

# Conference Report

## Education For All

Strengthening UPE through Family Learning

February 2010, Freetown, Sierra Leone

**A collaboration between**

The British Council, Sierra Leone,

The British Association for Literacy in Development,

Non-Formal Education Directorate, Ministry Of Education,  
Youth and Sports, Sierra Leone,

Freetown Teachers College and local NGO partners in Sierra Leone.

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# Conference Partners

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## British Association for Literacy in Development (BALID)



**BALID**  
British Association for  
Literacy in Development

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.



## The British Council, Sierra Leone

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.

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BALID wishes to thank The British Council, Freetown, for hosting and providing support for this event. We wish to thank speakers and participants for generously contributing their time and energy so that we could all benefit from their insights and experiences.

A full copy of this report is available for downloading on the Balid website:

[www.balid.org.uk](http://www.balid.org.uk)

# 1 Executive Summary

Educational provision in developing countries continues to face many serious challenges. In spite of efforts towards Universal Primary Education, millions of children remain marginalised from mainstream education because of poverty, gender, language, location or other factors. At the same time, some 759 million young people and adults remain illiterate (UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010).

In the face of these challenges, 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.**

In Sierra Leone for instance, approximately 30% of primary school age children do not attend school. 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.

The 'Strengthening UPE Through Family Learning' Conference showed how 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.

Janine Eldred shared some of the compelling research on the benefits of family-focused learning activities, including outcomes for adults and children, such as: participation in further, formal learning;

school participation and attendance and community engagement and employability. In Uganda, LABE's family literacy project ensured an increase in the number of parents engaging consciously in studying and playing educational games with children at home to reinforce reading and writing and number recognition skills. Research has shown that through family learning parents develop their understanding of how children learn. With this increased understanding, the parents develop confidence in supporting their children's learning. They also have an increased ability and knowledge of how to support their children's learning needs and development. In its implementation period the Ugandan family literacy project case study saw an increase of 60% in the parents who consciously study, and play educational games with their children at home.

Lack of resources hampers progress in all areas of adult and non-formal education; Olive Musa's presentation called for greater advocacy to ensure that this vital area of education receives the resources that are required. Too many literacy facilitators are expected to carry out their work with little or no stipend, inadequate training and no resources. There is room too for greater collaboration with the formal sector around the sharing of premises, teaching approaches and other resources. Martyna Foday's presentation on rural teachers highlighted how this substantial network of motivated individuals, both paid and unpaid, could be incorporated into a national integrated family literacy strategy.

Enhanced literacy skills have the potential to create an enabling environment for individuals and communities wishing to refuse harmful traditional practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Rugiatu Turay reported on how the literacy work of AIM had helped to build community consensus, creating a platform for change. Family literacy and the space created by the sessions played two roles: educating families so that they have the courage to turn away from this practice, and ensuring that the social environment for change is safe and supportive and therefore irreversible.

The potential role of Sierra Leonean stories as materials in literacy programmes was explored by Brian Street, Peter Koroma and Eddie Turay. This raised questions as to how the stories might be actually used by teachers - it is recognised that, significant though they are, such stories need particular attention in pedagogic terms in order to be useful for helping literacy development. A further project is being developed to help provide support for adult literacy facilitators.

Eddie Turay shared some of his experiences of developing a pilot family literacy project in Sierra Leone and recommended a range of supporting initiatives to increase the effectiveness of a family literacy programme. These included home visits to reinforce the programme aims, establishing community libraries to strengthen the literate environment, making use of PTAs and school management committees as project partners and where possible bringing retired personnel into programmes as experienced volunteers.

There is always a way that literacy can be brought into a programme of learning and Katy Newell-Jones explored methodologies for introducing such literacy learning opportunities into a range of programmes. Participants found the five point plan, designed as a checklist to consider when developing literacy programmes, particularly useful - highlighting again the conference findings that organisations are committed to strengthening their literacy work, but are finding a marked lack of guidance and training to help them do this.

## Lessons Learnt & Recommendations

- There was a strong feeling that family learning/family literacy fits well into the current formal and non-formal education policy agenda in Sierra Leone and was an essential element in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Sierra Leonean communities. Participants recommended that there was an increase in the sharing of information and enhanced communication between the Ministry of Education and NGOs.

## Participants felt that they:

- gained both a broad overview and practical skills in family learning / family literacy;
- extended their networks to include key stakeholders in relation to literacy and learning;
- gained valuable insights into challenging FGM and how integrating literacy into such programmes could enhance their effectiveness;
- enhanced their awareness of the role of story-telling in literacy and family learning;
- explored ways of embedding literacy into community-based projects.
- Whilst valuing the opportunities which the conference provided, most present would have liked a longer conference, with more time to exchange ideas with presenters and participants and formulate their plans for incorporating family learning/family literacy into their own programmes. There was also a call for follow up events which
  - promote greater respect and recognition of the essential role of facilitators, including greater financial rewards for their contributions;
  - provide more training opportunities, including increasing skills in participatory learning;
  - include Teacher Training Institutions and donors;
- There are several family learning/family literacy initiatives taking place in Sierra Leone currently where expertise is being developed. Participants recommended that a review of these should be undertaken which could form a valuable resource for others wishing to embark on family learning/family literacy as a result of this conference.

- The level of interest was extremely high with virtually all participants seeing family learning/family literacy as a way of enhancing their existing programmes. For example, school head teachers are considering introducing family learning and NGOs working with communities are considering involving intergenerational groups.

Limited funding is one of the barriers to implementing family learning/family literacy, although many organisations were committed to incorporating it where possible into existing programmes (below are some examples from feedback on proposed action plans)

*“Start family learning within my family and then try and expand it to my immediate community whilst working out strategies with my organisation for it to be implemented.”*  
(EDUCAID)

*“I will try by all means to adopt this system of parent and child literacy education in my school. And later establish it in the other schools country-wide.”*  
(FAWE Primary School)

*“Organise a coordination forum of our 16 partners (NNGOs, Media Houses and Vocational Institutes) to raise awareness on ‘family learning’. We will seek further cooperation from BALID etc.”*  
(Finnish Refugee Council)

- There is a strong call from participants for the establishment of a network of organisations interested and engaged in incorporating family learning/family literacy into their programmes of work. At least two organisations were willing to undertake the role of coordinating such a network. The network could:
  - promote and circulate existing materials, including DVD/videos;
  - increase sharing of information amongst NGOs;
  - secure widespread publicity and press for events to increase awareness;

- communicate and circulate the report;
- involve other relevant African networks, such as AFLAG;
- facilitate a Uganda-Sierra Leone learning exchange to share experiences.

## 2 Introduction

*Education for All: Strengthening UPE Through Family Learning* was jointly hosted by the British Council, the British Association for Literacy in Development (BALID), and local partners in Sierra Leone, including the Non-Formal Education Directorate at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Freetown Teachers College and local NGOs. The aim of the conference was 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 formed part of BALID’s work to promote the importance of literacy in development, and to contribute to the Education For All goals. This event followed 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 generated substantial interest amongst NGOs and others responsible for delivering basic education provision.

The conference attracted seventy participants, from local NGOs, literacy practitioners, government ministries, INGOs, universities, from other African countries and from Europe. There were lively discussions, with the sharing of good practice and ideas, as well as strong calls for greater local collaboration on family literacy issues for programme and advocacy purposes.

### 3 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 GMR 2010 stated that one quarter of primary school aged children in sub-Saharan Africa are out of school and that just 76% of school children in this region reach Grade 5. Despite progress in actual numbers, illiteracy rates remain extremely high: at least 759 million adults remain illiterate, of which 63% 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. 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. 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 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 could 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.

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.

## 4 Conference Papers

### 4.1

#### Family learning and literacy in international development: advocating an approach to effectively achieve education for all

##### Janine Eldred

Associate Director  
(International), The National  
Institute of Adult Continuing  
Education (NIACE), UK

Families, however they are described or defined are the first sites of learning for children. Parents or carers are children's first educators. In many developing countries, families continue to be strong societal structures as well as units of enterprise. The concept of family learning originated in the 1970s in the USA and spread to the UK, as well as many other industrialised countries, becoming recognised as a key policy driver for achieving multiple public service outcomes. It has also spread to many developing countries. Family learning helps to break the inter-generational cycle of under-education, low literacy and numeracy and creates a 'win-win' scenario of educating both children and adults.

Family and intergenerational learning has opened up learning to people who may have perceived that learning was not for them. Many models and approaches have been developed, including family literacy and numeracy, which engage parents, grandparents, carers and children in joint learning activities. Practitioners in this field indicate that not only adults benefit from such approaches but their children do so too. Examples of development can be drawn from industrialised nations such as Canada, New Zealand, USA and the UK, as well as European countries and networks. Examples emerge from developing countries such as South Africa, Namibia and Uganda.

To describe the full range of activities which are embraced by Family Learning is

daunting but an indicative list illuminates richness and diversity which, in turn, lead to interest and inclusion for a vast range and number of people. It takes place both indoors and outdoors, in the home, school, community workplace, museum or library. It often involves partnerships of both statutory and voluntary and community organisations and embraces arts, crafts, literacy, numeracy, games, stories, out-door activities, practical/technical activities (eg woodworking, metal working, basic engineering) agriculture/horticulture, Information Communication Technology and enterprise. Each aspect or focus to the learning develops its own approaches but the pedagogical principles remain:

- **"Promotes the family as a learning environment;**
- **Builds on home cultures and experience;**
- **Encourages participatory learning;**
- **Promotes learning as a change in or affirmation of skills, attitude and knowledge;**
- **Promotes family relationships as supporting well-being and readiness to learn;**
- **Promotes a culture of aspiration in adults and children;**
- **Gives opportunities and builds confidence to try out new skills and ideas."**

(Lamb, P, 2009, p7)<sup>1</sup>

Whilst this list relates particularly to the UK context, it provides a universal pedagogical, and andragogical framework, transcending culture, custom and context, upon which to build learning opportunities.

Much has been written on the benefits of family-focused learning activities, including outcomes for adults and children, such as: participation in further, formal learning; school participation and attendance and community engagement and employability.

##### Why is family learning important?

- Parents/carers are the first and most significant educators of children
- Universal Primary Education will not be achieved without the involvement of the adults in children's lives
- Uses intergenerational kinship, caring and friendship networks
- It is multi-contextual; not confined by place or purpose
- Family learning investment offers 'double-duty dollars' by supporting children and adults;
- Most family learning programmes have an element of literacy in them; poverty and poor literacy go hand in hand.
- The Millennium Development and Education for All goals could be more effectively achieved through holistic approaches;

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The benefits and outcomes, which family learning offers, in all its diverse forms and contexts, are needed in all countries, regardless of their economic and social global positions. This has been recognised in many industrialised nations, where national policies have been formed and programmes developed. It has also been recognised in many developing countries, at community and practitioner level, but, with a few exceptions this acknowledgement has not translated into national policies and funded programmes.

Careful analysis of the individual EFA and MD goals, viewed through the lens of family learning reveals that many of the goals could be achieved with significant contributions from family learning policies and programmes.

In their diverse forms, family learning activities support early childhood care and development, children in primary schools, literacy for children and adults, issues of maternal health and HIV/AIDS, as well as

gender equality and skills for living and working. The GMR on literacy indicated how there is a significant negative correlation between poverty and adult literacy rates both as an international comparator and within countries.<sup>2</sup> This means that where poverty rates are higher, literacy rates tend to be lower. Most family learning programmes address some aspects of literacy, with both adults and children. Family learning also provides a platform to explore issues of food security, preparation and nutrition which are current areas of great concern across the world. In addition, family learning helps to address issues of quality in schools as parents and carers begin to work more closely with teachers and question and challenge how they can support the best schooling experiences for their children. In one range of activities, developed under policies of family learning, many of the goals can be addressed, which contribute directly to poverty reduction. Adults gain the confidence, skills and knowledge to improve their economic, entrepreneurial and social capacity; their children gain the opportunity to move out of poverty by staying in school, achieving and accessing further, greater education and training opportunities. It seems so obvious.

##### What's the impact?

- Gains in skills, communication, confidence, changed behaviours and relationships in family and community (Lamb, P)
- Progression to other forms of learning – qualifications, work-placements, employment, voluntary and community work
- Contributions to literacy, numeracy and children's achievement (Brooks, G et al)
- Strong gains in women's and girls' literacy learning (Brooks, G et al)
- Breaks cycles of under-achievement (UK)

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The challenge for many countries, whose programmes of development are driven by the EFA and MDG goals, is to determine where family learning policies and programmes should sit within governments. There is a danger that they could belong in several departments and result in being developed in none, as each department

1. Lamb, P et al, 2009, Providing the Evidence: the impact of wider family learning, Leicester, NIACE  
2. UNESCO, 2005, EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006, Literacy for Life, Paris, UNESCO

perceives that another should lead. Cross-cutting policies must be addressed within government structures and the most appropriate departments instructed to co-operate in the public interest. This is more challenging than first appears.

The concept of family learning itself is not unproblematic from several perspectives; using the term 'family' in countries where traditional structures are disappearing is challenging. Women predominate as participants; this can be seen as both empowering and burdensome as women gain more knowledge and skill but are confirmed in a stereo-typical role as carers of children. How can men and fathers become involved? Culture, language, social and political concerns as well as community contexts are also areas for examination and critique. Challenges associated with transferred approaches arise as many programmes have been developed in industrialised countries.

Family learning and literacy approaches could be more widely developed to support participation of women in learning as well as open up routes to inclusion in community participation and employment.

Family learning, in all its diversity and richness has much to offer in the development of human potential, of both adults and children. It can contribute significantly to the achievement of the EFA and MD goals. A focus on primary education to the exclusion of adults is a naïve and unsustainable approach. Children's lives are bound up with adults, whether as parents or as carers and those adults must be supported and equipped to actively contribute to the development of the children in their care. In addition, adults have the right to learn in order to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding, not only for employment and enterprise but also to improve health and well-being.

**What's needed?**

- More research in developing countries to increase evidence-base of approaches and effectiveness;
- More case-studies
- More advocacy of benefits and impact to governments and NGOs, based on evidence, to support policy-development;
- More advocacy amongst donor countries and partner organisations;
- Development of partnership programmes to promote change, share practices, develop staff and produce relevant curricula and materials;

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Family learning is a strong, dynamic contributor to the solution of global inequities which EFA and MD goals attempt to address. It supports other strategies so that they are more effective. We have evidence of policies, processes, programmes and practices as well as benefits and outcomes to support our claims. Political will is required, to sensitively and responsively transfer what works in industrialised policies and practices to international development contexts.

A full version of Dr Janine Eldred's paper, *'Family learning and literacy in international development: A paper to advocate to policy makers, development agencies and adult and community educators, an approach to effectively achieve education for all'* can be found at [www.balid.org.uk](http://www.balid.org.uk)

## 4.2 Uniting the Goals of Universal Primary Education & Adult Literacy Programmes

**Olive Musa**  
*Ministry Of Education,  
Youth and Sports, Non-Formal  
Education Directorate,  
Sierra Leone*

### **The structure of the Education System in Sierra Leone**

The structure of the education system consists of 6 years of primary schooling, 3 years of junior secondary schooling, 3 years of senior secondary schooling, and 4 years of tertiary/higher education (the 6-3-3-4 system). Pre-primary schooling is technically not part of the education system because it is the responsibility of families and communities to handle.

There are various non-formal education provisions outside the formal school system organised and delivered mainly by Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs). The current provisions include programmes run by Community Education Centres 'A' and Community Education Centres 'B'. The latter provide learning opportunities for people who have not been to school; the former targets mainly early school leavers.

Non-formal provision includes adult literacy and community education for non-school clientele. Adult literacy programmes are many and varied; they address the literacy needs of their clientele.

### **Primary Education in Sierra Leone**

According to the Education Act (2004) Primary Education shall consist of full-time formal schooling which children receive for six years, from age six to twelve. The aim of primary education is to give children early structural cross cultural socialisation opportunities and an elementary introduction to those fundamentals necessary to produce individuals able at basic education level to improve and enrich their own circumstances and to contribute meaningfully to life in their community and thus to its development.

Although the number of primary schools has increased considerably over the years, enrolment increased from 1,135,000 in 2003/04 to approximately 2,305,515 in 2004/2005 but fell back to 1,322,238 in 2006/07 (ESP 2007). This is represented in the table below:

Year	No of primary schools	Boys	Girls'	Total
2003/4	4,015	618,747	516,068	1,135,000
2004/2005	4,298	1,261,120	1,044,395	2,305,515
2006/2007	5,016	693,730	628,508	1,322,238

SOURCE: RECORDS INSPECTORATE DIVISION, 2008

There are still large numbers of children and young people out of school. Universal access (UPE) as well as universal completion (UPC) are constrained due to a growing out-of-school population and a high dropout rate. On average boys complete less than four years of school and girls just two. There are wide gender and regional disparities in literacy specifically and adult education in general (World Bank, 2007). Specific challenges posed by the move towards universal access include:

- Inadequate enforcement of the Education and Child Rights Acts;
- Low primary school completion rate;
- High repetition and drop-out rates;
- Overage children clogging the system.

### **Adult literacy in Sierra Leone**

The aim of adult literacy is the acquisition of basic knowledge and life skills including understanding and living in harmony with one's social and physical environment, developing and applying skills of reasoning and critical thinking. At present 20,850 learners have been reached with numeracy, literacy, sexual reproductive health and livelihood skills training and micro-financing in literacy and community education centres in eight districts since 2003 with support from Islamic Development Bank, UNESCO and UNFPA. However, the overall literacy rate is still low among the population, particularly women in rural communities and this has had a direct impact on the enrolment of children in primary schools. If the parents are illiterate it is unlikely that the children will attend school.

A quick assessment of 300 women between age 15 and above in one of the chiefdoms (Braimaia) in Kambia district in December 2009 indicated that only ten of them have been to school up to class six; three women have attended up to class three, and the others have never been to school or learnt any skill. They are engaged in either farming or petty trading.

Further assessment of the situation can be more revealing and would present a gloomy picture for adult and non-formal education.

Other reasons for the low literacy levels are highlighted as follows:

- Low budgetary allocation of 0.7% (2010);
- Lack of trained and qualified facilitators in adult literacy methodologies;
- Most of the literacy classes are conducted by primary school teachers who are not adequately trained to facilitate adult and youth learning;
- Low incentive, lack of motivation and non-payment of the literacy facilitators;
- Non-suitability of the venue and the environment for learning;
- Lack of teaching and learning materials for learners in the classes;
- Proliferation of literacy programmes and uncoordinated;
- Unsuitable curricular for learners;
- Inadequate content of the literacy and non-formal education module for Teacher training;
- Lack of Management Information System to keep data on the clientele;
- Lack of data base to collect yearly statistics.

### **How Can We Create Synergies Between Universal Primary Education And Adult Literacy Programmes In Sierra Leone?**

There is a point of convergence between the goals of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and adult literacy programmes. Both UPE and adult literacy programmes seek to provide learners with sustainable literacy skills. In the case of adult literacy the issue of functionality is critical. The 300,000 children that are out of school can be enrolled in adult literacy or Community Education Centres because it will be cheaper in terms of financial and opportunity cost. Many of them would have

passed school going age and the flexible time for learning would suit them well.

In his budget speech to the nation the Minister of Finance said that

*“progress in improving education in Sierra Leone has been slow. We therefore need to increase the pace of activities aimed at improving access to education and raising the completion rate, especially for primary schools; improving the quality of education through extensive training programmes for teachers.....provide special incentives to encourage the girl child to attend and complete schooling. Overall, the 2010 Budget will significantly focus on improving Sierra Leone’s consistently low Human Capital Index (HCI) of adult literacy rate...” (GOSL, 2009).*

One way of improving education in Sierra Leone is by Uniting UPE and adult literacy education in the communities through the following strategies:

- Sharing of infrastructure such as school buildings, teaching and learning materials. Some of the facilities in the formal primary schools such as buildings could be shared and used in the evening hours for parents.
- Retraining primary teachers where facilitators are not available. In some areas where there is a desperate need for facilitators, teachers in the formal primary schools have been utilised to facilitate learning in the adult literacy classes.
- Motivating parents to acquire and use knowledge skills in emerging issues.
- Sharing relevant portions of the curriculum with parent education programmes to parents to send and keep their children in school and enable them to complete schooling
- Training of Teachers in adult literacy methodologies to facilitate learning at the centres
- Establishing and sharing proceeds of community farms, school gardens to sustain children at school.
- More resources. In addition to financial resources from government,

government would need to generate additional resources through partnership with communities, private sectors, individuals and other non-governmental organisations that are within Sierra Leone.

### **The Way Forward**

There is need for advocacy by all key stakeholders for heightened political intervention to develop a policy (and enforce it) for mass literacy to reduce child literacy and adult literacy in communities especially where primary schools are located.

Specific programmes that should be developed would focus on:

- Improving parenting skills;
- Teaching parents’ ways to support and encourage emerging literacy skills in children;
- Improving adults’ basic skills, including literacy;
- Changing attitudes to lifelong learning.

The pronouncement by the Minister of Finance and the address to the Third Opening of Parliament, by His Excellency the President that, to increase the overall literacy rate, the government “will put in place an extensive literacy programme that will impact both the rural and urban communities”, gives a ray of hope to those involved in adult and non-formal education. Uniting UPE and adult literacy will be critical in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education For All (EFA) Goals by 2015 and concerted efforts need to start now.

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### 4.3 Exploring a Family Learning Approach to Addressing Harmful Traditional Practices

#### Rugiatu Turay

Director, Amazonian Initiative Movement (AIM), Sierra Leone

The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) has been in existence for over 2000 years and has health implications on the lives of women. Sierra Leone has one of the highest FGM practices in the world, at around 90 – 95%.

FGM is considered to be the recognition of the passage between childhood to womanhood, an event that needs to be marked and celebrated with great feasting. The older women in the communities propagate the practice. As young girls grow up, they are taught to respect the custom and even look forward to it: once they are circumcised, the girls join the ranks of honourable women of the community. With circumcision comes companionship and certain privileges. An uncircumcised woman is an outcast; she is considered to be dirty or a prostitute and will never find a husband. In this respect, parents of the girl sincerely believe it is in the child's best interest to be circumcised. With marriage comes status and security; circumcision will ensure the girl's chastity and the promise of a future husband, a good life, wealth, and children. The custom is hard to eradicate as nearly all women are circumcised for fear of this myth.

**FGM has no practical value but participation in the practice allows women and girls access to social and community status and acceptance that would otherwise be denied to her in some societies.**

While our nation sits on a world spinning with crises from high infant mortality rate and high illiteracy rate to a fragile economy and corporate greed, half of its natural resources - women - have not been tapped for their uniquely valuable contribution to solving these problems that only they can provide.

Amazonian Initiative Movement (AIM) is one of the leading local organisations in the campaign against the practice of FGM in Sierra Leone. We believe that exploring a family and community approach is the best and only option to stop FGM. In all our work we have promoted the virtues of educating women and girls. With more educated women, power sharing between men and women will be easy. Educating women seemed not only fair, but also obvious: Women populate half the democracy; spaces should be created for women to learn so that they can find themselves.

**Evidence shows that irreversible abandonment of FGM is best achieved through empowering women to redefine their identity and social status away from FGM and to build community consensus to support and protect women.**

This is fundamentally the basis of the widely respected WECC - Women's Empowerment and Community Consensus - model of FGM and behaviour change to which AIM aspire. This was developed by US and UK based think-tank Rainbo who created an African women's network of which AIM became a member. We recognise that there are multiple reasons why families are under pressure to circumcise their daughters but it is fundamentally the low status of women that allows this to happen. FGM has been described as 'women directly trading their genitals for status and acceptance in their own societies'. As well as educating women and families so that they have the courage to turn away from this practice, we must also work with communities to make this change possible, so that the environment for change is safe and supportive and therefore irreversible. Family literacy classes are an ideal way to address this community consensus component of the WECC model.

AIM introduced the programme 'Improving the literacy rate of women and reducing FGM' as the first part of community consensus building, targeting initially the women who carry out the practice, the soweis. This programme gives an

opportunity to participants to learn how to read and write and to engage with issues in the community in an informal way.

Initially, the classes were conducted in their own village but later at the Saint Joseph Vocational Centre. St. Joseph is an institute run by the Catholic Mission in Lunsar. It was valuable bringing practitioners from different villages together so as to help practitioners share their experiences. A timetable was given on agriculture and adult literacy. Classes run throughout the week starting from 14:00pm and end by 17:00pm. The period for the course was for six months. The alphabets and words around FGM were built. Practitioners were trained to speak publicly and they built confidence and boldness to talk about their experiences.

We propose now to extend this late afternoon session to include groups of parents and children of school age children with the specific aim of building community consensus around the abandonment of FGM. Having established a relationship of trust with practitioners we can now widen this participation and bring in families to talk and learn around literacy and numeracy issues, but also address related issues that affect the lives of community members. We expect this to be the start of a new community dialogue which will begin the irreversible trend of FGM abandonment.

Improving the literacy rate of women is necessary and crucial if we are to eradicate the harmful traditional practice of FGM. I grew up in a community where children are not just subjected to FGM but are trained to become FGM practitioners at a young age. Women and children were not allowed to make a decision of their own and are truly limited in any choice that they may want to make.

When I look at the issues we face, and when I think of the changes we need, I am as convinced as I have ever been that our future depends on improving the choices and status of women, with literacy skills forming an integral part of that change.

AIM as an organisation doesn't support the government's proposition that FGM should be outlawed for girls below the age of 18, the age of consent as it is in the Child Rights Acts. This is not even a step to stop FGM - rather it is a way to promote and

sustain the practice by giving it greater apparent legitimacy and taking it back to its origin (prolonging Madam Yoko's vision of seeing FGM as the start of adulthood and preparation for marriage). Age of consent is a strategy for politicians to protect their position so that their voters will not lose confidence in them (in other countries, such as Egypt, greater medicalisation of the practice ensures its continuance in the face of protest). However, AIM believes that FGM consequences have no respect for age, and therefore we should work towards its eradication and not compromise on when and how. It is necessary for all donor agencies to work towards the eradication of FGM by providing funds for literacy classes and livelihood activities for women, including FGM practitioners who equally are victims of their societies. Improving the literacy rate of Sierra Leonean women to eradicate the long outstayed culture in our beloved country is the only sustainable way. It is now the time for action to help create the awareness and motivate more women to stop FGM and promote the overall health and social status of women and girls.

## 4.4 Family Literacy Work in Uganda

### Joyce Nairuba

Literacy And Basic Education, Uganda

Of the Ugandan population of 21 million, 7 million are non-literate. The average national literacy rate is 65%.

In 1997, with substantial resources from EU, USAID and the World Bank, the government of Uganda launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Programme making primary school attendance free and compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 12. The programme has since faced a number of challenges, the most pressing being a high drop-out rate - of the 2.1 million pupils who entered Primary 1 in 1997, only 22.5% were still in school by 2003.

#### UPE in Uganda

- UPE envisaged free and equitable access to education by all school going age children.
- UPE has resulted in increased enrolment but not necessarily retention.
- The drop out rate is still high as demonstrated in table 1.

The 2000 Uganda Poverty Status Report indicates that some of the net enrolment gains have been lost since 1997, dropping from 83.3% in 1997 to 76.5% in 2000.

Further, the sudden influx of pupils showed a tripling in school enrolment, with the result that teacher pupil ratios of 1:100 are not uncommon. The quality of education delivery has consequently declined and despite the high enrolment, there is irregular attendance as well as high drop out.

Table 1: Enrolment and Passing out at P7 in UPE

Year	Enrolment	Year	PLE
1997	5.3 million	2003	1.2 million
2000	6.6 million	2006	.4 million
2001	6.9 million	2007	.3 million
2003	7.6 million	2009	.4 million

#### Challenges to UPE

- School related (low teacher motivation, high pupil : teacher ratio, lack of facilities, home - to - school distances).
- Environmental related (financial obstacles, instability/wars).
- Community related (limited literacy skills of parents, lack of community participation to support UPE).

Alongside the national goal of UPE by 2003, the Government of Uganda (GoU) produced a National Adult Literacy Strategic Investment Plan (NALSIP) 2002/3-2006/7. The introduction of the NALSIP refers to a new vision of literacy that recognises "that solutions for different education problems are inter-connected. In particular, the growth of adult literacy, especially of women and female youth, is essential for universalising access to primary education and improving its quality and relevance". One of the NALSIP national outputs by 2007 is at least 85% of proficient learners supporting their children's primary schooling.

The NALSIP document emphasises that "Illiteracy is a form of inequality in Uganda between individuals, gender, districts and

even regions.... There is a role adult literacy can play in addressing non-attendance and dropout factors relating to low parent participation in motivating children or informed active role in primary school affairs. Many parents are concerned about access to quality education and not mere presence at school. Children in urban areas [where parents have higher literacy rates] have performed consistently and significantly better than those in rural areas. The regions of low education grade attainment coincide with regions of high illiteracy rates... Adult literacy can help redress some of these glaring education imbalances within and between generations, especially women and girls". (NALSIP document of Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, pages 3-4).

Ugandan NGO, Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) initiated the Family, Adult and Basic Education (FABE) project as a timely response to address the challenges raised by the UPE programme and the National Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) Programme and to attempt to break the cycle of poor school performance resulting in low adult literacy.

In this context, the overall objective of the project is to introduce family learning and thereby improve both adult literacy rates and the educational performance of primary school pupils in Bugiri district. Its interest lies in its concept, activities and implementation strategies. These are:

- The strengthening of parental ability to support children' learning at school and at home.
- The use of locally available materials as learning aids.
- Adult literacy instructors supporting teachers in classrooms which enables better planning.
- The use of folk tales to deliver learning across the curriculum and to provide good links to literacy and numeracy.
- Introductory sessions for parents only at the start of joint learning sessions
- The presence of parents learning together with children in class.

All these elements of the FABE programme were designed to contribute to enhanced community support and involvement in primary school education work.

#### Background to project

The Ugandan NGO which implemented this pilot project, Literacy And Basic Education (LABE) first explored the possibilities of family education projects in the mid 1990s and began to research the feasibility of such work. A 12 month mini-pilot Family Basic Education (FABE) project was started in 3 schools in 2000/1 in Bugiri district as a response to community education plans initiated by local school management committees, concerned parents and schools in particularly disadvantaged locations of the pilot district. The director of the national Ministry of Education participated in the review of the mini project and commended the approach.

Results of Mini-Pilot:

- Parents (especially women) reported an increase in confidence in checking their children's exercise books and challenging teachers on the quality of work.
- Men, in oral responses, described a realisation of the importance of spending some time at home with their children and talked of how this had strengthened their relationship with their children.

"I now listen to my child carefully. Even if I am not able to provide whatever she asks for, I realise she, like the boy, deserves it" remarked one parent.

- The District Education Officer (DEO) in Bugiri expressed an interest in expanding family education into more primary schools within the district.
- The sub-county officials pledged to work with FABE schools, for example, integrating FABE activity plans into the overall sub-county development plans. They have made formal requests to LABE for technical support and expressed an interest in
- offering financial support to schools in partnership with LABE.

- Building on the pilot, a Comic Relief funded project expanded these activities, with the following specific objectives:
- To build the capacity of teachers, adult educators, management committees and administration in 18 primary schools to deliver family related literacy, numeracy and language skills to 1080 parents and 2880 pupils (18 schools have been selected for the project, including the 3 which participated in the original mini-pilot).
- To equip six local sub-county authorities (level three) with the skills to plan, financially support and sustain family related basic education programmes within their local area.
- To produce basic literacy and numeracy bilingual learning materials in local language (Lusoga) and basic English plus a draft generic guide for school teachers and adult literacy workers.
- To advocate at national level for the incorporation of family basic education activities in government primary schools and the national government adult literacy programme.

**By Year 3 of the project, it was observed that:**

- **Parents were able to help children with homework at least twice a week.**
- **Attention and interest levels in the children had increased, although this is difficult to measure.**
- **School management committees were taking 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.**
- **Working with their children was a motivational factor for many parents who became involved in the project.**
- **More women than men are involved in the project – the reasons for this are being examined. But in some cases, it was observed through home visits men became involved in learning activities**

**in the home even if they did not attend the lessons.**

- **The teachers in the schools were trained in the FABE methodology and had adjusted their classroom environment, for example by putting up visual aids on the walls, re-arranging seating so children can sit in groups.**
- **Families were encouraged to provide a learning corner in the home.**
- **The role of the FABE teachers had developed. They were 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. This was an intentional strategy of the project.**
- **FABE was helping to counteract the annual dropout from P1 (usually about 50%)**
- **Children attended the FABE classes regardless of whether their parents were attending as they received and benefited from support from other adults.**
- **Education authorities at sub-county level were very open to FABE and were beginning to budget for FABE programmes within their yearly planning phases.**
- **Parents expected some level of accreditation for participating in the programme, equivalent to that awarded through the governments Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) initiative.**

### **Project Achievements**

#### **Developing Effective Communication Channels between Parents and Teachers and between Parents and Children**

The project aimed to develop effective communication channels between parents and teachers for increased information flow on children's education issues. The focus of this particular objective puts FABE at the forefront of pursuing and contributing to the achievement of the UPE policy and the need for parents/guardians to

develop relationships with teachers that focus on pupils' performance. The project proposed to meet this objective through a combination of activities that involved parents, teachers, literacy instructors and the children themselves in the joint parent-child learning sessions. These are characterised by both parents and children being taught from the same content, necessitating close collaboration between the classroom teacher and the instructor. The content is based on the primary school curriculum in which shared learning exercises are done by parents and their children. The underlying philosophy of these sessions is basically to enable a parent recognise what the child is learning with the understanding that the parent can help the child outside the class either through supportive discussions/story telling on topics learnt in class or playing educative games that are related to the content learnt coupled with the provision of an enabling environment for the child to learn at home.

There is documented evidence that this objective has been successfully achieved throughout the implementation period. In each of the schools, joint learning sessions have been held on a regular basis for P1 and P2 parents and children with a regular occurrence of such joint session per week for each group. The joint learning sessions are more popular amongst parents than the adult-only learning sessions.

The impact of the joint parent-child sessions has ensured an increase in the number of parents engaging consciously in studying and playing educational games (such as snakes and ladders, ludo, etc) with children at home to reinforce reading and writing and number recognition skills. Research has shown that through family learning parents develop their understanding of how children learn. With this increased understanding, the parents seem to develop their own confidence in supporting their children's learning. It also gives them an increased ability and knowledge of how to support their children's learning needs and development. In its implementation period FABE has seen an increase of 60% in the parents who consciously study, and play educational games with their children at home.

One other positive contribution of joint parent-child sessions has been the

bridging of the gap between the parents and their children's teachers. Increased communication has resulted in, and indeed been fuelled by, parents' improved knowledge of part of the school curriculum, the education system, how the school operates and preliminary understanding of the basic curriculum issues in literacy and numeracy. This has given them confidence to talk to teachers about their children's learning needs and successes. When asked about how they had benefited as parents from the FABE programme, most parents interviewed shared benefits that were more related to their children than themselves. This included benefits such as "knowing how to help my child to learn", "learning how to keep my child clean" and "being able to guide my child in his work".

These achievements are central to promoting the present UPE policy in Uganda, which places a responsibility on parents to develop relationships with the teacher(s) that focus on pupil performance

FABE supported schools to organise school open days, which promoted discussions and engagement between parents, teachers and children on the children's educational progress, and included exhibitions and cultural activities. During these days parents and subject teachers identified and discussed ways of supporting children's learning. This has proved to be an opportunity for parents to recognise the cumulative effect of their support to their children's learning throughout the year. From the internal surveys done by the project, the open days have been popular and well attended by parents. The development of effective communication channels within the FABE programme was not limited to parents and teachers but extended to the schools and community as a whole. Parents reported that they were now "respected by teachers", "confident in coming to school" and that they had learnt skills to "listen to and manage" their children.

Head teachers and teachers indicated that they value the FABE approach especially because of a number of positive trends including the "increased level of interest and involvement in children's education by the parents", "parents' involvement in decision making in schools matters", "children's ability to speak up to their

parents about their school needs”, and the general improvement in communication flow between the school, parents and the community.

### **Developing a new style of learning**

The strength of the family learning methodology lies in its ability to address literacy and numeracy rates simultaneously at multi-generation age levels. By running a flexible programme FABE has allowed initiatives by parents and schools to emerge during the project implementation period that promote parental support to children’s learning at the same time as encouraging learning for the parents themselves.

As an extension of the joint parent-child learning sessions, take home learning activities have been designed for parents and children to continue doing as ‘home work’. With time, this has evolved so that home visits by both the literacy instructors and the classroom teachers are now an integral part of the project. Many parents have created “learning corners” within the home, and used materials from the local environment to make learning aids e.g. straw dolls, bottle top counters etc. This again resonates with the emphasis of the UPE programme on the need for parents/guardians to provide a supportive and safe home environment for learning<sup>1</sup> and scheduling the children’s home responsibilities in such a manner as not to interfere with school responsibilities<sup>2</sup>.

In some cases, home visits have also expanded into “home to home” visits organised by the parents themselves to share ‘good practice’ with each other. Groups of parents have therefore formed and scheduled their own home visits to build each other’s parenting skills and make learning materials, e.g. number and alphabet charts, together.

### **Increasing Parent-Child Educational Interactions**

Increased parent-child educational interactions are intended to increase children’s retention and performance rates at school. In an internal project study in 2004, the FABE team found a strong relationship between fathers’ participation in parent-child joint learning activities and

girls’ school attendance. In the same study girls’ numeracy and writing scores improved with their mothers’ corresponding scores in the same subjects and a similar pattern was observed in father’s numeracy levels and boys’ scores in maths with a far stronger relationship identified between fathers’ improvement in reading skills and girls’ scores in reading.

The adult sessions ensured parents had time and space to learn in their own right as adults and address their own learning needs. The sessions are developed following the P1/P2 primary school curriculum, modified for adults and boosted by information on hygiene, sanitation and life skills. Perhaps as a result of this, parents who were asked about the benefits of the programme identified increased parenting skills as more significant than increased literacy skills. However, there was also enthusiasm for their new abilities to write their names, read short sentences in the local language (Lusoga), check their children’s exercise books, count and equitably apportion home resources, buy and sell with a good understanding of change and balance.

As one mother commented:

***“I learnt to count and value things. My husband cannot lie to me now when we sell something at home to raise some money. I know exactly what a chicken would cost or other things like maize sold in kilograms. I can read the measures accurately.”***

One father also said;

***“For me, because of coming to FABE lessons I am proud of my wife. She now measures food enough for the family. There is no wasting of food any more. I enjoy watching them (wife and children) talking and laughing when they are working together.”***

Increased confidence and self-esteem of parents who were adult learners in FABE classes was reflected in statements such as “I feel confident to talk to teachers about my child”, “I can also contribute to community discussions”, “When I have an idea I can freely explain it to others and I don’t fear to learn new things.”

### **Advocacy for Incorporation of Family Learning in National Education Plans**

From its inception, FABE set out to liaise closely with both the education and social development departments at district government level to establish a strong working partnership. This was necessary as (non-formal) adult learning falls under a different Ministry to (formal) primary education. Among the implementation activities, the training of coordinating centre tutors (CCTs) was designed to engender joint working between existing government authorities and FABE project staff. In the end only three (of a desired six) CCTs were trained in the FABE methodology, and the resulting technical support was lower than expected. However, interviews with all FABE staff indicate that there has been close partnership and good working relationship with the district education department. This was also confirmed by the District Education Officer (DEO) and one Inspector of Schools (IS) in an in-depth interview during the evaluation field visit to the district. These two officers made the following remarks on what they perceived as their role in the implementation of FABE:

***“FABE is playing a complementary role to what we do and is a partner in development. We make schools available for all who promote the education policy and ask schools to include activities on the timetable, we also encourage school management committees and others to cooperate. We also monitor the learning that is taking place”.***

Asked what significant benefits they have observed of the programme, the education officers said,

***“FABE provides an opportunity for implementation of the UPE government policy. e.g. parents are mobilised to provide uniform and food, there is improved punctuality, retention and good daily attendance in FABE schools” (DEO).***

***“It has helped push the UPE message in a very vivid manner” (DIS).***

The district education office has lent office space to the FABE project, although they commented that with limited resources it is difficult for them to contribute financially to the project let alone sustain activities after the project ends. The social development office, in particular the Community Development Officers, indicated a favourable attitude towards FABE but limited time to engage with it.

It is important to note that the apparent complexity of the FABE approach is also its strength. A next step in exploring the possibility of replicating or expanding the FABE programme nationally in Uganda would be a higher level discussion bringing together the two ministries of Education and Sports and that of Gender, Labour and Social Development. Advocacy for FABE needs to be intensified at the higher level with a clearly defined strategy of what is being implemented outlining the specific areas for each ministry to consider.

In 2004, the FABE project won a Mashariki Local Governance award. FABE won second prize at local level and then went on to win the community participation award at the East African Regional level. The awards are sponsored by the Ford Foundation through UN-Habitat.

### **Effects on beneficiaries**

The benefits that children gain in FABE seem to be linked to the benefits that parents receive from participating in FABE classes. There is evidence that a parent’s increased interest and understanding of children’s learning has a greater impact on children’s achievements both in class and at home. This is observed through the joint parent-child sessions which showed:

- Increased self confidence in parents
- Increased communication between parents and children
- Better relations between schools and parents
- Extension of school work to home with parental support.

1. UPE. Stakeholders handbook 4.3.12 Parent/Guardians responsibility subsection (ii) b and c

2. UPE. Stakeholders handbook 4.3.12 Parent/Guardians responsibility subsection (ii) f

- Increased ability and willingness of the schools to involve parents in school management and decision making.
- Children have readily received parental support

**“I now know that my children need me to talk to them well. I used to be very rude to my children before I started attending FABE classes”** A mother during a home visit.

**“I am happy to see my wife talk and laugh with the children, there is no more shouting in my home. I know it is what my wife learns about children when she goes to school”.** A father met at school.

learning from parents who have requested that activities be extended to classes P3 and above, and that English language be introduced as a subject for the parents, as well as local language literacy and numeracy.

*Thanks to Sally Pritchard for allowing us to use substantial extracts from her article ‘Family learning: Can parental involvement in primary schools make a difference? Initial Results of a model piloted in Eastern Uganda’, 2005.*

### Overview of Family Learning in Uganda

- Family learning creates synergies between formal primary education and non – formal adult education; with parents and their primary school children increasingly interacting in reading and writing together, leading to better learning outcomes for pupils in schools and parents in their adult learning groups.
- It leads to increased information flow between parents and teachers on children’s education, improved parenting and literacy skills for non – literate parents and better understanding of school governance.
- Facilitators are lower class primary teachers and Parent Educators - who handle parents’ only sessions, and also support the teachers to handle periodic joint parents – children sessions.
- Learning is in local language, the medium of instruction used in lower classes according to the government’s education policy.



FABE has successfully raised the awareness of the communities around the project schools about their role in supporting their children’s learning. FABE has successfully enabled parents to gain specific skills in basic literacy, numeracy, supporting their children’s learning and parenting skills. Although FABE’s focus is on adult learning and their support to children’s learning. There is evidence that the achievements are stretching beyond the relationships between the parents and children to a positive impact between spouses and groups of men and women in the community. The project has led to increased demand for

## 4.5 Support to Rural Teachers and Family Literacy

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face difficulties employing and retaining qualified teachers. This may be due to factors which include social and collegial isolation, late payment of salaries, lack of other opportunities like payment for extra lessons etc.

Family literacy programmes are a unique component of the adult education system. They work by bringing parents with low literacy skills together with their children to learn and receive instruction, reaching a cohort of people who might not be served by other adult education programmes. There are literacy centres in 33 out of the 149 chiefdoms in the country. These centres are distributed in the twelve out of fourteen districts in the country. There are a total of 2000 teachers who are called facilitators, of these only 9.3% (186) have received training to teach the basic education classes. The other 90.7% (1,814) have only received training in adult literacy methodologies using the harmonized non-formal education curriculum.(Non-Formal and Adult Education Directorate, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology) Almost all of these teachers/facilitators are teachers of basic education in rural areas where most of these centres are located. Rural schools

If we were to implement a family literacy programme based around the networks of rural primary teachers what might it look like? And what factors should we consider?

It is assumed that since these teachers are involved in teaching literacy in their localities, this may be a good starting point. Otherwise it is also possible to work with teachers who are in the teaching profession that are not involved in adult literacy programmes.

There are about 19,300 teachers in the primary schools; female teachers make up about 30% of the primary work force. Sierra Leone has a lower percentage of female teachers in primary schools as compared to other countries in Africa. This lower Percentage ranges from 49% in the Western Area to 25% in the Southern province. The table below shows the distribution of teachers by Gender and qualifications 2004/05.

REGION	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	PERCENT FEMALE	PERCENT UNQUALIFIED
Sierra Leone	19,316	32	41
Northern Region	5,706	26	51
Southern Region	5,650	25	44
Eastern Area	4,232	34	39
Western Area	3,728	49	23

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

When we are talking about rural teachers in this context, we are referring to two categories. The first are those who teach in government assisted schools and are on payroll and the others are those who volunteer their services to respond to community needs of a teacher. The latter just receive a token from the community which may not always come.

These teachers whether they will be taken from the core of adult literacy teachers or the others in the primary school teachers will be very crucial to the success of the family literacy programmes. So it is very important that we give them the necessary support they need to do the work effectively.

There are certain factors that will either impede or enhance their abilities to their work effectively. These include availability of resources, access to professional development and information, linkage to colleagues, access to decision making and access to 'real' job.

### **Availability of resources**

Thanks are due to the government of Sierra Leone and its development partners for building schools for both the urban and rural communities. So some teachers have relatively good facilities in which to work. However, there are still some who work in makeshift structures, often they don't have good blackboards, the chairs they use are meant for children, and are not able to display materials or even store them. The inability to leave materials in place for one class to the next, constraints, the teachers' abilities to plan and implement lessons well. The lack of textbooks and other teaching supplies like visual technology can affect the teacher's productivity. Most of the classes if not all are held in the evenings. There are times classes are called off when it gets dark earlier than usual. It is vital that teachers have the right seating accommodation for their adult learners, teaching/learning materials, storage facilities for the resources and a source of light to continue the evening classes.

Access to professional development, qualified school teachers in the formal school systems can be recruited as facilitators. Despite being trained, it is also necessary to train them in family literacy teaching/learning methods, adult education, management of learning processes involving parents and their children and

needs-based family literacy curriculum planning. Beside this, the bulk of the teachers in the rural areas are untrained either having served their communities for a long period unable to go to college because of many constraints or are just school leavers desiring employment where trained teachers are not motivated to go. There is also need to give them support to attend workshops, other training activities and participation in conferences where they will get to know about the recent trends in adult education, have journals in the field and newsletters about training opportunities. Most of the teachers have expressed willingness to enroll on the distance learning programme but their inabilities to get sponsors have prevented their enrollment.

- Linkage with colleagues. Rural teachers may get easily isolated. It can be tough for the rural teachers to meet to talk about teaching and administrative issues. If ever they contact other colleagues it will only consist of quick conversations as almost everybody is part time. Committed teachers wished they have the opportunity to observe other teachers teach or share ideas with colleagues and in some cases be mentored by a more experienced teacher or supervisor. These can be supported by encouraging them to form networks, create opportunities where they will meet quarterly to learn from one another.
- Be part of the decision-making process. Some of these teachers will tell you that they haven't been heard. When these teachers make inputs into decisions undertaken by the programme, these teachers get the sense of ownership and understanding of the programme as a whole. Being aware will position them to better respond to queries either from the learners or other interested bodies.
- A real job for people. Rural teachers like other professionals need jobs that offer a liveable wage and benefits as well as sufficient working hours to do the job well. Often for want of starting or continuing a programme it is assumed that these teachers would volunteer their service free. If they give them stipend it is usually too small to be mentioned in the public area, if they are government employees their

- salaries are not paid on time because they don't have access to banking operation in most rural areas. These teachers perceive their status within the teaching profession as low. There is usually the perception that they are not real teachers. These should be supported with a regular budget to give an appreciable stipend that will motivate them.
- As I conclude may I remind you all that the rural teachers need resources, access to professional development, linkages with colleagues. They want to be part of the decision making process and want a 'real' job. Who will help? Who will give them these?

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## 4.6 Publishing Local Stories as part of Family Learning in Sierra Leone

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*Partners In Adult Education  
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The People's Educational Association of Sierra Leone (PEA) is a voluntary agency with branches across the country engaged in development work mainly through adult education. In 1984 PEA started to collect stories and songs, riddles and proverbs from different parts of the country. There were several reasons given at the time for this work:

- Stories and songs are a rich tradition and valuable heritage which represent a major source of literature in the country;
- The transcription and publication of stories and songs, after they have been collected, contributes to the modest stock of written materials from Sierra Leone available for schools, youths and adults;
- The translation of stories and songs into several languages of SL contributes to intercultural understanding within the country.

The finished products of the project have been published in a series 'Stories and Songs from Sierra Leone'. The Series Editors are Edward D.A. Turay, Peter O. Koroma, Frederick B. James and S.A. Tamu. An original leading participant in the project was professor Eldred Jones, a distinguished faculty member at Fourah Bay who has recently published further stories in the series, in the Krio language - 'Stori Go Stori Kam; Folktales collected by Eldred D. Jones' 2009, (Published by Knowledge Aid, SL). The German Development Agency DVV was also involved in the early project and Heribert Hinzen was series editor in 1987.

The project has also liaised with Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD) Sierra Leone in collaboration with Education Action International (EAI-UK) and, under the co-ordination of Peter Koroma from Partners in Adult Education Coordinating Office (PADECO). The title was recently changed to 'Stories from Wonderland' (August 2009). One of the issues involved in this shift, which was reported at the Conference session, was the use of such materials for adult literacy and education classes. Whilst the materials produced continue to represent a key aspect of SL cultural heritage, they are also now part of the adult literacy movement. This raises questions as to how the stories might be actually used by teachers and a further project is being developed to help provide support for adult literacy facilitators - it is recognised that, significant though they are, such stories need particular attention in pedagogic terms in order to be useful for helping literacy development. In terms of the conference theme, one aspect of this is the recognition that such stories are often part of family engagement - parent, grandparents and other relatives may tell stories to children and as all of these parties are supported in their development of literacy, so the written versions of the stories can become educational materials. Maintaining the family dimension of their use in the shift to education, maintains then the Family Literacy approach being advocated in the Conference overall and represented in many of the other papers presented - for instance the account of family literacy work in Uganda was illustrated with a number of books of stories produced for work with both children and adults.

Colleagues in Sierra Leone, such as those involved in this session, those in Uganda, such as LABE, and in the UK, such as Brian Street and Alan Rogers working on a DELPHE Project for Adult Literacy, will continue to liaise on this use of local stories as part of family literacy work.

## 4.7 Challenges and Dilemmas of Materials Development for a Pilot Family Learning Project in Sierra Leone including Hints for the Establishment of a Family Literacy Programme

**Edward D.A. Turay**

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This paper is primarily concerned with a report and an analysis of doubts and possibilities that confronted a 5-man writing team that was empanelled to produce initial material for teachers or facilitators of a project aiming to highlight the significance of a learning scheme involving both adults and children. The project was launched by an international agency and implemented through a community-based organisation in Sierra Leone.

The analysis/report will deal with the background and questions that came to our mind as we extended our area of materials development into the domain of child education. The overwhelming pre-eminence of adult and non/formal educators was partly reduced and tempered by the presence of a representative of the formal school system who also doubles as an important executive member of a national teachers union.

Initial questions were:

- Where should the programme be implemented?
- What was the nature of the clientele - parents and siblings and other community members?
- What were the resources? Which materials could we use as a guide or as a comparative programme? What tangible example existed in Africa that we could turn in order to adopt or re-craft to suit the local circumstances? The answer was largely difficult to find and so we had to dig deep into our (Sierra Leonean) cultural tradition to find the connections, if not the rationale, and clear examples of this new venture in the quest, of Education for All.

The difference between adult and child education has often been mentioned

ad nauseam. A Head of State from an East Africa country some years after independence asserted in Parliament in 1965 that (Bwatwa, 133) "First we must educate adults our children will not have an impact on our economic development for five, ten, or even twenty years."

This came at a time when African nations were expanding formal education in schools throughout the continent. This statement by the then head of state was buttressed later by an adult educator, named Malcolm Knowles whose book assumed the status of a path breaking publication. In his *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy* (Knowles, 1980) he gave adult education a new lease of life and enthroned it as a discrete profession. It may be necessary at this stage to para-phase his ideas, albeit in a rather cursory form. According to him education had been the captive of a tradition, which had come to be known as pedagogy. No matter what the level of education transmitted it had always been guided by pedagogic consideration.

He concluded that education of adults must assume a different form, which he called andragogy.

We were also challenged by the fact that we were dealing with a largely non-literate population living in condition of poverty - so the issue of learning resources and their availability became an additional consideration. The number of schools in the particular areas to be covered by the project was not clear. It was also not clear whether any adult literacy work was ongoing in the project area.

With these dilemmas and challenges at the background we thought that as a first step we should work on developing materials for teachers or facilitators and in this we were helped by previous work on adult literacy training and the materials produced under the non-formal Primary Education project of People's Educational Association of Sierra Leone. The Non-Formal Primary Education project is a three-year scheme which seeks

to provide education for children aged 6-14 in areas where there are no schools or where the distance to the nearest school is a few miles away. It has shorter contact hours than the formal school and there is a significant input into the operations of the school by the parents and members of the community. But unlike the formal school these non-formal schools have four terms a year instead of three, short holiday periods and their facilitators receive an initial ten-day training. Their trainers' manual was found useful as it deals with many areas of learning for children in a non-formal setting. This manual could be useful with few changes for adult literacy work since it is mainly in the non-formal domain. The manual underlined the centrality of community participation in the non-formal primary education project such as identification of suitable candidates to serve as facilitators, constructing make shift structures and training of Area Development Committees. In the formal school system we identified the important role also played by School Management Committees and the Community Teacher's Associations. All of these clearly show the links between school and community and the prospects of the joint onslaught on illiteracy. It has been asserted that in an area of South Africa in a year after the initiation of the family literacy programme "the parents were more confident in their ability to support their children whatever their own levels of literacy." (UNESCO, 8)

In two months (April & May 2009) we produced two booklets designed for those who would serve as the frontline workers of the project namely the teachers/facilitators. We reviewed each other's chapters as a take home assignment then resubmitted a few days later to consolidate our inputs so that there was a uniformity of approach. The following modules were produced:

- Module One: Elements of Family Learning
- Module Two: Strengthening Links with the school, family and the local Community
- Module Three: Leadership and Management of Schools
- Module Four: Basic Literacy Skills
- Module Five: Numeracy Skill

In providing the booklets we gave voice to the idea of lifelong learning which as a recent writer put it: "is now accepted universally as an important concept for every human being and therefore needs to be defined. It is a truism that human beings learn throughout their life that is from the cradle to the grave. This may be at home, in the street, in the church, on the farm or in the workplace." (Nafukho et al: 150) Family learning, especially the practice, is captured in such statements as "the elders in African societies, especially grandparents, parent uncles and aunts played a major role in passing on to younger adults and children essential knowledge, skills and values (Nafukho et al, p. 150) or "African tradition encouraged continued learning. Children learnt from adults how to live and function in society and likewise adults learnt from children and fellow adults.' One author unequivocally asserts that 'the future of adult education in Africa lies in the promotion of lifelong learning'. It could also be extended to mean that the future of education in Africa also lies in the promotion of family literacy and intergenerational learning.

### **Hints on establishing a Family Learning project**

1. A survey is necessary to know the priority areas on which to focus. This task may largely be influenced by settlement, occupation of parents, and existence of schools (formal non-formal or even Koranic schools). This survey should be able to produce evidence as to the patterns of learning interaction in the settlement. A high level of literacy is not necessarily the foundation for family learning. In one country with a population of close to 50 million and an adult literacy rate in 1996 of 82% it was found that just over 50% of families in that country own no books for recreation or leisure time reading. One million children in that country lived in a household where no adult can read. (UNESCO, 8)
2. Get in touch with schoolteachers and enlist their support in popularising the idea throughout the community. If a literacy class exists in the neighbourhood address the learners

regularly who may be parents and opinion leaders in the community. If the parents take an interest in the idea they may be encouraged to enrol.

3. School management committees and Community Teachers Associations are useful partners in the venture and their role is key to the success and sustainability of the programme.
4. Use traditional channels such as famous storytellers, and other occupational groups to spread the message including traditional office holders.
5. Organizers of festivals that attract the attention of parents' community members, youths and children can run shows dedicated to family literacy.
6. Develop a guide and manual in a writer's workshop to be used as the basis to train facilitators. The idea of the polyvalent teachers able to work reasonably in formal and non-formal settings should be given greater emphasis.
7. A Community Education Centre, if present in the locality, could be most useful for talks and interaction with all members of the community and skills training centre as well.
8. Arrange for funding incentives for co-ordinators, supervisors and facilitators. This aspect can be slotted into the annual budget of local councils, which now should be responsible for educational development ranging from pre-school to the ninth year of the basic education paradigm.
9. Volunteers may also be encouraged such as retired teachers, civil servants and facilitators and ex-security personnel.
10. Home visiting schemes can reinforce the projects aims, as this will enable the group to share information for example on how to play with children and take care of their health. In one country this home visiting scheme has "resulted for group members to help promote early literacy development and health in a playful, interactive way with both adults and children in their homes" (UNESCO).

11. To address issues of lack of books in a particular project area, a project should establish Community Libraries, which should contain books in English and if necessary the local language and should be easy-to-read covering such issues as parenting, common diseases, life skills etc.
12. Leaflets, posters and brochures and traditional mechanisms are also useful means of advertising the project.

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## 4.8 Workshop Report: Embedding literacy in empowerment and human rights programmes with reference to families and the three gender laws of Sierra Leone

**Katy Newell-Jones**  
Feed the Minds and Balid, UK

The aim of the workshop was to explore ways of actively promoting literacy in programmes where literacy is not the primary goal.

This workshop arose from the work of Feed the Minds ([www.feedtheminds.org.uk](http://www.feedtheminds.org.uk)) with indigenous NGOs including Craftshare and Community Organisation for Mobilisation and Empowerment (COME-SL), based in Bo, Sierra Leone. The workshop also drew on Integrating Literacy and Peacebuilding: a guide for trainers and facilitators (Doe, McCaffery and Newell-Jones 2004) which is available on the BALID website ([www.balid.org.uk](http://www.balid.org.uk)).

### Feed the Minds Five Point Plan

1. Being aware of the literacy levels and practices of beneficiaries	e.g. including literacy in pre-project community assessment, identifying how different groups use literacy and numeracy and what experiences they have of using textual materials
2. Avoiding stigmatisation or discrimination against those who are non-literate	e.g. avoiding excluding those who are literate from workshops, trainings or positions of responsibility, considering whether the over-reliance on text in workshops is acting as a barrier to those who non-literate
3. Examining the use of textual materials in the project and adapt where possible to reflect the literacy levels of those using them	e.g. avoiding the use of complex vocabulary and sentence construction which is beyond the capacity of many of the participants  e.g. using pictures and diagrams, fewer words and mixed cased where possible to aid reading  e.g. considering the most appropriate language for written materials
4. Identifying opportunities where literacy skills can be developed	e.g. using key word lists so participants can see new words, using pictures and words together, breaking down complex words into syllables, emphasising initial letter sounds, using mixed case on blackboards
5. Providing opportunities for ideas and experiences for promoting literacy to be shared	e.g. enabling teachers or facilitators to share good practice within NGOs and also for NGOs to share their experiences and ideas for promoting literacy with other organisations

### Background

Feed the Minds works in partnership with a wide range of indigenous NGO. Some programmes focus explicitly on enhancing literacy practices, however, others are engaged in providing vocational training, promoting compassionate approaches to HIV/AIDS or challenging gender based violence, for example, FGM. Feed the Minds considers the enhancement of literacy to be an important element in empowering poor and marginalized people to take an active role in decision-making in relation to their lives and those of their families and communities. The FTM Five Point Plan has been used as a framework to prompt discussion about how literacy can be promoted by its partners through the planned project activities.

### The workshop

The workshop began with a discussion of the Five Point Plan. There was general agreement with points 1, 3, 4 & 5 with several present indicating that they might adopt some new practices, for example extending their existing community needs assessment to include the literacy experiences and practices of community groups, or ensuring that the texts they use in trainings reflects the literacy capabilities of the participants more closely. However, there was robust discussion around point 2, avoiding discrimination against those who are non-literate. This led onto discussion on facilitation and teaching techniques about where the responsibility of a facilitator lies: with the group as a whole or with each individual participant.

The second part of the workshop took a situation where an NGO was working with family and community groups to raise awareness on human rights of women and children, with particular reference to the Three Gender Laws and Child Rights Laws of Sierra Leone. It was agreed that the literacy levels and practices would probably vary enormously, with many of those who were non-literate also being less likely to contribute actively if text was used to explain the legal aspects.

Drawing from the examples in Integrating Literacy and Peacebuilding: a guide for trainers and facilitators, a Reflect-type approach was used to draw up a picture of an extended family which in this instance included father, mother, three children, a grandmother, uncle and aunt. These were drawn and the possible relationships between different members of the family discussed. (This could have been continued to include neighbours etc had time allowed.) The advantage of drawing the figures and adding lines of contact was that all became involved drawing on their own experiences and making the discussion reflect the situation in their own communities.

The question was then posed

**'Where in this family might there be abuses of human rights under the three gender laws and the child rights acts?'**

The discussion was lively and included examples under the headings

### The Three Gender Laws

- 1. Land Ownership** – the uncle taking over the family farm when the father dies and the mother being evicted from her home
- 2. Domestic violence** – the father beating the mother, the aunt beating the children, the abandonment of the grandmother
- 3. Sexual abuse** – the uncle taking sexual advantage of the widow, the father taking sexual advantage of the children

### The Child Rights Law

The children might not be treated with respect.

The children might not be given enough food

The children might be denied their right to go to school

At all stages simple words were added to the diagram, the complexity of the words might depend on the literacy levels of the participants.

### For groups where very few can read just a few words the key words might be

- mother
- child
- father
- uncle
- aunt
- rights
- grandmother
- hit
- food
- school

### These could be extended to include

- human rights
- land
- widow
- beat
- abandon
- force
- inheritance

**The facilitator might emphasis the sound of the first letter(s) or break difficult words into syllables or use other ways of helping participants to recognize and read them.**

e.g.

wi-dow

a-ban-don

in-her-i-tance

**Once the group has discussed the ways in which human rights might be being abused, the discussion is turned towards different areas, depending on the focus of the programme.**

### For example

- **Ways of supporting victims e.g. involving family members, community leaders**
- **Human rights monitoring and recording**
- **When, how and to whom to report human rights abuses**

Links were also made with the work of Rugiatu Turay combating FGM and the kinds of words which participants in her workshops were learning and writing, including blood, cutting etc.

### Conclusion

There was general agreement that the kind of approach demonstrated and discussed would encourage participation among a group and greater sharing of opinions, and realistic discussion of potential breaches of the laws in question.

# Appendix One

## Conference attendees

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