least developed countries taken together, a little over half reached this level and many drop out after the first or second grade. Despite progress in actual numbers, illiteracy rates remain extremely high: at least 875 million adults remain illiterate, of which 63.8 per cent are women – *exactly the same proportion as a decade previously*.

There is a growing recognition that for children to succeed at school, the role of parents is crucial. This is particularly true for disadvantaged children, whether their disadvantage stems from their gender, their economic situation, their physical and intellectual ability, or from other social factors. Though the issues of adult literacy and the effectiveness of children's schooling are starting to be seen as mutually reinforcing by those responsible for developing and delivering educational provision, there is a lack of knowledge about how to develop effective integrated programmes.

Family learning methodologies which support parents to engage in their children's school experience, and also increase the parents' own literacy and numeracy skills, are being employed in a number of African countries to halt the cycle of illiteracy which sees children of non-literate parents quickly becoming the next generation of non-literate adults.

The strength of family learning methodology lies in its ability to address literacy and numeracy rates simultaneously in multi-generation age groups. Results can be seen not only at the school level but also at the family level in, for example, reduced domestic violence and a decrease in early marriages for girls. It can be adapted and approached in a number of ways, but the common factors are:

- Children receive direct and ongoing help from parents as well as teachers.
- Children see the example of adults learning, and of education as an ongoing life process.
- It provides, responds to and nurtures a real motivation of individual parents to support their children's learning, and as such is demand-led.
- It is implemented through joint learning sessions, parents only sessions, and home learning activities
- Parents' confidence and skills are enhanced as they learn and engage in dialogue with teachers about their own learning and that of their children.

One of the key challenges for Education For All is ensuring the education of people affected by HIV/AIDS, and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in particular. All reports suggest education has a vital role to play in alleviating the impact of this pandemic and family learning methodologies can play a valuable role in this context: providing continuity through devastating change; strengthening community links; preparing a child to attain self-reliance; and increasing opportunities. The well-documented impacts of education on health, access to resources, and other key development indicators, have probably never been more relevant than at this time and demand flexible approaches alongside long-term commitment.

A pilot project in Uganda between 2000 and 2003 highlighted the mutually reinforcing effect of creating an effective learning environment for both children and adults:

- **Parents** were able to help children with homework at least twice a week. Parents' confidence was enhanced as they engaged in dialogue with teachers about their own learning and that of their children. Working with their children was a motivational factor for many parents who became involved in the project and were encouraged to provide a learning corner at home. The need to develop more tailored literacy content was identified to enable parents to support their children's learning activities, especially in lower primary classes
- The project helped to counteract the annual dropout from P1 (usually about 50%). Children attended the classes regardless of whether their parents were attending as they received and benefited from support from other adults.
- **School Management Committees** took a central role in the project, bringing people together for planning. If a new school became involved in the project, the management committee was expected to take the lead in this.
- More **women than men** were involved in the project – although in some cases, it was observed through home visits that men became involved in learning activities in the home even if they did not attend the lessons. **Men** also responded to the introduction of Father and Daughter reading clubs
- **Teachers** trained in the methodology had adjusted their classroom environment, for example by putting up visual aids on the walls, re-arranging seating so children can sit in groups. They became concerned not only with the children whilst they were in the classroom, but also with the general environment of the children and their home situation.
- **Education authorities** at sub-county level were very open to family learning and were beginning to budget for it within their yearly planning phases.

The approach developed in Eastern Uganda is currently being implemented in the more challenging context of Northern Uganda where UPE has been less successful due to the effects of war and resultant fractured communities.

In other African countries, notably South Africa, Mali and Nigeria, similar positive outcomes for both adults and children are being recorded. BALID is committed to exploring and disseminating successful family learning methodologies further through a series of conferences, aimed ultimately at supporting the attainment of UPE whilst working towards the neglected targets on adult literacy.

Conference Partners

British Association for Literacy in Development (BALID)

BALID's aims are to:

- promote literacy and numeracy for adults as an integral part of human development;
- increase awareness of the relationship between literacy, numeracy, economic development and social change, in partnership with other appropriate organisations;
- inform and advise governments, non-governmental agencies and the private sector on adult literacy and numeracy within the context of development
- contribute to programmes for adult literacy and numeracy;
- facilitate interactions and exchanges between those working in adult literacy and numeracy programmes;
- exchange experiences and research findings in order to inform future practice.

African Family Learning Action Group (AFLAG)

AFLAG is a pan-African group with current representatives in South Africa, Mali, Chad, Uganda and Zambia. AFLAG is involved in seminars, dissemination and promotion of family learning and family literacy methodologies.

The British Council, Freetown

The British Council builds trust and understanding between people worldwide by enabling them to share ideas and knowledge.

The office in Freetown has been in operation for 66 years and offers a place to learn and study, take exams, access the internet for information about qualifications, attend events and exhibitions and receive advice on UK culture and education.

Registering for the Conference

Cost of Attendance

RESIDENTIAL

£450 for international NGOs and agencies staying at conference accommodation, including airport pick-up, transport to conference venue, food and accommodation on Friday and Saturday night.

NON-RESIDENTIAL

£250 for weekend delegates who will NOT be making use of accommodation, airport runs and additional services. To include lunch at the conference, conference documents, tea and coffee throughout the day and evening reception. No travel/evening meals included.

SUBSIDISED RATE FOR LOCAL NGOS: £20 (Maximum of two per organisation). To include lunch at the conference, conference documents, tea and coffee throughout the day and evening reception. No travel/evening meals included.

Bookings to be received by Wednesday 13 January.

Do you require an invitation letter to acquire a visa for Sierra Leone? YES/NO

Flights to Freetown

There are a number of European carriers operating to Freetown.
From the UK the BALID Executive Committee will be using Kevin McPhillips Travel (at <http://www.sierraleonetravel.com/>) who has flights four times a week, including Friday arrivals and Sunday night departures.

Participant details

Name

Job Title

Organisation (if applicable)

Daytime No

Mobile No

Email

Address

