

EDUCATION ACTION INTERNATIONAL (EAI)

Sudan Literacy Programme

2003-2006

Literacy, Education and Development (LEAD)

Project summary

Sudan is Africa's largest country and is one of the world's poorest. Literacy rates in Sudan range between 30 – 46% and female literacy is 30% at best. There are more illiterate people in Sudan today than 30 years ago (at least 11 million) and women and girls are especially marginalised. There is an urgent need to facilitate women's participation in literacy service delivery, policy, planning and learning in order to enhance their status, rights and income.

This three-year project will assist a new national women's literacy NGO (LEAD) to develop its organisational capacity and literacy teacher training services for the most disadvantaged people, especially women. A series of activities are planned to A) develop LEAD as a strong female led NGO, B) develop its training capacity to deliver high quality literacy training and C) enhance its advocacy and networking opportunities.

Civil war has devastated Sudan 1983. This, coupled with intermittent droughts and famines have crippled the country's economic, social and political development. In a country of approximately 30 million people, the war, predominantly between the Muslim north¹ and the and the Christian² and animist south has seen the loss of over 2 million people's lives, mostly civilians. The past 19 years has also seen the internal displacement of over 4 million people. Two million of internally displaced people (IDPs) reside in around the capital city, Khartoum, living squalor with few health, education and income opportunities. The vast majority of IDP homes are female headed. Sudan's problems have been aggravated by the government's self-imposed isolation, which peaked in 1995, when the UN imposed economic sanctions. These were lifted in September 2001 ushering a new era of 'openness' in Sudan.

Sudan's adult literacy rate (15 years and over) is estimated at approximately 30%, although some estimates put this figure at 46% of a total population of 30 million. Even the latter rate compares abysmally to the developing world's average of 65%. Disaggregated, the picture becomes more bleak with female literacy rate put at 30% (UNICEF, 1995). Although the literacy rate is higher than in 1970 (6%), due to the population growth, the number of illiterate people in Sudan today is higher than it was over 30 years ago. The Sudanese National Council for Literacy and Adult Education (NCLAE) crudely puts the number of illiterate people at 11 million.

In the past two decades, the Council has coordinated three mass literacy campaigns. By its own admission, these have been unsuccessful due to poor planning, lack of political will, under funding and lack of well trained literacy teachers and appropriate methodologies and resources. The NCLAE is an independent 'parastatal'³ body appointed by the Prime Minister to oversee the eradication of illiteracy in Sudan. This body is separate from Sudan's Federal Ministry of Education but coordinates its work with the adult education departments (AED's) of state ministries of education⁴. The NCLAE is due to commence a further nationwide mass literacy campaign (2002-2006) with the aim of meeting the Education for All (EFA) target by reducing its

¹ Led by the military and the Islamic Salvation Front have jointly ruled Sudan since the coup in 1989.

² Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) has been fighting the government forces since 1983.

³ NCLAE comprises 44 representatives of various governmental department and adult educationalists.

⁴ Sudan is divided into 26 separate states, 16 of which are in the north of the country. This is where the project will focus.

illiteracy rate by 50% by 2015 (Annex 1.0). The plan envisages that 40% of literacy services will be met by grassroots, national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

In recent years, EAI has worked to improve the teaching quality and the resources of the literacy cadre culminating in a four-year project (1998-2002) where over 300 trainers and 75 teacher trainers were trained and an appropriate 'hybrid' literacy course was developed. Having developed the capacity of Shendi Center as a quality teacher-training institute, EAI has taken the strategic decision to support newly formed civil society organisations to contribute to Sudan's literacy campaigns and in response to women civil society actors who are beginning to feel more confident to participate in the improvement of their rights, status and the development of their communities.

Earlier this year, a newly formed Sudanese women's educational NGO, Literacy, Education and Development (LEAD) approached EAI for support in their development as an emerging NGO, and their capacity to deliver learner-centred literacy training. LEAD is a membership group of 57 literacy teachers, consisting of graduates from the literacy-training course supported by EAI and Comic Relief and other educationalists. Evaluation from the Shendi based literacy-training course and feedback from schools and teachers has revealed that demand and motivation for literacy training is high.

Literacy training provision in Sudan is haphazard and inadequate. In the context of extreme poverty, boys or men are often given priority access to education. In the long term this means that the education profession is male dominated, further marginalising women.

This project supports LEAD as they address the problems and challenges facing a new organisation led by women within Sudan and to facilitate their aspirations to deliver literacy instruction which will be accessible by all. There is an urgent need to increase the access of women and girls to education within Sudan, not only is access to education a basic human right, but the human costs of women's exclusion from education are massive and wide reaching. Mothers typically assume responsibility for the welfare of children, including their nutritional status and their contact with health- service providers.

EAI's mission is to help people gain greater access to education opportunities and to support work that improves the quality, relevance and equity of access to those opportunities. As an education development organisation we support local efforts to increase the access to and the quality of education for poor women, men and children – especially people affected by conflict. We seek to promote community wide initiatives to develop the knowledge and skills of local partner staff to equip them with the necessary and appropriate skills to meet the need of their constituents. This initiative meets both our own and our local partner's mandate in its focus on women's literacy. This proposal has been prepared by LEAD and WUS staff in participative planning workshops and consultations with various literacy bodies and individual educationalists over the past six months. The small, flexible, dynamic and participative nature of this new and emerging national women's NGO will ensure the project and the organisation's sustainability.

EAI encourages networking and information sharing between its regional partners, and it facilitated a project visit by the Ugandan organisation (Literacy and basic adult education, LABE) in June 2002 to run a series of workshops with LEAD members on their own organisational development and literacy approaches and initiatives in Uganda.