

# FAMILY LITERACY A GLOBAL APPROACH TO LIFELONG LEARNING

*Effective Practices in Family Literacy and Intergenerational Learning Around the World*



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The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) is a non-profit, policy-driven, international research, training, information, documentation and publishing centre of UNESCO. One of six educational institutes of UNESCO, UIL promotes lifelong learning policies and practices with a focus on adult learning and education, especially literacy and non-formal education and alternative learning opportunities for marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

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## Foreword

Family literacy emphasises the intergenerational transfer of language and literacy from parents to their children or from one generation to another. A range of family literacy programmes exists, varying according to the groups at which each is aimed. Some programmes focus on children, some on adults, and others on both. Some programmes are run at home, some in schools or other educational institutions, and others in community centres. Some programmes have a strong focus on literacy and language, others are based on broader concepts involving health, parenting and life skills.

Family literacy as a specialist field is still perceived as an essentially Western concept. However, intergenerational learning is rooted in many cultures and exists across the world, in the North as well as in the South. In November 2007, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) brought together family literacy practitioners and researchers from all the global regions to take stock of policies, practices and research in the field of family literacy worldwide and to explore its relevance and potential within the fields of adult education and lifelong learning. This publication contains the report from this meeting as well as overviews of all the projects represented therein.

The Institute will continue to promote family literacy and build capacities for its provision in all the world regions, with a focus on the 35 countries targeted by the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), which is being coordinated by UIL. LIFE is a ten-year key operational mechanism (2006-2015) that was initiated by UNESCO in the context of the United Nations Literacy Decade in order to accelerate literacy efforts in the 35 countries with a literacy rate of less than fifty percent and/or an adult population of more than 10 million people without literacy competencies.

UIL has several reasons to encourage family literacy as a means of enhancing literacy and lifelong learning. There is evidence that family literacy increases parents' self-confidence and often represents the point at which they choose to (re-)engage in education. Family literacy programmes can also bring about changes in school culture and the relationship between institutions and families. Moreover, family literacy programmes tend to be innovative in their pedagogical approach. Unfortunately, family literacy is still an unexplored field of practice. In most cases, programmes have no access to sustainable funding as they fall between the categories of formal and non-formal education. These programmes are rarely evaluated, making it difficult to advocate on their behalf. We hope that this publication will contribute towards making the benefits of family literacy better known to practitioners, programme planners, funders, policy makers and researchers in all regions of the world.

Adama Ouane  
Director, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

## North-South Exchange on Family Literacy – Report

From 5 to 7 November 2007, 20 family literacy experts, including practitioners and researchers, came together at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg, Germany, for a “North-South Exchange on Family Literacy”, which was organized and funded by UIL.

### The objectives of the meeting were to:

- take stock of policies, practice and research in the field of family literacy worldwide;
- explore the relevance and potential of intergenerational learning within adult education and lifelong learning and the achievement of the Education for All (EFA) goals;
- create an international network of experts and institutions working in the area of family literacy;
- prepare a report on this issue in preparation for the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), to be held in Brazil in 2009;
- build capacities in family and intergenerational literacy programmes, especially for LIFE countries.

In his opening statement UIL’s Director, Adama Ouane, asked the participants to provide UNESCO with arguments against the common view that family literacy is a concept of the North. One major objective of the meeting was thus to show that the concept of intergenerational learning is universal, even if it is less institutionalized in the South.

The seminar built on the Institute’s prior activities in the field of family literacy. In 2004, UIL initiated a family literacy pilot project, ‘FLY’, in Hamburg, together with the State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development headed by the City-State of Hamburg’s Ministry of Education. The FLY project was strongly inspired by the family literacy programmes developed by the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) in the UK. The BSA consulted with and

accompanied the FLY project team over a period of two years. From 2005 to 2007, UIL coordinated a European project on family literacy – QualiFLY (Quality in Family Literacy) – which was funded by the European Union through the Socrates/Grundtvig programme. Core partners in the project were institutions from Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta and Turkey. Other countries involved in the project were Canada, Israel (Palestinian communities), South Africa and the United Kingdom.

Moreover, family literacy is a focus of UNESCO’s series of Regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy in the context of Education for All (EFA) and the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD). The Global Initiative for Literacy is a series of high-level conferences held in all of the world regions that involve not only Ministers and other decision-makers but also First Ladies. UIL was responsible for organizing the Regional Conference in Africa, held in September 2007 in Bamako, during which family literacy was presented in the form of three projects from Africa (Mali, South Africa and Uganda), all of which were also represented at the “North-South Exchange” meeting.

It is also due to the Global Initiative for Literacy that interest in family literacy seems to be increasing. However, the last meeting that UNESCO organized on this issue dates back to 1994 when – in the context of the International Year of the Family – a World Symposium on Family Literacy was held in Paris. Two participants in that meeting were also present at the North-South Exchange: Dr Sharon Darling, President and Founder of the National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville, Kentucky, USA, and Prof Greg Brooks from the University of Sheffield, UK.

The North-South Exchange on Family Literacy brought together countries with a wide variety of experience in establishing family literacy policies and/or programmes. Some have already gained substantial expertise in this area. As a follow-up to this

### Statement of the participants in the North-South Exchange on Family Literacy:

- Family literacy is an approach to learning that focuses on intergenerational interactions within families and communities which promote the development of literacy and life skills.
- Family literacy celebrates and builds on existing skills and knowledge, and encourages participants to identify issues they face within their families and communities and to act upon them.
- Family literacy has proved to be an effective means of promoting literacy and encouraging adults and children to become lifelong learners. It bridges formal and non-formal / informal learning.
- There is growing evidence of its benefits from a range of countries and settings around the world, and of its ability to empower families from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.
- Depending on local circumstances and aims, these benefits can include improvements in parents’ and children’s language, literacy and other skills, and in parents’ ability to help their children. Other benefits may include: progression to further study, employment, and more positive child-rearing practices (for parents); and enhanced self-confidence, relationships in the family, status of women and girls, and life chances (for parents and children).
- Culturally appropriate research and evaluation are central to the development of effective family literacy policy and programmes.
- Family literacy is essential to building a culture of lifelong learning. It should be an integral part of education policy and requires comprehensive and long-term public investment.

<sup>1</sup> The UNESCO/UIL-led Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) targets 35 countries worldwide with literacy rates below 50% and populations with more than 10 million illiterate adults.

meeting a second seminar is planned for 2009, which will bring together countries which have little or no experience in family literacy – particularly on LIFE countries – but are interested in learning more about it and developing their own programmes. That meeting will focus on capacity-building, relying on the expertise of some of the participants in the first seminar.

Prior to the meeting, all participants had submitted reports on intergenerational literacy learning and family literacy policies, practices and research in their countries, based on a questionnaire. These questionnaires and other materials related to the seminar are available on the UIL website ([www.unesco.org/uil](http://www.unesco.org/uil)). As a follow-up to the seminar, the participants submitted descriptions of their projects, which can be found in the second part of this publication.

In the course of the three-day meeting, participants provided a brief insight into their projects and initiatives, and thematic sessions were held that centred on: community-oriented programmes, best practices, multilingualism, teacher training and research. A statement was adopted that reflects the view of all participants that family literacy is an effective means of promoting literacy and should be an integral part of education policy worldwide.

All participants and the work they represent are listed below:

#### Africa:

Mr *Souleymane Kanté* is Director of *World Education Mali*. The US-based NGO runs the Programme known as “Support for the Quality and Equity of Education in Mali” (*Appui à l’Amélioration de la Qualité et de l’Égalité de l’Éducation/AQEE*), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Through this five-year programme (2003-2008) World Education is supporting the Ministry of Education’s ten-year strategic plan entitled PRODEC by providing training and ongoing support to 700 Parent Associations and School Management Com-

mittees. An essential component of this training is the adult literacy programme, *Sanmogoya*, meaning “hard worker” in Bambara, which World Education developed to reinforce community-based organizations’ capacity to improve the quality and equity of basic education in their communities. The Sanmogoya programme also benefits from an innovative public/private partnership that is currently testing the use of locally-appropriate technology to provide lighting for night-time literacy classes. The literacy programme is active in six regions of Mali (Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Koulikoro, Ségou and Sikasso), where approximately 6,000 adult learners benefit from 140 literacy centres.

Ms *Snoeks Desmond* is Director of the *Family Literacy Project, South Africa*. The Family Literacy Project (FLP), based in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, was started in 2000 to address the low literacy achievement of many pre- and primary school children, and parents’ lack of confidence in their ability to provide support for these children. The NGO believes that parents (or other carers who assume a parental role) are the first and most important educators of children and that the family literacy approach supports both adults and children. Eleven facilitators work directly with 197 adults, 479 primary school children and 116 teenagers. In addition, FLP group members visit their neighbours to share information on early childhood health and development, and to play with and read to children. The lack of relevant reading materials contributes to the low levels of literacy of both adults and children; to address this, the project runs three community libraries.

Mr *Patrick Kiirya* is Director of *Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE), Uganda*. LABE first became interested in family literacy in the mid nineties as a new dimension of its adult literacy work in the region, and piloted a programme in the Buguri district – one of the poorest districts in Uganda with low adult literacy rates – in 2000-2001. As parents started to experience the value of literacy, they wanted to support their children in their school work but felt increasingly inadequate. In response to this felt need and the community education plans initiated by local school management committees, concerned parents and local government and district education officials, LABE negotiated a project with the UK-based charity Comic Relief through Education Action International to expand the coverage of the pilot project from 3 to 18 schools. Today, the project reaches over 1,400 parents and more than 3,300 children. Besides literacy and numeracy, other learning objectives of the programme are to enrich the abilities of teachers and adult educators in child-adult teaching/learning methods; strengthen parental support for children’s educational needs and equip parents with basic knowledge on school learning methods; and increase parents’ communication skills when interacting with children and teachers.

Mr *Ivan McDonald Scheffers* is Education Officer at the *Directorate of Adult Education of the Ministry of Education, Namibia*. High drop-out rates in Namibia prompted the Ministry of Education to address the problem of literacy in the home environment.



In 2004, the Directorate of Adult Education conducted a survey with the purpose of investigating the need for a family literacy programme. It concluded that a family literacy programme could play a vital role in improving the performance of learners in the lower primary grades. During May/August 2005, training was given to carefully selected Family Literacy Promoters and Education Officers from the Head Office. The project was piloted in 2005. It expanded by establishing two centres per region in 2006, and two further centres per region in 2007. Currently, Namibia has 5 Family Literacy Centres in each of its 13 educational regions. The Family Literacy project is fully funded by the Namibian Government. The 10-week programme targets parents with children in pre-school and in Grade One. 1,281 parents participated in the programme in 2007.

#### Arab States:

Mr *Farid Abu Gosh* is President of the *Trust of Programs for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education*, based in Jerusalem. The NGO working in the *Palestinian communities* has developed and implemented a range of programmes in the areas of early childhood education, health education, parent involvement, women's leadership and teacher training. The Mother-to-Mother Programme supports and strengthens the parenting skills of young mothers and trains mothers as paraprofessionals. The Learn-by-Play Programme attempts to reverse the trend of increasing drop-out rates in elementary schools by building trusting relationships between pupils and teachers and creating a stimulating educational environment. As well as supporting and offering training to teachers in elementary schools, the programme also trains young volunteers to motivate young children to stay in school. Other programmes run by the Trust are the Women's Empowerment Programme, the Combating Domestic Violence Programme, the Young Women's Programme, the Prevention of Early Marriage Programme and the Pre-school Teachers' Training Programme.

Ms *Julie Hadeed* is Founder and Director of the *Mother-Child Home Education Programme (MOCEP)*, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. MOCEP is a non-governmental and private charity organization which provides a non-formal, home-based education programme for pre-school-aged children and their mothers in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The annual 25-week programme provides women with a schedule of daily lessons for teaching their five-year-old children at home. Participants (children entering primary school) are from low-income, disadvantaged families who cannot afford pre-school education for their children. The programme consists of two components: The Mother Support Programme (MSP) – weekly three-hour educational sessions, including lectures and discussions on a wide range of subjects related to child development – and the Cognitive Training Programme (CTP) that is carried out by the mothers with their children, based on materials the mothers are given. Home visits by trained professionals help mothers overcome individual problems, and complement the programme.

#### Asia and Pacific:

Ms *Sereima Lumelume* from the University of the South Pacific coordinates the *Vanuatu Literacy Education Project (VANLEP)*, which is run in Vanuatu's primary schools. The project was implemented by the Polytechnic of New Zealand Company and funded by New Zealand International Aid Development Programme (NZAid) under its Education Assistance Programme for Vanuatu (NZEAP). The VANLEP project is commonly known as the Book Flood Project, a book-based approach to literacy and language teaching and learning. It is an initiative that aims at lifting literacy learning outcomes in rural and isolated areas of the country. VANLEP targets 8 and 9 year-old students in Classes 3 and 4. Teacher training and teacher empowerment represent an important element of the programme. Other objectives are to provide quality books for children, improve classroom management, and parents' awareness with regard to literacy learning at home and participation in literacy acquisition at school.

Mr *John Benseman* from the Department of Labour in *New Zealand* has been heavily involved in the *Manukau Family Literacy Project* as a researcher and evaluator. The Manukau project is the best-documented example of family literacy programmes in New Zealand. It was developed by the City of Manukau Education Trust (COMET). This programme is located in Manukau City, southern Auckland. This is the most culturally diverse area in New Zealand, as well as having the highest proportion of socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Literacy needs are highest among Maori and Pasifika groups. Together, these have formed the COMET programme's main target group. The programme was originally based on the American Kenan model, but has since developed a distinctive New Zealand flavour to it (particularly the Parent and Child Together Time). The model involves adults attending their children's schools, to participate in a programme, as well as take a course in child development and participate in the reading and numeracy components of their children's schoolwork.





### Europe:

Ms Gabriele Rabkin represented the *FLY* pilot project in Hamburg, Germany, which was implemented in 2004 by the State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development of the City-State of Hamburg's Ministry of Education and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. The German "Bund-Länder-Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion" has undertaken to sponsor the project for a period of five years as a part of the programme entitled "Promotion of Children and Young Adults with Migrant Backgrounds". The programme involves the participation of parents of five year-old pre-school children and runs in nine locations in socially disadvantaged districts of Hamburg. It aims to involve parents in everyday school life with regard to literacy activities. The work with parents takes place in pre-school/day centres and is based essentially on three key elements: 1) the active involvement of parents in everyday classroom activities (together with children); 2) activities with parents (parents alone); 3) joint out-of-school activities.

Mr Sandro Spiteri represented the *Foundation for Educational Services (FES)*, Malta. Although family literacy is a relatively new phenomenon in Malta, with at most an eight-year history, it has put down solid roots and is entering mainstream professional development as well as teaching and learning. Its importance has grown in proportion to the increasing recognition of the centrality of parental involvement in education and school life. Indeed, parental involvement is one of the key principles of the new National Minimum Curriculum published in 1999. Family literacy provision in Malta started in 2001 with the establishment of the FES, which was conceived as a mechanism to provide a range of innovative educational initiatives in the field of literacy support, parental empowerment and lifelong learning. FES started the Hilti (My Ability) Programme, an after-school family-oriented educational service that would complement and reinforce teaching and learning at day schools. Since then, the FES has developed and implemented variations of this model, the most important of which are the Nwar (Late Blossoms) Programme for families at severe risk of educational failure and the

Ongi Ongi Ongella Programme, which forms part of the day-school programme at Kindergarten and Junior 1 levels.

Ms Viorica Alexandru is Family Learning Adviser at *Center Education 2000+ (CEDU)*, Romania. CEDU is a non-governmental, apolitical and independent organization offering educational consultancy services. The Centre – founded in December 1999 – is part of the Soros Open Network, the main network of non-governmental and civic organizations in Romania. Since 2001, Club Europea Romania has developed family literacy in Romania through a European project led by Malta and entitled Parent Empowerment through Family Literacy (PEFaL). This programme still runs in a few schools and kindergartens and is the only literacy programme running in the country which targets parents and children equally. There is no national public family literacy policy or programme in place at present, but family learning is becoming an issue in public debate.

Ms Deniz Senocak represented the *Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV)*, Turkey. AÇEV is an NGO that aims to empower people through education. It conducts research and develops and implements programmes in early childhood education and adult education, especially for disadvantaged pre-school children and their families. AÇEV has also set up nationwide programmes such as the Mother Child Education Program (MO-CEP), the Parent-Child Pre-school Education Program (PCPEP) and the Father Support Program (FSP).

Mr Greg Brooks from the *University of Sheffield, United Kingdom* has directed over 40 research projects in initial, family and adult literacy. He reported on family literacy in the United Kingdom, focusing mainly on research. In the 1990s, the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) received funding for four Family Literacy Demonstration Programmes which were implemented in England and Wales in 1994. The BSA model had three strands: sessions for parents in which they worked on their own literacy and on how to help their children; parallel sessions for children in which they received high-quality early years provision for reading, writing and talking; and joint sessions in which the parents typically tried out something with their children that they had been practising just beforehand in their separate session. Evaluations proved the success of the demonstration programmes. In the meantime a great variety of programmes has developed in the UK. In the context of the national "Skills for Life" initiative – which promotes basic skills for adults – a considerable amount of money has been invested in family literacy, language and numeracy programmes.

Mr Eric Nédelec represented the *Agence nationale de lutte contre l'illettrisme (The National Agency to Fight Illiteracy/ANLCI)* in France, where literacy is a national priority. ANLCI was created in 2000 in order to coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders and the resources provided by the State, local authorities and private enterprises for advocacy and action in the field of literacy. ANLCI has recently started to focus on family literacy and has actively promoted the approach in France.



Ms *Mara Theodosopoulou* represented the *General Secretariat for Adult Education of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in Greece*. In 2003, the Greek government launched the Parents' Schools nationwide in the context of the country's commitment to lifelong learning. The Parents' Schools Program, which is funded by European Social Funds and the Hellenic State, is run by the General Secretariat for Adult Education and implemented and supervised by the Institute for Continuing Adult Education. Parents' Schools exist in all 14 prefectures in Greece. Since 2003, 45,000 (approximately 3,500 fathers and 41,500 mothers) have participated in these courses. The courses are mainly held in schools and community centres. The Parents' Schools are run exclusively for parents, although parents are recruited through their children's educational institutions. The focus of the Parents' Schools is on parenting, intergenerational communication, encouraging parents to participate in school activities and addressing the issues of violence and health.

Ms *Donata Elschenbroich* represented the *Deutsches Jugendinstitut (German Youth Institute) in Munich*. She is an expert in the field of international comparative research on childhood and early education, has published several books and produced films on the topic.

#### North and Latin America:

Mr *Jorge Rudy García Monterroso* represented the *National Committee on Literacy (CONALFA), Guatemala*. CONALFA runs the *Alfabetización Integral Intrafamiliar (Intra-family Literacy Programme)*, which was officially launched in 1998 in the district of Baja Verapaz. It was based initially on the methodological approach of the TEZULUTLÁN project, and was formalised in 2000 by CONALFA staff. The basic idea of the programme is that one member of the family, generally a child attending the 4th, 5th or 6th Grade of primary school, provides teaching to adult members of his or her family unit, in most cases the mother. The primary objectives of the programme are to assist the educational development of the individual within the home, without detracting from the culture or behavioural patterns prevalent within the family environment, and to strengthen family relations by allocating responsibilities to all its members.

Mr *Yvon Laberge*, Director of *Éduk* – an NGO working mainly in the area of literacy and family literacy for the francophone minority in *Canada* and Board member of the *Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français* – has been involved in the development and implementation of literacy and family literacy programmes and policies in Canada for many years. Family literacy programmes are common in Canada, especially in the Anglophone communities. Yet Canada is officially a bilingual country (French and English), with a French-speaking population that is widely dispersed and constitutes a minority in every province except Quebec. In response for the need for communities, families and individuals to be exposed to and use the minority language in order to gain mastery of both the minority and majority languages, practitioners are provided with a com-

prehensive five-day programme on the foundations of family literacy in French and English. Programmes have also been developed for aboriginal populations. The French-language family literacy programmes help parents transmit mother tongue skills and develop a sense of belonging to a specific culture. The *Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français* works with its member organizations to implement family literacy programmes in French across the country.

Ms *Sharon Darling* is President and Founder of the *National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), USA*. She was accompanied by Ms *Laura Westberg*, Director of Research and Special Projects at the Center. US family literacy programmes are supported by public funds from many areas of national, state, and local governments. The private sector, both corporations and foundations, has played a powerful role in family literacy expansion and programme innovation. There are now approximately 5,000 family literacy programmes in the US. These programmes operate in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), schools, libraries, and early childhood centres. NCFL, funded by private and public sources, provides a model demonstration of best practices; provides training for more than 150,000 teachers and programme administrators; advocates for family literacy in the US Congress and state governments; and conducts research and evaluation to increase the knowledge base and improve the quality of programmes as they continue to emerge.



### General observations about the programmes:

The participating countries' experience of family literacy vary widely. In particular, Turkey, the USA, Canada and the UK have long-standing experience in this field and family literacy is a common practice. To date, the National Center for Family Literacy in the United States has served about one million people. Since 1988, family literacy has been integrated into and defined within Federal Law. Other countries such as Malta and New Zealand have "imported" the concept and adapted it to their own specific context. In other countries, the practice exists because certain individuals and NGOs have implemented and introduced it. Namibia is a unique example of a country in which family literacy has been implemented by the government. Turkey is another interesting example: here a programme developed by an NGO – the Mother Child Education Program – proved so successfully that the programme was upscaled and taken over by the Ministry of Education. Turkey has many years of experience with mother-child education programmes, but until recently did not consider these to constitute family literacy even though they share all the salient features of programmes thus labelled elsewhere.

The programmes vary considerably in length: for example, the duration of the Manakau family literacy programme is 300 hours, whereas other programmes are much shorter. The Mother Child Education Program runs for 25 weeks and involves approximately two hours of participation a week. In South Africa, the average time participants remain in the programme is 3.5 years. In other countries, participants enrol for a few months or even a few weeks only.

### "Community-oriented" programmes:

For part of the meeting, the participants split into two groups to discuss the characteristics of community-oriented programmes, and the issues shared by the North and the South as well as the differences between them.

What is a community? A group of people who live in the same area, and share the same schools, institutions and public authorities? In Germany for example, the word "community" refers to a religious community.

One group began by posing the counter-question 'By exclusion, what would a non-community-oriented programme look like?' The following responses were given:

- It would overlook local needs
- It would suffer from bureaucratic definitions
- Because of those deficiencies, it would not last.

- As a consequence, a community-oriented programme would
- be based within easy travelling distance of the intended participants ('easy walking distance' for those arriving on foot);
  - fit into the school day;
  - respect local boundaries, some of which may not correspond with official boundaries but be clear to residents, and therefore constitute the area in which they feel safe;
  - be based in a community whose boundaries are defined in this way, perhaps within a school's catchment area.

It was felt, however, that practical evidence on such programmes is scattered and fragmented; hence knowledge is limited and few general conclusions can be drawn. Nevertheless, some recommendations and features could be identified:

- Public events should be organised at the end of a programme to celebrate students' achievement ('graduations'/award ceremonies) and which the wider family can attend.
- Visible and practical evidence that the programme has run and is sustainable should be made available, e.g. the libraries in the South African programme.
- Local authority figures need to be co-opted as champions. In particular, programmes based in schools need the support of the head teacher. In general terms, this means that participants must feel that the programme has been 'endorsed' by those with the authority to do so and the influence needed to encourage community involvement.
- Local people should be employed, including local educators, enabling programmes to build on their knowledge and prepare children for school.
- The use of paraprofessionals can play a particularly important role in family literacy programmes, especially in the South, as they are people from the community and have a better understanding of people's needs (for example in Palestinian communities).
- Where possible, parents and local coordinators should take over the running of the programme.
- The programmes must be linked to the local community's perceived needs. This requires asking community members for their opinions and respecting them, even if they subsequently prove to be wrong, as well as asking how people wish to be involved in the work.
- In some cases, local opinion may prove to be wrong because people have seen earlier promises broken and have developed survival skills to deal with such eventualities. They may therefore have a strong yet hidden agenda which is invisible to outside agencies unaware of these people's prior experiences, and which may hinder the programme's success.
- Curricula should be based on local skills and languages, and on local role models, e.g. librarians.
- If multilingualism is a factor, translations of stories need to preserve the principles of the stories rather than be literal.

**Differences between the “North” and the “South”:**

It was felt that there are not so many differences, though community needs are different.

**The South has:**

- limited access to resources
- limited literate environment
- limited access to reading materials
- higher illiteracy rates.

Also, literacy programmes are often much more basic. The school fails even more than in the North to equip students with literacy skills – many drop out. In the Palestinian territories, there are 40 children in a class with one teacher. ‘Conventional’ teaching methods do not work. Programmes in Africa report that it may be advisable to start off with very basic things such as holding a pen. As a literate environment is missing, the South African programme creates community libraries. Even more generally, in the South programmes need to target both literacy and life skills, e.g. by strengthening Parents’ Associations.

**The North has:**

- high rates of functional illiteracy
- a greater emphasis on literacy
- family literacy programmes that involve groups of parents and children working together.

**Shared issues:**

- Schools are isolated and often located outside the communities instead of being a part of them.
- Family literacy builds a bridge between schools and adults.
- Both areas need to sensitise parents with regard to (their children’s) education.

**Issues arising:**

- Is the idea of parent-child interaction (speaking, listening, hugging, etc.) with children a westernized idea?
- Any programme, however well-designed and well-intentioned, imposes values.
- What are we taking away to put a new practice in place?
- Change should not be imposed, but come about through dialogue.
- We need to make sure that what comes in has added value.
- Family literacy involves many collaborative partners. That is a strength but also one of the challenges.

**“Added value” of family literacy programmes:**

- They bring out the potential of parents.
- They question taboos.
- They inculcate respect for families: “Not for families, but with families”.
- They are multidimensional and modular.
- They have the potential to bring about social change.
- An element of family/intergenerational learning can enhance every programme.
- Adult and primary education methods can enrich each other.
- Parents become ambassadors for education in their communities.

The approach in family literacy programmes is often more individual than in conventional adult literacy programmes. For this reason, family literacy programmes can be more expensive.

Family literacy programmes have much more and wider effects than enhanced literacy skills, especially increased competence of parents to support their children in school and increased self-confidence of parents. Patrick Kiirya of Uganda reported that parents who have attended a family literacy class seem to do better in numeracy also. Programmes report changes in the school culture and in relationships within families, e.g. changes in domestic violence towards girls (e.g. Uganda), lower school drop-out, and stronger family relations (e.g. Guatemala).



### Challenges faced by family literacy programmes:

It is difficult to involve **fathers**. Similarly, mixed groups (except for couples) are difficult to arrange or are considered unacceptable in some countries. In general, the rate of participation of fathers in family literacy programmes is low and does not exceed 5%. The Father Support Program in Turkey is an example of a programme that targets fathers successfully. The CONALFA programme in Guatemala has also achieved 25% attendance by fathers – possibly because the programme is carried out in homes.

**Grandparents** have an important role to play in the education of their grandchildren. In the UK, a research programme has been started to explore further the impact that grandparents have on their grandchildren's education, and resources have been developed for grandparents and their grandchildren. Grandparents, especially grandmothers, pass on traditional languages and knowledge to their grandchildren. Souleymane Kanté reported from Mali that grandmothers do door-to-door visits to convince parents to send their daughters to school.

Programmes involving **older children**, especially secondary school children and adolescents, are problematic and have proved a failure in the UK. A good example of a functioning family literacy programme with older children is the Nwar programme in Malta.

**Multilingualism** is a challenge faced by many family literacy programmes. In Germany and the UK, for example, family literacy programmes often target migrants who have not yet mastered the language of the host country. Multilingualism is common, especially in the South. In Guatemala there are 23 local languages. In most African countries, the situation is similar. In Vanuatu, 100 languages are in use for a population of 340 000 (the lingua franca is Bislama, a creole language with mainly English-based vocabulary and mainly Melanesian grammar). In most cases, literacy programmes start by teaching the local language and then continue with the official language, as studies have shown that this approach is more successful than commencing with a language that is unfamiliar to the learner. However, this approach is expensive and many learners in fact want to learn the official language because they associate it with higher prestige and greater work opportunities. Canada is a bilingual country, in which family literacy programmes are helpful in preserving the identity of the francophone minority. The USA also has a high percentage of speakers of other languages, especially Hispanics. Multilingualism also infers multiculturalism. Intercultural competencies are crucial in many contexts in family literacy programmes. It is important to value the language because that values the culture. The question was raised as to teaching a programme in a specific language leads to a change in the culture.

**Effective programmes** are built on:

- teacher training
- integrated research

### Teacher training:

The qualifications of teachers carrying out family literacy programmes differ widely. Most of the teachers working in family literacy programmes specialise in teaching children and/or are school teachers, some are adult educators. The ideal team would consist of a child educator and an adult educator. There is a need for initial and ongoing training on the family literacy approach and more evaluation of teaching practice. In some contexts, experience with migrants is important, and the teachers should be trained accordingly. Intercultural competencies play a crucial in family literacy programmes.

Parental involvement should be an integral element of training courses for teachers. Unfortunately, this is still a rarity. Malta is one of the few countries in which the national government has established a National Minimal Curriculum that encourages schools to set up programmes of parental education and school involvement. The B.Ed. university course for primary school teachers offers specialist pre-service training enabling teachers to improve parents' education and increase parental involvement.

### Research:

Evaluation should be built into a programme right from the beginning.

All evaluations of family literacy programmes use qualitative methods, and some also use quantitative ones. Turkey, the USA and the UK have the most substantial experience of evaluations of family literacy programmes. New Zealand's Manakau project also has a strong research base. All programmes have carried out evaluations; however, it should be noted that there is a lack of comparative studies, especially with regard to quantitative data.

The longitudinal study carried out in Turkey between 1982 and 2005 – the only one of its kind – showed that students whose mothers had been part of a family literacy programme were much more likely to attend university. The South African Family Literacy Project has favoured more participatory ways of evaluating programmes by applying a modified version of *Photovoice* and *Most Significant Change*. These evaluations are carried out by the facilitators themselves and involve them, as well as the learners, in the evaluation process to a much higher degree than "traditional" methods. The reports on these evaluations can be downloaded from the Family Literacy Project website ([www.familyliteracyproject.co.za](http://www.familyliteracyproject.co.za)).

Researchers need to think about presenting their reports in innovative ways (e.g. through video diaries) in order to make their evaluations more attractive to all concerned, including the funders. It is equally important to report on what does not work as on what does.

### Policies/funding:

Family literacy has yet to be included on most policy agendas. As it usually targets school children and adults simultaneously, it is difficult to categorise, which in turns makes it difficult to secure funding. Namibia and New Zealand are the only countries in which the national government has invested in family literacy and is running programmes. In both cases, this can be attributed to studies highlighting the inadequacies of the standard educational system, as well as to individual “decision-makers” who believe in the concept of family literacy. In the UK, the central government provides partial funding but devolves the responsibility for providing the remaining funds and for running the programmes to local authorities.

In New Zealand, family literacy is a priority within the education system. Contrary to the norm, policies and research are already available, but hampered by a lack of experience. In this respect, the case of New Zealand is an unusual one. Much research has been done on the Manakau project, and the programme has been extremely successful in changing the way that policy-makers view family literacy.

### Outcomes/Follow-up of the meeting:

Following the meeting, an African Family Literacy Action Group (AFLAG) was founded. One of the aims of this group is the implementation of a Centre for Family Literacy in Africa to act as a point of reference for promoting family literacy and disseminating tools and know-how on the continent.

As a follow-up to the meeting, France submitted a proposal for a national family literacy pilot programme to the Ministry for Social Affairs. This has since been approved and is currently being launched.

The UIL and *dvv international* have co-published a book on family literacy in Africa, entitled *Family Literacy: Experiences from Africa and Around the World*.

The Fédération canadienne pour l’alphabétisation en français (FCAF) held a forum on family literacy in March 2008 during which the statement of the “North-South Exchange” meeting was disseminated. The forum issued a declaration in which the FCAF associated itself with the UNESCO and UIL initiative for the worldwide promotion of family literacy.

The report on the meeting is being disseminated - particularly to LIFE countries - through UNESCO’s networks.

*Greg Brooks and Maren Elfert*

# Effective Practices in Family Literacy and Intergenerational Learning Around the World



# AFRICA





## The Family Literacy Project – South Africa

### Context

In South Africa it is estimated that between 7.4 and 8.5 million adults are functionally illiterate and that between 2.9 to 4.2 million people have never attended school. One million children in South Africa live in a household where no adult can read. In a recent survey, it was found that just over 50% of South African families own no books for recreational or leisure time reading. It is perhaps not surprising, given this information, that a national evaluation carried out by the Department of Education in 2003 found that the average Reading Comprehension and Writing score for Grade 3 children was only 39%.

The Family Literacy Project (FLP) is based in the southern Drakensberg area of KwaZulu-Natal with a population of 300,000. The unemployment rate currently stands at 41% and 66% of households live on less than R 800 per month. The majority of people do not have access to electricity or proper sanitation and this has serious consequences in an area where it is estimated that 30% of the population is HIV positive.

The project is aimed at families as a means of addressing the low literacy achievement of many pre- and primary school children, and the lack of confidence of parents in their ability to provide support to these children. As the parents (or those who take on the role of parents) are the first and most important educators of children, the family literacy approach supports both adults and children.

### Programme

The FLP was set up in 2000 in response to findings that showed that the literacy scores of pre-school children were not improving, despite government interventions in the early childhood sector. Initially, monthly meetings were held with the parents of pre-school children to work with them to strengthen their role in early literacy development. By the end of that year, the parents were more confident in their ability to support their children whatever their own levels of literacy. These parents, and others in the area, requested that the FLP provide adult literacy tuition. Each group chose a member of their community to take part in training organised by the FLP. These women have since been trained in adult literacy (mother tongue and English as a second language), early literacy, and the participatory Reflect approach. Participation by the group members is important as the FLP believes that local knowledge is significant and relevant and that any new information must be integrated into this knowledge.

The FLP approach now combines these three aspects and eleven facilitators work directly with 197 adults, 479 primary school children and 116 teenagers to achieve the aims of:

- making literacy a shared pleasure and a valuable skill within families;
- helping to develop a critical mass of community members of all ages who see literacy as important and enjoyable; and
- supporting parents/caregivers in their role as the educators of young children.

The adult groups focus on building literacy skills, sharing local knowledge and introducing new information where necessary. Topics covered in the groups range from children's rights and protection to women's health, environmental issues, and committee and budgeting skills. The adult groups regularly discuss issues relating to children, consider how to support their development, and have fun with them as they look at or read books together. The FLP stresses the importance of the parent/caregiver as the first educator of children, and the adults in the project are supported in this role. In turn, a number of group members visit their neighbours as part of the project's home visiting scheme. The 69 home visitors share information, for example, on how to play with children and take care of their health. This innovation has resulted in additional training for group members to help promote early literacy development and health in a playful, interactive way with both adults and children in their homes.

The main barrier to the smooth running of group sessions is posed by the members' workload. Women will miss sessions when they have to cut thatching grass, re-thatch their homes, or rebuild/plaster walls. If a government-funded initiative requires short-term workers, FLP group members are often the first to apply and as a result will then be absent from the sessions for the duration of the contract. Another challenge is the state of the roads in this very rural area. The roads are bad even when the weather is good and when it rains or snows they are often impassable, which disrupts the support the project offers by visiting each facilitator once a month. The groups made up of teenage and primary school children explore many issues and relate these to the enjoyment of books and reading. Often, the topics will be the same as those covered in the adult groups, providing opportunities for families to discuss these issues together in their homes.

The problem of low literacy levels in adults and children is exacerbated by the lack of books in the area. To address this, the project has established three community libraries and eight box libraries which are run by project facilitators with the assistance of group members.

In addition, project staff have developed learning materials and easy to read books that are available in both Zulu and English. The topics covered in these books include early literacy development, parenting, HIV/AIDS, and resilience. The facilitators are provided with all units (lesson plans), as well as posters and leaflets where these are appropriate and available. The project supplies stationery for the adult, teenage and children's groups. Group members do not have to leave the project until they want to, as there is no defined end to the programme.

All the facilitators and group members are from the community in which the groups operate. The age range of the group members, who are all women, is between 21 and 79, with the average age being 48.



### Lessons learned

The most important lesson learned has been that children who are supported by their parents usually do well at school, and that this motivates adults to continue offering this support. The FLP has also learned that well-supported facilitators are key to the successful implementation of the programme.

The FLP must maintain the focus on families as new members join the project. The first members, many of whom are still in the project, joined because they were interested in learning more about how they could help their young children and at the same time develop their own literacy skills. It is important that women who now join this well established and recognised project realise and subscribe to its core mission and vision.

Danisile Gladys Duma (b.1948) has been a regular member since the first family literacy meetings held in Lotheni. In 2003 she wrote (in Zulu):

*"I was born in kwaNoguqa and grew up in Mpendle. I started school and went as far as Std 2. I stopped schooling because my home had nothing. I stayed at home, although I desired to learn, but I had to look after cattle.*

*I was married when I was 15 years old ... during the ninth year (of marriage), I had a baby girl ... She is the only child I have. My child grew up and went to school. I had wished that my child should be educated and not have to go through a similar experience to me, as I had a very sad experience because I was not educated. In 2001, an adult school was established, and I joined it. Now my life is interesting, and I am free. I thank this adult school."*

The Family Literacy Project knows that if literacy skills are not regularly used they can be difficult to maintain. For this reason, group members are encouraged to contribute to the project newsletter, have pen friends, write for community notice boards and keep journals with their children.

Group sessions for adults are advertised by word of mouth and are open to all. FLP experiences low drop-out rates and when members are absent they send apologies and give reasons. It is clear that members are motivated to remain in the programme (the average is 3.5 years for the groups running since 2000) because they are treated with respect and the programme is relevant to them and to their families.

Family literacy can be developed in different ways and can benefit both adults and children. The FLP experience has shown that combining adult and early literacy in a participatory manner can work. It is for this reason that the staff of the FLP have been meeting with other organizations and government departments to explore how to offer family literacy in a way most appropriate in the different contexts. To do this, FLP draws on its experience and shares the lessons learned with others. The women who joined the project in the first years have now become not only competent facilitators but are also able to speak at meetings and conferences and lead training courses outside their own

area. Their confidence has grown and the main challenge now is how they are going to meet the different demands on their time. The project has been evaluated every year and the latest reports are available on the FLP website. The recommendations from the evaluations are taken seriously and followed up each year by the external evaluator. Different evaluation approaches have been used, including storytelling, photographs and stories, focus groups, interviews, and group members reflecting on their own practice.

As NGO work is dependent largely on donor funding, donors who change their priorities can pose a real challenge to the NGO because it then has to source new donors. For example, FLP's 2007 budget is close to R2,000,000, but it is not possible to extract the cost per learner from this total, as the very small staff of 2 full timers and 11 part-timers are involved not only with group work but also materials development, outreach, fundraising and management. In addition, the project contracts a health expert and external evaluators and these costs are included in the overall budget. As donors do not make long-term commitments and some do not let organizations know well in advance when they are going to change their funding criteria, this poses a major challenge to the FLP. Meantime, as many people – convinced of the importance of the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, skills and support – are working to raise the profile of family literacy in South Africa, as in many other countries, it is possible that resources, whether financial and technical will be forthcoming.

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## World Education – Mali

### Context

The World Education Mali Programme, “Support for the Quality and Equity of Education” or “Appui à l’Amélioration de la Qualité et de l’Égalité de l’Éducation (AQEE)” operates in six regions within Mali: Kidal, Gao, Timbuktu, Ségou, Sikasso and Koulikoro. Within these regions, the programme targets 105 communes in which 2,430,676 inhabitants live, representing approximately one quarter (24.60%<sup>1</sup>) of the total population within Mali. More specifically, the programme covers 700 schools (300 public schools, 213 community schools, 103 medersa schools, and 4 private schools), 8 teaching academies, and 17 centres for pedagogical training. Within the framework of the AQEE programme, elimination of illiteracy is integrated with initiatives to increase community participation in the support of schools and children’s education. Key partners in this regard are members of school management committees, members of parents’ associations (mothers’ associations in particular), and other illiterate community leaders who partner with schools.

More importantly, the programme aligns itself with the ten-year strategic plan of the Malian Ministry of Education (called PRODEC), serving as an agent of change and facilitating: a) the improvement of teaching methods and training of children; b) pre-service and in-service teacher training; and c) the increased participation of parents and communities within school management. The last component of the programme requires literacy training for parents to enable them to follow the school work of their children who receive bilingual instruction in French and a national language.

### Programme

In 1999, World Education Mali developed and began piloting literacy programmes that help strengthen community participation in education activities. In April 2002, teachers, community members and NGO staff were brought together to write literacy materials, and in 2003, World Education began incorporating the new literacy materials into the USAID-funded AQEE programme. The programme serves the Malian community and has the following specific aims:

- to contribute to the improvement of teachers’ performance from the first to the sixth year;
- to support the development and setting of the curriculum to be taught at levels 1 to 4;
- to increase parents’ participation in the management of schools; and
- to increase the population of literate adults within the community leadership.

The specific goal of the AQEE programme is to provide parents and members of community-based organizations with the basic literacy skills they need to enable them to contribute to the management of their local primary schools and the education of their children. Another major objective is to ensure that both parents and children achieve basic literacy. The focus on adult

literacy is specifically intended as a complementary means of improving the quality of education for children. Parents who read and write can better monitor and take part in their children’s school work and activities. They can also participate in creating and implementing school improvement plans.

Community members recruit programme participants who meet the following criteria: a) they participate voluntarily; b) they are members of the community in which the literacy programme takes place; c) they are currently illiterate or abandoned formal education at an early age; and/or d) they are members of a school management structure (i.e. school management committee or parent-student association). While other literacy programmes may offer participants a monetary incentive, World Education participants do not receive financial motivation and this is important to the longterm sustainability of the programme. Moreover, World Education has worked to enable elected members to act as community representatives and assume responsibility for selecting trainers and participants and managing the literacy centres.

The programme employs the *Sanmogoya*<sup>2</sup> methodology. Coined by World Education, the methodology is action-based, meaning that participants catalyse change, and utilises content that is most relevant to the priorities and needs of the participating community. Trainers employ a problem-solving process that aims to help participants solve concrete issues while learning how to read, write and calculate. Facilitators engage learners in dialogue based on visual aids, leading them through a series of questions such as:

“What problem(s) is/are these people facing? What are the causes of the problem(s)? Is your community or a neighbouring community involved in the same issue? What can we do to avoid or solve this problem?” Through the *Sanmogoya* methodology, learners develop a broader understanding of education-related issues in their community and identify relevant solutions to address them within the classroom.

There are two facilitators (one man, one woman) per class of 25 to 30 participants. The community recruits the facilitators based upon the basic criteria that a) they have received basic education; b) they are members of the community; c) they are reliable, available and sociable; and d) they are in agreement with the community’s conditions of motivation. Accordingly, the employment scheme is determined by the specific community in which the facilitator works.

Courses are conducted in one of three Malian languages, Bamankan, Tamasheq, and Songhai, determined by the dominant language within the community, and are held four times per week for two hours to reinforce the lessons learned. Basic literacy requires 150 hours in total, which is typically achieved in a six-

<sup>1</sup> Source : United Population Division

<sup>2</sup> Sanmogoya is equivalent to “hard worker” in Bambara

month period. The programme also integrates lessons covering gender equality and HIV/AIDS into the subject material. Literacy centres use reading, writing and maths booklets, and image boxes designed for basic education and post-literacy, which are accompanied by a basic education and post-literacy teaching guide for trainers in reading, writing and maths. Trainers supplement these materials with a set of letter games and the “Waligana” or numbers table. For women specifically, there are booklets on post-literacy that include topics of education, health, the environment, good governance and income-generating activities. World Education also introduced an innovative literacy tool as a result of a public/private partnership called “Kinkajou”, named after a nocturnal animal capable of seeing in the dark. This partnership between USAID, World Education, Design that Matters (affiliated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and the Ministry of Education has allowed a simple and locally-appropriate technology to be tested that enables community members in predominately rural areas to learn to read, write and count under good conditions at night. The system consists of a solar panel that charges a battery daily to power the projector in the evening class. The projector is used in conjunction with the *Sanmogoya* methodology. An independent evaluation found positive impacts in literacy centres using Kinkajou projectors. In particular, the participants in Kinkajou centres learned material twice as quickly as those in control centres, and displayed lower drop-out rates (66.5% lower among women).

### Lessons learned

From the time that it was introduced during the 2003-2004 Malian academic year up to the end of 2006, the World Education literacy programme has successfully served 17,637 basic literacy learners (6,524 women) and 6,831 post-literacy learners (2,260 women). World Education assesses the literacy programme participants through the administering of initial, mid-term and final literacy tests, which follow the evaluation grid established by the Ministry of Education’s bureau of non-formal education as well as the internal and external evaluation of the AQEE program. Newly acquired literacy skills enabled parents and community members to employ their skills as participants in 756 school management committees and/or parent associations. Community participation within the education system continues to improve as 1,204 community meetings were held to discuss school results and to develop capacity-building plans in 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. The programme is also building a literate environment within the national languages.

World Education noticed an improvement in the quality of school management by literacy programme participants. Participants have also been more active in the supervision of their children’s education at home and at school. In addition, community awareness has increased in areas regarding personal hygiene, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Members of participating communities have displayed a strong will to achieve lit-

eracy, but have noted that the community cannot reach higher literacy rates without the support of key actors and resources, particularly by way of continued teacher training and material provisions.

Community members have been responsible for managing literacy centres since the beginning of the programme while the regional centres for pedagogic training and teaching academies provide technical support and follow-up on ground-level activities. Clarifying the roles and the responsibilities for the key actors enables them to participate fully in all aspects of the programme’s implementation and promotes the appropriation of the programme by the local actors (elected community officials, teaching academies, pedagogic training centres, members of the School Management Committee, etc). The communities have been able to assume almost total control of the centres by transferring competencies locally and promoting a community-level mobilization of resources and negotiations with other partners. Community members negotiate the location of the centre, recruit the *Karamogos*<sup>3</sup>, select an equal proportion of male and female learners and oversee the operations within the centre. The delegation of authority is an integral part of the World Education Mali strategy and acts as a means of institutionalising the programme. A systematic challenge is the incorporation of the newly literate into the professional world so that they can become productive members of Malian society and contribute to the country’s socioeconomic development. Some former literacy programme participants have gone on to become teachers in training centres for development. The broader challenge is to expand the professional options for this newly literate population.

In addition, the current model delegates the responsibility of providing motivation to *Karamogos* to community members. While *Karamogos* must agree on the conditions of motivation, World Education has found that in some cases, the remuneration is minimal, while in others, *Karamogos* do not receive any remuneration at all. For World Education, the challenge is to monitor the agreements between the community members and the *Karamogos* and to ensure that *Karamogos* receive sufficient motivation.

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<sup>3</sup> Karamogo means “teacher” in Bambara



## Namibia's Family Literacy Programme

### Context

Before Namibia gained independence, education was split along racial and ethnic lines, based on colonial apartheid laws. Education for the non-white population was not only inadequate but also inferior compared to the education provided to whites. As a result, many people did not have access to schooling, which resulted in relatively high illiteracy rates in the adult population.

The post-independence Ministry of Education (MEC) in Namibia sought to redress that situation and provide "Education for all". It took steps to improve access, quality and equity throughout Namibian society. In doing so, however, the government became aware of the inequalities in the performance of learners. This prompted it to develop a family literacy programme that would promote parent education so as to make parents aware of their supportive role in their children's first years of school. The first step was to conduct a survey to investigate whether the country actually needed such a programme. Based on the findings, the MEC would draft an action plan.

### The survey

The survey was conducted in August 2004 to determine the ways in which a family literacy programme could assist parents and other caregivers to support their children in their first years of school. The sample was limited to one school and community per region. Information was obtained from the school principal, teachers, learners, parents and their caregivers, as well as by observing the atmosphere in the school and the community. Disadvantaged and isolated schools were identified for this purpose by region.

Three groups of learners were interviewed: One group from Grades 1, 2 and 3, respectively. In each group the teachers were asked to select the two learners who were making good progress, two average learners, and two learners who were not doing well. For parents' views, data collectors visited six homes. Principals and teachers were asked what they expect children to know when starting Grade 1, how much assistance they receive from parents, and what they would like parents to do in relation to how teachers teach the children reading and writing. Learners were asked what support they received from their parents, what they thought of the school, and what they do after school. Parents were asked how they support or would like to support their children with their school work, what they thought of the school, and what activities they do with their children. The main conclusion drawn from the survey was that a family literacy programme had a vital role to play in improving the performance of learners in the lower primary grades. All who participated in the survey were very much in favour of such a programme and wanted it to start as soon as possible.

### Implementation of the Family Literacy Programme

In preparation for the pilot Family Literacy Programme (FLP), Ms. Snoeks Desmond, a consultant from South Africa, was contracted to train the first family literacy promoters (facilitators). These

promoters had to meet specific criteria for selection, and one per region from 13 different regions was selected and invited to the training. Their role after the training was to return to the region to establish a Family Literacy Centre at the schools that had been involved in the survey. Their target group was parents of learners in the year prior to Grade 1, and learners in Grade 1. The pilot programme took place 31 May–19 August 2005.

The main purpose of the training workshop was to equip the promoters with an understanding of the importance of the parents' and caregivers' role in their children's development of literacy skills. In the workshop, sessions dealt with early childhood development, storytelling and reading, songs and music, child protection, children's rights, HIV/AIDS and nutrition. In addition, sessions were designed to help promoters to develop skills in facilitating groups and designing and writing session outlines.

After the pilot programme ended in August 2005, full implementation of the FLP started in 2006, with three centres per region. Another two centres per region were added in 2007.

In 2007 there were 874 participants in the FLP in nine regions (statistics for four regions were not received by the time this report was compiled). Of these, 83 were male and 791 female. However, not all participants completed the programme; indeed, only 25 males and 443 females did so. From these figures, it is clear that male participation was comparatively low, and that a large number of participants from both groups dropped out.

### Achievements

1. *Stronger parent-teacher relationship.* Grade 1 teachers report that participating parents are more interested in what is happening in the class room. They communicate by letter if there are issues they are not sure of.
2. *Stronger parent-school relationship.* Parents show more interest in school activities.
3. *Improved confidence.* Grade 1 teachers report that learners have increased self-confidence when participating in such activities as storytelling. Children share stories in class which they have heard at home.
4. *Reinforcement.* Many of the activities done in the class are repeated at home, because the Family Literacy Curriculum includes activities from the Grade 1 syllabus.
5. *Expansion of programme desired.* Communities have requested that the programme be extended to more schools, especially in areas where no pre-schools exist. Such requests may be a result of the benefits the programme is seen to have had elsewhere.
6. *Certification.* Receiving certificates is regarded as encouragement and an achievement since many parents are illiterate.

7. *Communication through dance and drama.* Parents discovered dance and drama as a tool for communication of important issues. They found it both entertaining and valuable, and see it as a skill acquired which can also be useful in other contexts.
8. *Education in specialized topics.* Parents appreciated the knowledge and skills acquired in specialized topics, such as HIV/AIDS, nutrition and child protection, which they gained through the family literacy programme.

### Challenges

1. *Cultivation and weeding work.* Since the FLP targets disadvantaged communities, a large percentage of parents are unemployed and have to attend to agricultural work for their daily survival, which hampers attendance to classes.
2. *Migrant work.* If participating parents find jobs in other towns, they regard it as more important than attending the classes.
3. *Delays in government procurements.* The FLP is totally dependent on the government for provision of materials. Delays in such provision often occur, which frustrates parents and promoters.
4. *Misconception by elders.* Some elderly people still mistakenly believe that educating children is the task of teachers, who get paid to do it.
5. *Monitoring visits hampered.* Monitoring through visitation is often hampered by unavailability of government transport, flooding, heavy rains (in northern regions) and dangerous gravel roads.
6. *Promoters leaving for greener pastures.* The government pays promoters an honorarium of ± N\$700.00 per month, which is very little to live on. If promoters get better job offers, they often quit and leave. As a result, some centres have been left without the services of a promoter for long periods, because new promoters require training before they can start.
7. *Negative attitudes of school principals.* There have been reports that some principals do not welcome the programme at their schools, since it means more work and responsibilities for them. Such cases are referred to the Regional Director of Education.
8. *Late payment of promoters.* Promoters are often paid late due to technical problems in the salary system, or late submissions of appointments. This can be frustrating to both promoters and supervisors. Often promoters prefer to look for another job.
9. *Low participation of men.* As a rule, men have not participated in the education system, preferring instead to have women attend to the education of their children.

### Conclusion

The FLP has been welcomed by communities throughout Namibia – not only by the participating parents but also by the promoters, who are dependent on the job opportunity it creates. However, the Directorate of Adult Education faces many challenges, as noted in the preceding section.

For many of the solutions, the Directorate has sought recommendations from individual regions, though some issues still remain unresolved. The FLP is relatively new and the Directorate of Adult Education is watching closely to see what it can learn from similar programmes elsewhere to be more effective. The low participation of men in educational programmes remains a big challenge, and for that reason a research proposal was recently formulated and forwarded to UNESCO for funding. The outcome is still awaited.

Despite the challenges, however, the Directorate remains committed to monitoring the programme and redressing weaknesses wherever they arise. Serious consideration is currently being given to involving more stakeholders. The Directorate was recently approached by the Early Childhood Development Sector, as well as the sector in government dealing with pre-primary schools/Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP), which also would like to become involved in FLP activities. Such a move would make it possible to reach more parents throughout Namibia. A joint effort would then be made to lay a good foundation in young children from which would spring future learning.

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## Family Basic Education – Uganda

### Context

As a result of government efforts to achieve universal primary enrolment, 7.2 million children throughout most of rural Uganda have become literate. However, most adults are still illiterate. Despite the government Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FAL), only about 5% of would-be learners are reached.

The Uganda Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) targets households, assuming that families will demand and claim access to quality basic social services. Yet information on available services is in printed form and claiming these rights requires mastery of literacy and numeracy – skills which family members do not necessarily have.

FABE (Family Basic Education) is a programme set up by LABE (Literacy and Adult Education), a leading NGO in the field of basic education. LABE first became interested in the possibility of family education projects in the mid nineties as a new dimension of its adult literacy work in the region, and piloted the programmes in the Bugiri district of Eastern Uganda in 2000-2001. By 2005 the programme was active in 18 schools, reaching over 1400 parents and over 3300 children. As parents realised the value of literacy, they wanted to support their children in their school work but felt increasingly inadequate. In response to this felt need and the community education plans initiated by local school management committees, concerned parents and local government and district education officials, LABE negotiated a project with Comic Relief through Education Action International to expand the coverage of the pilot project.

### Programme

The project targets families in the Bugiri district, which is one of the poorest districts in Uganda. Its primary schools perform well below the national average and its adult literacy rates are among the lowest in the country, especially for women. The programme works with teachers and adult educators whose capacities are built on family literacy methods.

Aside from literacy and numeracy, the programme also aims to:

- strengthen parental support for children's educational needs and equip parents with basic knowledge on school learning methods;
- increase parents' inter-communication skills while interacting with children and their teachers;
- develop parenting skills;
- create awareness on family learning; and
- enrich the abilities of teachers and adult educators in child-adult teaching/learning methods.

Consequently, the adult basic literacy and numeracy sessions for parents only and joint parent-child sessions are structured towards building shared learning and promoting home learning activities which complement school learning. The adult literacy sessions are based mainly on the school curriculum but structured differently for adult learners. Joint parent-child learning

sessions include activities such as playing games, and telling and writing stories together. Home learning activities use stories, folklore and other activities to extend school learning to the home. 'Favourable education practices' must also be established to encourage a link between school learning and community indigenous knowledge, practices and cultural heritage and involve various stakeholders in the planning, implementation, monitoring and shaping of what goes on at school. It is also important to transform 'ordinary' events or facilities such as class visits, school open days, school compounds into effective learning opportunities. Finally, home visits are organised to help parents to create both learning space at home and homemade teaching/learning materials.

Each participating school receives a package of materials, while parents make low-cost, home-made teaching/learning materials, either on their own or in the joint parent-child sessions. FABE has developed a teacher's guide for adult educators and teachers and introduced various participatory techniques to complement teachers' existing materials.

The approach combines the use of professional teachers (primary school teachers) and para-professional adult educators (adult literacy educators). English and Lusoga (local language) are the languages of instruction.

### Lessons learned

One of the challenges was to enable parents (especially mothers) and children (especially girls) to play an active but informed role in community affairs, using the school as an entry point. As the programme progressed, diverse empowerment results emerged, some of which were initially unknown or unintended.

Parents were now consciously interacting with children to reinforce reading, writing and numeracy skills. They were helping children with homework and checking their children's books. Some parents were even gathering local learning materials for children, such as bottle tops and counting sticks.

They increasingly engaged with their children's education, sending written notes to school teachers concerning their children's learning progress or the challenges they faced. They also attended school activities, such as meetings and open days, and visited the school informally to talk to their children's teachers about their educational progress.

As for the parents themselves, after more than 2 years of FABE literacy-related work, they are able to: 1) correctly read sequences of numbers from 0 to 1,000 and calculate three-digit numbers in writing; 2) record in writing short messages heard on the radio and copy details from a calendar, notice or other text.

Some of these changes were unexpected. To be able to make broad generalisations and use these results for policy recommendations, it was necessary to obtain larger sample sizes and subject the results to greater quantitative analysis. Using control groups from neighbouring schools where no FABE activities were carried out, the following results have been recorded:

#### Family level (household level)

- Number of children reporting domestic violence (especially slaps from their fathers) has dropped by 15%.
- Number of young girls married off (before they are 15) has dropped by 40%.
- Number of women presenting themselves for election in school, church and village committees has increased by 65%.

#### School level

- Increase in girls' overall school attendance has increased by 67 days each year.
- Drop-out rate of girls has decreased by 15%.
- Number of women in school governance structures has increased by 68%.
- Number of parents who take part in developing school development plans has increased by 65%.

#### Community level

- Number of (previously non-literate) community members who took part in the last national elections by independently selecting a candidate of their choice has increased by 27%.
- Ratio of new community members who have joined local voluntary associations has risen to 3:5 (3 being the new members).

In addition to the improved reading, writing and numeracy results, FABE has also produced broader social, economic and political effects:

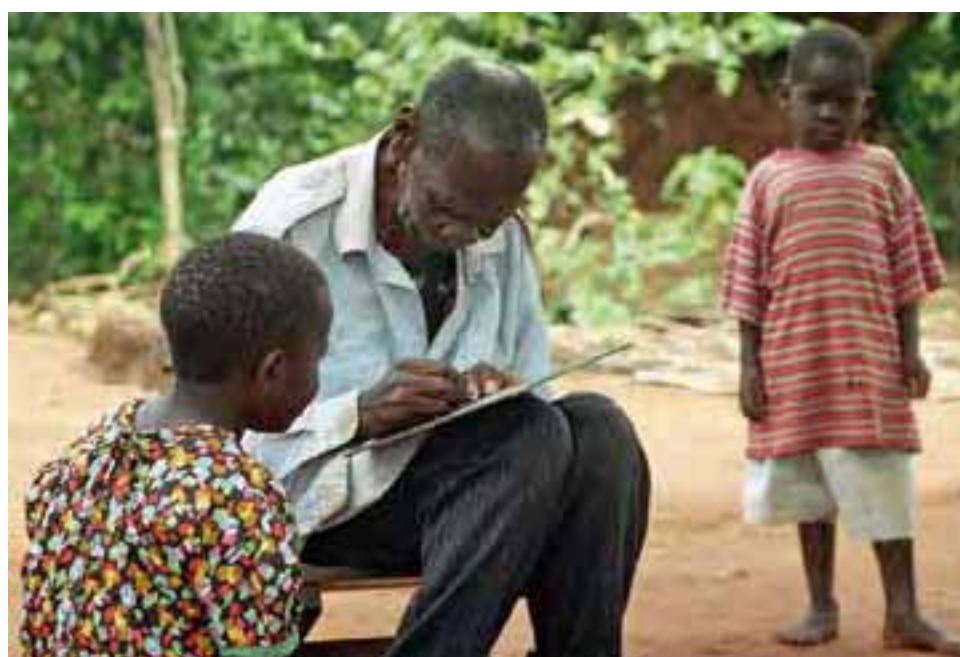
- increased resource allocation by local governments to adult learning;
- increased donor interest; and
- community and parental involvement in basic education now a government policy priority (though the emphasis is still on children's literacy).

In the future, FABE would like to achieve the following:

- expand the content of family learning but emphasise literacy and contextualised basic education in a broad sense;
- present convincing evidence of the complementarity of basic education for children and adults;
- diversify but at the same time retain the coherence and clarity of what constitutes family basic education in an African setting. Avoid getting sidetracked by divergent interpretations and terminologies;
- develop an assessment framework for basic adult education competencies that can equally be used to assess the qualifications system for basic children's education; and
- market FABE further to gain the support of local and central governments and win funders for sector-wide support – to go beyond an NGO project approach.

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# NORTH AND LATIN AMERICA



## Family Literacy in Canada

### Context

Canada is the second largest country in the world, whose borders span 7,500 km from East to West. Canada is a knowledge-based economy that relies heavily on exports and whose major trading partner is the United States of America. There is currently labour market polarization, which features growth in both highly skilled, well-paid and secure jobs, and low-skilled, poorly paid and unstable jobs.

Canada is a nation built on immigration. By historical standards, the share of Canada's population composed of immigrants has always been relatively high – between 15% and 22% during the last century. In 2001, 18% of Canadians were immigrants and 39% of the population was either first- or second-generation immigrants, that is, persons born outside Canada or having at least one parent born outside Canada. Canada ranked fifth among OECD nations in terms of its resident population that is immigrant.

French and English are the two official languages in Canada. English is the predominant language except for the province of Quebec, where 6 million of the 7.5 million inhabitants are French-speaking. There is also a French-speaking minority (approximately 1 million people) dispersed across the country.

Primary, secondary and post-secondary education is the responsibility of the provincial and territorial governments. Curriculum varies slightly across the 13 jurisdictions, but each province and territory offers free public education from Grade 1 (ages 5 or 6) to Grade 12 (ages 17–19). Some jurisdictions also offer free part-time or full-time kindergarten programmes (ages 4–5). School attainment rates and adult literacy rates vary significantly across the country and among different language and cultural groups.

The national high school completion rate in 2002–2003 was 74%. Canadian students performed very well in terms of mathematics literacy on OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), with only Hong Kong-China and Finland performing significantly better than Canada. Student achievement is measured by all jurisdictions, and, overall, students perform well within established national and international norms. Canadian educators have placed a high priority on information and communications technologies. As a result, in Canadian schools, there was an average of 6 students per computer compared to 15 students per computer in OECD countries. Further, 89% of 15-year-olds in 2003 had a home internet connection, ranking second after Sweden (90%), and overall, about 90% of students reported frequent computer use at home.

The 2003 Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) shows that 48% of Canadians aged 16 and over performed at levels 1 or 2 on the

prose literacy scale. In the nine-year span between the 1994 IALS survey and the 2003 IALSS, Canada has added 1 million more people who fall under level 3 (8 million in 1994 and 9 million in 2003). This increase can be largely attributed to population growth.

In its review of the IALSS data, the National Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills observed the following:

- The prose literacy performance of the Aboriginal populations surveyed is lower than that of the total Canadian population. Younger Aboriginal people have higher scores than older ones, but all age groups score lower than non-Aboriginal people.
- The proportion of Francophones with low literacy is higher than the proportion of Anglophones with low literacy. The exception is Quebec, where there are no significant differences in prose literacy proficiency between Francophones and Anglophones at the same level of educational attainment.
- Overall, immigrants of work age performed significantly below the Canadian-born population. Recent immigrants (ten years or less) and established immigrants (more than ten years) have the same average score in all four domains and have the same proportion scoring below level 3 in all four domains.
- Immigrants whose mother tongue was neither English nor French have lower average scores in all four domains compared to immigrants whose mother tongue is one of the two official languages.

How is Canada responding to this situation? In principle, the responsibility for the delivery of literacy programmes rests with the provincial and territorial governments. In a recent declaration on learning, the Council of Ministers in Education (CMEC) identified a number of goals that must be achieved to ensure lifelong learning, including: to provide access to high quality early childhood education that ensures that children arrive at school ready to learn, and to raise the literacy levels of Canadians.

### Family literacy programmes

There is neither a single approach nor a single programme in family literacy in Canada. Programmes are tailored to the specific cultural or linguistic needs of families in their communities. The programmes and activities in family literacy conducted across the country are defined by their richness, depth and quality.

A 1997 survey of programmes identified over 20 different programme models. Most programmes are offered in English or French. Some are emerging in some Aboriginal languages. Others that target immigrant families incorporate elements of the native tongue and culture.

The majority of programmes focus on parents with pre-school-aged children. Although significant efforts are made to reach parents from lower socio-economic groups or those with lower literacy skills, more middle or upper-middle class families seem to enrol in the programmes. Larger population areas allow for more homogeneous groupings based around language, culture and socio-economic status. Programmes offered in rural communities especially tend to bring together families from all

socio-economic strata because targeting lower income groups would stigmatize the participants.

Most often in Canada, programmes are offered by community-based NGOs in collaboration with multiple partners, such as school boards, health service providers and immigrant service agencies. Adults are always directly involved in family literacy activities, whereas children are either directly or indirectly involved.

### Anglophone programmes

Building on family literacy programmes created in Israel, the United States and England in the 1970s and 1980s, programmes began to appear in Canada in the early 1980s. A few programmes were offered in English in Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal. By the mid-1990s, programmes were being offered in English in every province and territory.

In addition, other local, provincial and national initiatives began to emerge. In the late 1980s and early 1990s. Advocacy groups became active, particularly the Family Literacy Interest Group (FLIG) in Ontario and the Family Literacy Action Group (FLAG) in Alberta. FLAG produced many organizational tools and materials that were eventually incorporated into the Centre for Family Literacy (CFL). The CFL is a leader in family literacy in Canada, having developed innovative tools, programmes and training initiatives.

The CFL developed Foundational Training in Family Literacy, a five-day training programme specifically aimed at family literacy practitioners. Also, a number of best practices documents have been prepared over the years. Foundational Training in Family Literacy includes the following topics:

- Understanding family literacy
- Understanding and working with diversity in family literacy programmes
- Working with communities
- Understanding the child
- Understanding emergent literacy
- Understanding and working with parents
- Working with families in a family literacy setting
- Administering a family literacy project/programme
- Developing an evaluation plan
- Best practices in family literacy

### Francophone programmes

Family literacy programmes in French began to be offered in Alberta as early as 1992. But it was a national symposium on family literacy in French hosted by the Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF) in 1994 that was the precursor to the delivery of family literacy programmes in French across the country.

Initially materials and programmes were developed and offered in French in individual provinces and territories outside of Quebec. Collaborations and sharing of resources occurred on an ad hoc, uncoordinated basis. In 2003, the Federal government initiated a national five-year plan to support the development of francophone communities outside of Quebec. Family literacy was a component of this five-year plan. The FCAF and its member organizations in each province and territory worked together to develop and implement a five-year plan for family literacy. The results from the long-term funding and efforts have been impressive. Examples include:

- An awareness-raising kit was produced and distributed across the country
- The CFL's Foundational Training Programme was translated into French and adapted to meet the specific needs of the minority francophone population
- New programme models were developed and delivered
- Programme evaluation tools were developed and implemented
- Provincial organizations' capacities were enhanced through systematic training sessions in areas such as strategic planning, results-based management and effective community-collaboration models
- A national research committee was established and a strategy developed

Family literacy in Canada has developed significantly since the 1990s. The benefits of programmes are increasingly recognized. With adequate, stable funding, programmes could become more generalized and more families could benefit.

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## CONALFA – Guatemala

### Context

The Guatemalan National Commission for Adult Literacy (CONALFA: Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización de Adultos) conducts a family literacy programme. At the family level, the programme is facilitated by a family member, typically an elementary schoolboy who is in Grade 4, 5 or 6. He helps adult family members (usually his parents) to learn to read and write and to do basic arithmetic.

The family literacy programme was initiated in 1998 in Baja Verapaz, a region in central Guatemala that has one of the highest rates of illiteracy in the country, particularly among the indigenous population. Greater emphasis was placed on this programme once it was recognized that the conventional modes of literacy provision were falling short of their objectives. The chief cause of this situation was seen to be irregular attendance by students. Their lack of adequate participation was due to socio-economic difficulties in the family. Such hardship affect particularly women, who suffered from long-standing practices of exclusion, as well as self-esteem issues and socio-political marginalization.

### The programme

The programme has been carried out throughout Baja Verapaz, and since its inauguration it has been extended to the regions of Zacapa, Alta Verapaz, Escuintla and Chimaltenango. In all likelihood, the programme will soon operate country-wide.

The chief objective of the family literacy programme is to help members of a nuclear family to become literate. Because the facilitator in this process is a family member, instruction can be tailored to each family member's situation, making adjustments for work schedules and other family demands and thereby overcoming the usual obstacles posed by culturally embedded behaviours and logistical issues (e.g. the distance from the home to a meeting place of a conventional literacy group).

This programme targets mainly the indigenous population, whose native tongue is most often a Mayan language (particularly the Achí, Poq'omchi and Q'eqchi languages), but also those who speak Spanish. The family literacy programme aims to help adults with the following:

- Problem-solving that requires the use of written information
- Accepting more responsibility within the community
- Increasing self-esteem and sense of personal value
- Providing women with equal opportunities

Although the programme is oriented mainly towards increasing the literacy of young people and adults in the nuclear family, the students as literacy tutors also benefit. For instance, they:

- Assume a leadership role within the family and within the school
- Become more responsible regarding his or her schoolwork
- Improve their study and thinking skills by learning how to employ the programme methodology
- Are encouraged to continue their education in order to improve their professional opportunities
- Are valued more by their parents as a result of their increased abilities and greater commitment to their studies

The school children who act as literacy tutors teach reading and writing by focusing on personal expression in everyday situations. Similarly, they teach basic arithmetic by focusing on solving everyday problems. Lessons about health, the economy, the family and politics use an analytical-reflective approach. Three printed modules are provided to each literacy student.



CONALFA's implementation of the programme is headed by a municipal literacy coordinator, who is assisted by a community supervisor, who provides technical-pedagogical support and instructional materials to at least 20 child literacy tutors. The successful operation and development of this programme depends on several players. Because the municipal coordinator, pedagogical supervisor and state coordinator are part of the programme's permanent administrative structure, we sketch the profiles of only two other key figures here.

The first is the community monitor, who should have the following characteristics:

- Resides in and originates from the community
- Accepted by the community based on his or her skills and educational outreach experience
- Has completed studies on basic elementary education and is able to conduct monitoring of literacy instruction
- Has sufficient time to do the assigned job well
- Carries out his or her duties in a responsible manner
- Is respectful of religious differences

Another key figure, as noted above, is the schoolchild who acts as a literacy tutor within his or her family. He or she should:

- Be a student in Grade 4, 5 or 6 in an elementary school in the community
- Be 10–14 years of age
- Have sufficient time for literacy tutoring
- Be committed to conducting literacy tutoring within his or her immediate family
- Be able and willing to use the appropriate methodology in literacy tutoring

### Impact and lessons learned

The programme's drop-out rate has been quite low, which testifies to its appeal. In addition, it has had a positive impact on families (e.g. strengthening family bonds and communication) and the community (e.g. increasing literacy students' participation in the community). Of course, the monitoring and educational support has required greater investment of time and money, but the results so far justify the investment.

With regard to the families and the communities in which this programme has been conducted, developments have met the socio-economic needs of the target population. Statistically speaking, since the drop-out rate fell almost 35 points between 2000 and 2004, this programme has proven to be among the most effective means of combating illiteracy in Guatemala.

Due to the family literacy programme's innovative fusion of the formal with the non-formal education system, where the community project cooperates with the formal school system in order to increase literacy both in the school and in families, there has been a marked improvement in prospects not only for schoolchildren but also for the participating communities as a whole. The family literacy programme has been a means of empowerment for all involved.

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## The National Center for Family Literacy in the United States

### Context

Overcoming low literacy poses a daunting challenge in the United States of America. The breadth and diversity of needs throughout the country reflect the uniqueness of each community, making a “one size fits all” solution impossible. Nevertheless, the focus on family literacy provides a powerful means for addressing educational barriers because it raises the literacy levels of two generations simultaneously, is flexible and adaptable to meet the specific literacy, cultural, and career goals of participants, and maximizes resources by blending public and private funds to support services for individual family members and families as a whole.

Despite vast improvements in research-based instruction and growing public awareness about the economic burdens of low literacy, the U.S. continues to wrestle with solutions to improve educational attainment for the most at-risk adults, children and families. In 2003, the National Adult Assessment of Literacy (NAAL) showed that 14% of adults – about 30 million – have insufficient literacy skills. The connection between parental educational attainment and children’s literacy achievement is well documented. That 38% of U.S. children in Grade 4 are reading at below the basic level is evidence that a multigenerational solution is critical.

Compounding the problem of low literacy in the U.S. is the rapid growth of immigrant populations, especially Hispanics, who face both linguistic and cultural barriers to success. Low literacy in English and high dropout rates indicate a need to address the specific needs of this population efficiently, while also building on the strengths of family and community ties.

### About the programme

The comprehensive family literacy model now central to federal legislation began as the Parent and Child Education (PACE) programme in Kentucky, spearheaded by then Director of Adult Education, Sharon Darling. Based on that programme’s success and with the support of the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, Darling expanded the model and founded the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL). With early and ongoing support from Toyota, the NCFL’s model has spread throughout the country.

Today, the NCFL provides training, public awareness, advocacy and other services to approximately 6,000 family literacy programmes in the U.S. Toyota’s commitment of more than \$35 million to establish model programmes can be credited with much of the expansion of services to different age groups and cultures. These services have touched the lives of more than one million families.

Since its inception, the NCFL has provided training and technical assistance for more than 150,000 teachers and programme administrators. Through the Verizon Foundation’s free website, Thinkfinity.org, the NCFL offers distance learning opportunities and programme assessment tools online. Other NCFL initiatives, both privately and publicly funded, have provided training and resources in areas such as workforce development, financial

literacy, English as a Second Language, volunteerism and community partnerships.

The components of family literacy – children’s education, adult education, parenting education and interactive literacy activities between parents and children – are the essential ingredients of the comprehensive approach, but may be configured in different ways. The most prevalent approach is the provision of centre-based classes. In these programmes, parents and children participate in separate sessions to improve their literacy skills, and also come together at specific times to participate in interactive literacy-building activities. Parents also meet to develop skills needed to be a parent, worker and community member.

The majority of the family literacy programmes serve children from birth to 8 years of age and typically bring parents into the facilities that house early childhood programmes. Some centre-based programmes operate in elementary schools, where parents observe and take part in their children’s classroom activities to learn strategies to support their children’s academic progress at home. Other centre-based programmes operate in the evening and are particularly popular with fathers and mothers who attend with their children after the workday. Although they are in the minority, some programmes provide services exclusively through home visits.

The most intensive programmes operate every day for the length of the school day, while less intensive programmes operate several evenings per week or have weekly home visits. The level of intensity of family literacy services varies according to many factors, but the evidence suggests that the most effective programmes are more intensive.

When parents and children come together for interactive literacy activities, teachers provide initial instruction and guidance to parents and then observe interactions between parents and children. The goal of these sessions is to help parents to explore and grow in their role as the primary teachers of their children with support from educational professionals. Following this interactive time, teachers debrief parents about their experiences with their child, discussing what learning strategies were effective, what parents discovered about their child’s learning styles and how they can apply their new knowledge about their child’s development to learning experiences at home.

Due to the variation among programmes, there is no standard family literacy curriculum. In most states, programmes deliver adult education in accordance with the particular state’s adult education criteria and children’s education in accordance with the state’s standards for pre-school or elementary school. In the parenting component, many programmes use commercial curricula that teach parents about child development and how to become their child’s first and most important teacher. Parent education sessions also may include topics of particular interest to parents, such as understanding their child’s school system, how to access health and social services, and financial literacy.

NCFL also provides programmes with resources such as integrated lesson plans that link adult education, parent education, children's education, and parent-child interactive literacy activities.

### Impact and lessons learned

Programme evaluation data and research studies continually document the short- and long-term successes of family literacy participants. For example, a compilation of family literacy follow-up data by Dr. Andrew Hayes, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, found that both adults and children who participated in comprehensive family literacy programmes made long-term gains.

Data representing 969 adult students who had completed a family literacy programme indicated that:

- 51% had obtained high school equivalency
- 43% had jobs, compared with 14% prior to enrolment
- 14% were enrolled in some form of post-secondary education or job training programme, or continuing in adult basic education working toward high school equivalency certification
- 23% reduced dependency on public assistance

Data on 1,113 children participating in family literacy programmes and comparison data on 478 randomly selected children revealed that:

- Children who participated in family literacy services are prepared for kindergarten when they enter, as indicated by ratings of eight factors by their current teachers
- Family literacy children have higher standardized test scores than comparison children in reading, language, and math
- Family literacy children receive higher class grades than comparison children
- Family literacy children continue to be successful in school as indicated by ratings by their teachers

Families participating in NCFL-designed programmes for special populations also demonstrate significant improvements in literacy skills and behaviours.

Adults who have participated in the current Toyota Family Literacy Program (TFLP), which serves Hispanic and immigrant populations, have shown significant increases in literacy. Children participating in the TFLP have been consistently rated significantly higher on a set of academic, social and behavioural indicators by their classroom teachers than a matched, non-TFLP comparison group.

The Family and Child Education (FACE) programme, which serves Native American families, expanded from 500 participants in 1991 to more than 4,500 in 2005, indicating the increased interest in and need for the programme.

At the conclusion of 2005, 68% of adults participating in FACE read to their children on a daily basis, compared to the U.S. national average of 36%. A FACE Impact Study, commissioned by

the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, found that children with special needs who did not participate in FACE are twice as likely to require special education services at school entry than are children who participated in FACE (30% compared to 15%).

In 2005, 50% of participating FACE pre-school children demonstrated significant gains in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, social studies, scientific thinking, arts and physical development as measured by the Meisels' Work Sampling System. Following a two-year intervention in which teachers and parents were trained in interactive dialogic reading strategies, FACE children moved from very low expressive vocabulary to nearly equal standing with national peers – from the 11th to the 47th percentile.

Longstanding family literacy programmes like FACE and the Toyota programmes consistently show significant gains for the adults and children enrolled in them. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that adults remain in family literacy programmes longer than learners in adult-only programmes, resulting in greater educational gains. Children in family literacy programmes score higher on standardized tests than comparison children who do not participate in such programmes.

The value added in family literacy programming is the unique motivation stemming from the parent-child relationship. Research continues to support linkages between parental education level and the amount of time parents read to their children, parents' ability to provide a financially stable home, and ultimately children's performance in school. Family literacy increases parent support of children's education because it provides parents the skills they need in order to do so.

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# ARAB STATES





## The Mother-Child Home Education Programme in Bahrain

### Context

The Mother-Child Home Education Programme (MOCEP) Bahrain was launched in 2000 in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It targets needy families through a home intervention literacy/empowerment programme, serving 200 families in Bahrain annually. It is currently the Arabic MOCEP training hub for the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. MOCEP-Bahrain has trained and is operating in Saudi Arabia and is expanding to other GCC countries.

### About the programme

The Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) was started in Turkey over 20 years ago. It grew out of a research study conducted at Bogazi University that was designed to improve pre-school education for poor families throughout Turkey. It has been operating there successfully, now under the auspices of Turkey's Ministry of Education.

In the late 1990s, MOCEP was translated into Arabic and adapted for implementation with the local Arab, Bahraini population. MOCEP-Bahrain annually targets 200 families living in poverty. It is run under the auspices of the Bahrain Red Crescent Society, a privately run NGO charity organization that provides a non-formal, home-based educational programme for pre-school-aged children and their mothers in the Kingdom of Bahrain and other GCC countries.

MOCEP is a two-generational, six-month programme. It has two components:

1. A series of weekly discussions and lectures (including planned parenthood discussions) for the mothers in their regional areas
2. Cognitive training materials/activities that are given to the mothers so that they can teach their own children pre-readiness skills at home before they enter primary school

These two components provide mothers with a powerful literacy/educational base for child-rearing/training on the one hand and children with the necessary skills to compete at the primary school level. In addition, positive-attitude training empowers mothers and their families to sustain the benefits of the programme.

### Approach

MOCEP's teaching approach for the parents (mother training) is dynamic yet structured. The emphasis is on cooperative exchange through guided general topics, such as listening and reading. No grades are given; most important is that the participants digest and make sense of the information shared. Mothers in a given group help and support each other to make responsible choices based on the education/information provided and their own unique circumstances and backgrounds.

Mothers follow a structured day-by-day programme of activities, which they do with their children at home. There are no time-frames, nor are the children given any grades. Feedback is given at weekly meetings, and the children show significant gains early in the programme intervention. Teachers make weekly visits to

encourage, support and guide mothers and children. Often, other family members participate in the learning activities and improve their literacy skills as well. If a mother is not functionally literate or does not understand what she is reading, another close family member will help the child with the lessons. In such cases, the mothers remain in the programme to improve their own literacy skills; often by the end of the programme, they have replaced the stand-in relative and have become more competent and confident. They come to see themselves as real teachers for their children after having been so well supported by a network of professionals and their relatives during the programme.

### Objectives

1. *To address the disparities associated with poverty and disadvantage.* There is growing disparity between rich and poor in the local Bahraini population and many families live in constant poverty. Well over half the pre-school population cannot afford early childhood education or intervention, and there is no comprehensive early education programme country-wide. So far, MOCEP has served only a fraction of the families in need of educational intervention in Bahrain. Each year we are unable to serve all the families that register for the programme due to a lack of funding and support.
2. *To redress the unofficial functional illiteracy that exists in families living with disadvantage or in poverty.* MOCEP fosters and improves the functional literacy skills of the adults (mothers) who are the primary caretakers/teachers in the programme. Those adults also participate in a comprehensive parent education programme, which serves as a preventive measure against early drop-out rates. Success rates are highest for the children in the area of language ability and communication skills.
3. *To provide a social, community network of empowerment that creates opportunities and sustains them via literacy/education programming.* MOCEP dynamically constructs and sustains a knowledge and skill base that responds to existing needs and creates opportunities.

### Facilitators

All staff (discussion leaders, teachers, assistants, managers, researchers) are trained at the official training centre in Bahrain. A published training course was developed and used for training staff at MOCEP-Bahrain and in other Arabic-speaking countries in the region. All candidates for training are college graduates and bi-lingual (English and Arabic). Initial intensive training is followed by an in-service training programme lasting at least one year. All staff are given equal voting rights in MOCEP regarding the design, implementation and improvement of content, as well as the diversification and direction of the programme.

### Key programme elements

To assure its successful operation, MOCEP-Bahrain seeks to do the following:

- Base the intervention on research and make it theory-driven so that it can influence public policy.

- Include a combined child and parent education programme.
- Base the programme on a two-generational plan with long-term objectives.
- Keep attrition rates below 20%. Account for attrition costs in “success” models.
- Employ professionally trained staff.
- Provide staff with flexibility to change roles according to services provided.
- Provide staff with continual in-service training.
- Make frequent home visits – more visits assures better sustainability.
- Closely link intervention, either directly or indirectly, with community and government agencies (social services, personal support, food supplies, employment, prenatal care, etc.).
- Recognize that needs are not always apparent nor easily solved and that adjustments may have to be made to meet needs. Seek expert advice when necessary to meet needs.
- Adopt a contextual view of the child within the family and the family within the community.
- Recognize that resources provided must include human involvement, such as caring, respect and trust.
- Provide a direct and uncomplicated approach to meet needs.
- Make intervention rules and guidelines flexible, not rigid boundaries.
- Provide for emergency backup resources and services (transport, visits, etc.) to ensure quality.
- Do not employ a hierarchical structure in the intervention; all staff members should have an equal voice in decision-making. Teamwork makes for success.
- Hold frequent and regular staff meetings. Feedback and re-direction are central to all successful programming.

### Assessment of research and outcomes

In 2001–2003 an experimental study and assessment was conducted to measure the MOCEP programme’s impact on children’s development and family relations in the Kingdom of Bahrain. A random sample from a cohort of children born in 1996 was selected for the investigation. For the intervention, 92 families were recruited, while 75 families served as a control group for comparison in the study. All families were socially and economically disadvantaged, and all child participants were approaching primary school age but not attending any form of pre-school.

The study measured the effects of the MOCEP on several aspects of children’s development (cognitive, social and emotional competencies) and parental attitudes and beliefs regarding child-rearing and development. The quality of home environments was also investigated.

All children, families and home environments were pre-tested before the intervention (2001) and then post-tested at the end of the intervention (2002). All tests were carried out in Arabic by trained staff.

### Results: Child development

- Cognitive abilities: Intervention children significantly outperformed control-group children, four to one, on verbal, reasoning and spatial ability measures.
- Self-concept measure: Intervention children had significantly higher scores than control-group children on self-concept competency and acceptance measures.
- Social skills and behaviour problems: As a result of the programme, intervention children had fewer behavioural problems than control-group children.
- Quality of mother-child relationship: Mother-child relationships involved less over-dependency and conflict for intervention participants than for control-group participants.

#### *Results: Parent, family and home influences on child development*

- Parental beliefs and practices (strategies) for disciplining children: The intervention predicted a significant reduction in the lax (permissive) parenting strategy, whereas harsh parenting was associated with lower cognitive abilities and firm parenting was associated with higher social skill scores.
- Parental child-rearing orientations (beliefs and values): Progressive parenting beliefs were correlated with higher cognitive/social abilities and fewer behavioural problems, whereas traditional parenting beliefs reinforced less social competency and over-dependent parent-child relationships
- Quality of home environment: In comparison with control-group families, intervention families provided significantly more stimulation for learning; warmer, more affectionate relationships; and less physical punishment at home.

In sum, the research findings provide clear evidence that MOCEP works effectively to improve children’s skills and abilities before they enter primary school and it promotes positive changes in parenting skills and home environments for early learning

### Impact

MOCEP has proven cost-effective in assisting families living with social, economic, and cultural disadvantage. MOCEP gives children an academic head start, readying them for entry into primary school, where they will be able to compete with their peers. In addition, the programme addresses many potential risk factors in the home life, including learning disabilities, handicaps, poor health conditions and abuse. It empowers families with knowledge, skills and opportunities for change. It is a catalyst and incentive for constructive change outside the family because family members are more confident and able to meet their needs and pursue their goals.

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## The Trust of Program for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education – Israel / Palestinian Communities

### Context

The Trust of Programs for Early Childhood Family and Community Education was established in Jerusalem in 1984 as an indigenous developmental organization by a group of Palestinian educators and social workers. The organization's chief objective is to empower Palestinian communities by means of a holistic, integrative and inclusive approach. The Trust works with Palestinian communities in Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) areas, where it currently operates the following programmes:

- The *Mother-to-Mother* programme supports and strengthens the parenting skills of young mothers (and fathers), empowering parents individually and collectively.
- The *Young Women and the Prevention of Early Marriage* programmes help young women to gain self-confidence and knowledge in the field of education and raise the awareness of parents and young women about the consequences of early marriage.
- The *Women Empowerment Program* aims to be a means of community development by supporting women and providing them with the skills necessary to initiate programmes and services in their communities.
- The *Teachers' Training Program* trains pre-school staff members and supports them in their work with children, parents and the community.
- The *Combating Domestic Violence* programme seeks to counteract domestic violence and continues to develop the necessary skills and technical know-how to face the challenges of such violence.
- The *Learn-by-Play* programme we consider to be the cornerstone of our other community-based programmes and a means to life-long learning. The programme aims to reduce illiteracy and decrease the school drop-out rate.

### The Learn-by-Play programme and lifelong learning

The programme was started in Jerusalem in response to a high school's request for a literacy programme for its students, many of whom suffered from illiteracy. When selecting candidates for the programme, we found that 85% of the illiterate students came from extremely poor neighbourhoods, where school drop-out rates were high and the illiteracy rate among those who managed to reach high school was also very high. There were also serious differences in expectations and communication between the parents in these neighbourhood and the schools. While parents lacked the skills necessary to support their involvement in their children's education, the schools were neither well-prepared for nor responsive to the children's needs, which caused feelings of alienation among those children.

To bridge the gap between home and school, and to solve the problem, as well as to cope with the increasing illiteracy in schools, the programme operates on three levels: with parents (mainly mothers), children and educators. The Trust launched a three-part programme to meet the distinct and interrelated needs on these three levels.

First, the home intervention programme – the *Mother-to-Mother* programme – is based on the view that every child deserves to live in a healthy atmosphere and be raised by a functional family. The programme enables mothers to act as social-change agents in their families and communities. By gaining knowledge of child development and education, as well as increasing their level of self-confidence, they become better able to play a role in decision-making concerning their children's education.

Second, the *Learn-by-Play* programme is based on the view that every child has a right to education. The programme aims to reduce illiteracy and limit the school drop-out rate among the children, which will result in their maintaining and pursuing their right to education. The programme works mainly with children from Grades 2, 3 and 4 to build their basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Third, the *Teachers' Training Program* trains pre-school staff members and supports them in their work with children, parents and the community.

Illiteracy is mainly attributed to the nature of the school environment and a lack of resources, such as over-crowded classrooms, poor facilities and no heating system. Furthermore, there is a big gap between school culture and home culture. It is often difficult for parents to prepare their children adequately to meet the school's expectations, and the curriculum may not always bear any relation to the child's reality. Also with average class sizes of 40 students per class, there is a danger that teachers will overlook those whose behaviour or abilities do not meet the "normal standards" from the teachers' perspective. No less serious is the fact that the school system allows many children to be upgraded from one class to another regardless to their level of achievement in school.

### The programme and its components

The Learn-by-Play programme is holistic, integrative, modular and flexible. Its different components can fit a community's diverse and changing needs.

The programme is based on work-papers that simplify the school's curriculum and help the students to understand the material more easily. The students are provided with a pleasant, friendly environment where they can feel confident, safe and free to express themselves to the educator. In addition, games can be played that help to explain the key educational concepts at issue. The programme also encourages parent involvement through meetings and activities, which seek to build a partnership between the parents and the teachers for the children's benefit.

Furthermore, there are activities such as didactic games, songs and small talks, that enhance the students' potential and cultivates a friendly relation among the children themselves, as well as between them and the tutor, providing the necessary

support to the pupils who often have been given up on by their community as “lost causes”.

*Tutors:* In training courses for young women (big sisters), lasting 22 hours over five days, they receive intensive training in educating children in basic subjects, and on the Learn-by-Play programme’s principles and techniques and how to realize the programme’s objectives. These young women act as “big sisters” to the younger students, helping them do their homework, etc. Following the training, the tutors work with groups of seven children, twice a week for three hours each meeting. The programme creates a pleasant atmosphere in which the students can do their homework and use the work-papers we have prepared for the curriculum.

*Parent involvement:* In monthly meetings with parents, their children’s progress is discussed in order to strengthen relations and better understand the children’s behaviour. The aim to maximize the programme’s benefits.

*Educators:* Teachers of the students involved in the programme are given the opportunity to participate in study days and workshops on social development, children rights and learning difficulties. Enrichment workshops for young women educators are conducted on children’s rights, drama and learning difficulties. The work of the “big sisters” is accompanied by bi-weekly follow-up meetings.

### Evaluation

The evaluation of the Learn-by-Play programme is formative and ongoing. The professional coordinators issue a periodical report to find out the extent to which the execution of the programme accords with the work-plan. Those professionals In regular Trust meetings, the senior staff discuss the aforementioned report, address any concerns, and make proposals to make programme delivery more effective. Every three months, the professional coordinators of all the Trust’s programmes meet to discuss the reports, and each coordinator contributes to the process of formative evaluation. Together we seek to determine where the various programmes can be integrated with one another in order to meet the programmes’ individual and collective objectives.

Weekly supervision is provided to the tutors. At each location, the Trust’s coordinator meets with the tutors for follow-up and enrichment, and the tutors are also able to discuss any problems they might have encountered in the previous week.

The students are monitored through their test scores and their weekly progress in overcoming their weaknesses with their tutors. Special tutoring sessions are given at the school prior to assigned tests; in the sessions, the tutors review all the test material with the students. The school results attest the students’ improvements, and the teachers have commented favourably on the progress of some of their students. Feedback from school principals, educational supervisors, teachers and parents is also factored into the evaluations.

Follow-up on the progress of students who have entered Grade 5 is achieved by maintaining contact with teachers and students, and by tracking their school reports. We have noticed that the students have continued to progress, testifying to the lasting impact of the gains they made in the preceding year’s work within the programme.

### Programme goals

The Learn-by-Play programme has the following operation goals:

- To reduce illiteracy among students
- To improve the level of achievement in school by Grade 2, 3 and 4 students
- To recruit young women and college students, and offer them training with professional techniques in tutoring and managing groups to act as “big sisters” to the younger students
- To provide adequate learning conditions and consider individual needs
- To help students with their studies in basic subjects, such as arithmetic and Arabic and English language
- To involve parents through monthly meetings
- To network with local organizations in order to pool resources
- To enrol the teachers involved in the programme in study days and workshops

### Challenges

The programme is meant to promote and support the process of lifelong learning. It therefore has to be flexible enough to meet the specific and changing needs of the local community. The programme is implemented in full partnership with the community stakeholders, schools, children and families.

The major challenge we face is the expansion of the programme. There is a high demand to implement and operate the programme in new areas and new schools. In addition, schools already enrolled in the programme wish to add more and more students every year. This challenge has forced the Trust team to search for new professionals to join the programme and to recruit more tutors to aid in implementing the programme.

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# ASIA AND PACIFIC





## The Manukau Family Literacy Project – New Zealand

### Context

Following the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), interest in adult literacy increased in New Zealand. The government developed a national adult literacy strategy and emphasized “foundation learning” in the post-school sector. The strategy’s primary objectives are:

- to increase significantly the literacy, numeracy and language skills of the low-skilled workforce
- to improve settlement outcomes for new migrants and refugees
- to improve the foundation skills of parents with poor educational attainment who want to support their children’s learning

One result of these policy changes has been a move to diversify adult literacy provision through programmes in the workplace and by involving families. Like most countries, New Zealand operates a very age-stratified educational system, where mixing across generations is very limited. In recent years, a number of organizations have developed family literacy programmes that involve both parents and their children as learners individually and together. Because a large proportion of children struggling with literacy and numeracy come from families in which the parents have similar difficulties, targeting family literacy has proven to be an effective way to address not only literacy issues for individuals (adults and children) but also the inter-generational perpetuation of those issues.

While there have been a number of family-based initiatives (often referred to as ‘*whanau* literacy’ – *whanau* is Maori for ‘family’), the best documented example of such a programme is the one developed by the City of Manukau Education Trust (COMET). The programme’s genesis and subsequent development, as well as its impact, have been thoroughly recorded.

The COMET programme is located in southern Auckland’s Manukau City, which is home to New Zealand’s most numerous and culturally diverse low socio-economic groups. IALS data showed a disproportionately high number of adults in this area with low literacy skills, which is consistent with similar patterns among Manukau children. Since literacy needs are highest among Maori and Pasifika groups, the COMET programme has mainly targeted them.

The programme was originally modelled on the American Kenan Family Literacy Project, but has since developed a distinctly New Zealand flavour to its operations (particularly the ‘Parent and Child Time Together’, or PACTT, component). The model involves adults attending a tertiary programme in their children’s schools, combined with studies in child development and participation in the reading and numeracy components of their children’s schoolwork. It has been located in low socio-economic areas and has proved to have a particular appeal to Pasifika people.

### The programme

The Manukau City Council established COMET as a not-for-profit organization to support and stimulate educational opportunities in the city. Early in 2002, COMET identified family literacy as a potential area in which it could work to complement its other educational work in the city. In September, COMET hosted Connie Lash Freeman from the US National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) and conducted a seminar to explore the family literacy option, relying on Connie as a key resource person. Thereafter, the Manukau Family Literacy Programme (MFLP) secured funding from the Ministry of Education, a programme co-ordinator was appointed, an advisory and reference committee established, two pilot sites selected, and a formative and process evaluation initiated. A third site was added in 2004, and a fourth in 2005. The two pilot sites ran their programmes throughout 2003–2004.

Each MFLP site involves three partner institutions: an early childhood centre, an elementary school and a tertiary provider. Both the centre and the school supply child participants, and the tertiary provider delivers the programme’s adult education component. The early childhood centres and the elementary schools work with the child participants enrolled in the programme and link with the adult components for key parts of the programme, such as ‘Parent and Child Time Together’ (PACTT). The tertiary providers employ the adult educator who teaches the adult participants and is involved somewhat in other components of the programme. Both MFLP sites are located in elementary school classrooms.

The MFLP’s design is based on a conventional model of family literacy, with its four components of adult education, child education, parent education, and parent and child together time. Adult participants attend approximately 30 hours of instruction per week, taking a range of courses in adult education (such as computing, maths and reading) and parent education (including child development). Their nominated children attend either a partner school or early childhood centre; adult participants and their nominated children have Parent and Child Time Together (PACTT) for approximately 20 minutes per day, four times per week.

One adult programme has based its curriculum on a pre-entry programme for a certificate in early childhood education, while the other has used a tailor-made course based on a developmental education programme. Common to both programmes are strong basic skills components, child development studies and parent education. Child participants follow their conventional programmes in their early childhood centres or elementary school, and they meet with their parents during PACTT for topics and activities planned jointly by the family literacy teacher and the school or early childhood centres.



As with any new programme, the MFLP has had to resolve a number of issues that have arisen during its development. These include:

- Difficulties in achieving effective collaboration when working across educational institution boundaries
- Coordinating different agendas and aims of the participating groups
- Recruiting staff appropriate to the multiple demands of family literacy
- Recruiting high-need participants, especially in the early stages of the programme
- Coping with participants' personal crises
- Finding ways to include non-PACTT children in the programme

### Impact and lessons learned

A 2005 summary evaluation of the MFLP showed that the programme has had considerable impact on the participants, their families and the participating institutions. This evaluation identified a number of the programme's key outcomes.

First, the MFLP has been successful in recruiting and retaining a high proportion (with attendance rates over 90%) of adult learners who have historically been under-represented not only in New Zealand tertiary education, but also in the achievements of the schooling system. These participants have typically left school early with few or no qualifications and worked in low-status, low-skill occupations with limited aspirations for their own and their children's futures.

Secondly, the MFLP has been highly successful in improving participants' academic skills and self-confidence, as well as in raising their long-term aspirations. There is evidence that many who have been out of the programme for some time are going on to achieve these ambitions. As parents, MFLP learners have become more involved in their schools and in their children's education, both at school and at home. They are modelling new possibilities and providing their children with valuable support. There is evidence that their children are performing better academically and are more confident and active socially.

At one site, only one of the 14 participants had been in paid work and none had pursued tertiary education prior to enrolling in the MFLP. One year after the programme, at least eight were in some form of gainful employment, two were studying, and six are planning to do a tertiary course in the next few years.

At the other site, three of the ten were in paid employment and none was in tertiary education prior to enrolling in the MFLP. One year after the programme, at least seven were gainfully employed, six were in a tertiary programme, and two are planning to do a tertiary course in the next year.

While many have succeeded as a result of participating in the MFLP, not all those who enrol achieve the same level of success. Some have withdrawn, while others have not changed much either academically or as people or as parents.

Thirdly, the MFLP is not only having an impact on the individual learners but is also contributing to a more integrated community of educational providers where it operates and it is valued by the project's early childhood, primary and tertiary professionals for this outcome. The programme provides a positive example of lifelong learning in action for the adult and child participants in the programme, for the professionals involved in the programme and, increasingly, for children and parents not directly involved in it.

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## The Vanuatu Literacy Education Programme

### Context

The Republic of Vanuatu, an archipelago in the South Pacific Ocean, was formerly the Anglo-French condominium of the New Hebrides. There are more than 110 different vernacular languages spoken within the archipelago. While English and French are the official languages in schools, neither is used widely outside the school environment. Bislama, a form of Pidgin English, is the language used most and therefore serves as the lingua franca.

### The Vanuatu Literacy Education Programme

After a 2003 baseline survey funded by New Zealand International Development Aid (NZ Aid) showed disappointing results for rural/remote schools, the Vanuatu Literacy Education Programme (VANLEP) was developed. Its aim has been to improve literacy learning outcomes in Vanuatu's rural/remote schools so as to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals. Its main strategy to improve literacy rates has been to bridge the huge gap that existed between schools and homes.

Central to VANLEP has been the inclusion of parent education, specifically teaching them how they can make a difference at home as "first teachers". This has involved showing parents that there is more to child-rearing than the provision of necessities; it is also necessary to understand child development and the impact of quality nurturing on children's cognitive development. The education, development, growth, and motivation to learn and acquire skills necessary for learning all begin at home.

The programme has sought to take gradual steps towards educating parents, since the target group consisted primarily of parents who were from rural areas, had little or no formal education, could neither read nor write, and spoke many different languages. On the other hand, they all had the common bond of being parents and they all wanted their children to do better than they had done.

### The Family Literacy Programme

The Family Literacy Programme began in 2006 as part of VANLEP's continued development. The aim was to involve parents in improving literacy and learning outcomes in the schools, much as had been achieved in 1998–2000 in Phase 3 of another programme, the Basic Education Literacy Support (BELS) programme. The approach was holistic and naturalistic in character since participating parents lived together in communal settings (villages) and mostly worked together to achieve their various cultural goals.

The overarching theme of the Family Literacy Programme is that spending time with one's child is the greatest gift one can give him or her. The programme has three main components:

1. *Literacy and the home.* The emphasis of this component was on the following areas:

- Parenting is a professional responsibility, involving quality nurturing, quality nutrition, quality growth

- Parents are a child's first "language makers"
- Parents are "meaning makers"
- Parents are relationship-builders
- Parents foster quality learning
- Parents lay the foundation for their children's lifelong learning

2. *Parental roles.* The emphasis here was on the following:

- Building a firm foundation (for a future quality nation)
- Building self-esteem
- Building confidence in one's reading and writing skills
- Enlarging vision or perspective

3. *Multilingualism.* Parents or parent groups for each school spoke a different language. This was a dilemma for the course instructor, who could only speak English. The following questions about the use of English required consideration:

- Why use English in a rural/remote area?
- Is this an attempt to re-educate parents formally?
- Using a language means using its culture. How about the language and culture of the target group? Is it being undervalued?
- Why is a person from a different culture and language background here to tell us about our roles in his or her language? Are we learning his or her language and culture?

These are important questions. They need to be considered and reflected on in order to develop an appropriate methodology, which will minimize conflict.

### Introductory session: Home and school and making connections

First, a general introductory session was held to communicate and discuss the reasons for conducting the Family Literacy Programme. The chief reasons centered the supportive roles of parents in improving the literacy learning outcomes of their children in schools and how parents as "first teachers" can be more influential in this at home.

Because the workshops and discussions were held in the VANLEP classrooms, the parents were also able to view first hand the improved classroom environments, which invited learning, and the improved management and organization of the classrooms, the provision of quality reading books and writing materials, and the children's work within the VANLEP programme.

Getting parents into the classrooms fosters inclusiveness. This strategy has had a great impact on parents, particularly those who live in rural/remote areas and feel that their place is restricted to their rural habitats. This approach is an innovative way to bridge the gap between home and school, between parents and teachers and the child.

Second, the parents split into smaller, more manageable groups to hold discussions in Bislama with teachers and to study the book published specifically for them in Bislama, *Yu Mo Pikinnini*

*Belong Yu*. Finally, the whole group gathers again to round off discussions. Parents are given storybooks to use at home with their children.

**Home-based learning: Evening sessions**

The family can easily do activities 1–3 listed in Table 1. These can be in the language with which the child is most familiar or in English or French. In activity 4, the child can read one of his or her favourite library books, or one he or she may select from the books the parents have brought from their workshops. If the parents do not know how to read, an older child in the family can help by listening to the younger child read. If neither the parents nor the child (or children) know how to read, they can begin by picture-reading the books. The primary objective here is to spend the activity time with the children and thereby to forge a stronger bond between parents and children a closer bond is forged. The overarching theme here is ‘Enjoying literacy and language learning together at home’.

These home-based learning activities are designed to encourage the love of listening to and reading quality language in stories or other kinds of prose, as well as in rhymes, poems and songs. Exposure to such language helps children to develop stronger thinking skills and the use of quality language.

The 2007 mid-year survey (see Table 2) showed that children in VANLEP classes improved in their reading and writing. However, unless sufficient funding is secured, it will be difficult at best to continue the programme and monitoring.

Because family literacy is new in Vanuatu, some more time will be needed for it to make a clear impact. The results in Table 2 show the effect of VANLEP in the 2003 VANLEP schools. The results do not indicate whether the parental education and involvement has made a difference.

| Activity   | Appropriate time         | By whom                                    | For whom                            |
|--|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Storytelling</i> – Listening to a story          | After dinner – 7.00 p.m. | Father, mother, grandfather or grandmother | Children and the rest of the family |
| 2. Reciting rhymes or singing songs                    |                          |  |                                     |
| 3. <i>Reading to</i> – Listening to a story read aloud |                          |  |                                     |
| 4. <i>Reading by</i> – Listening to children reading   |                          | Individual children                        | Mother or father                    |

Table 1. **Home-based learning: Evening sessions**  
**Impact and challenges**

The Ministry of Education has been happy particularly with the development of the family literacy component. However, lack of funding remains a major constraint. Because there was no

specific funding for family literacy in VANLEP, the programme had to be integrated in the development of VANLEP. The solution to the problem of low literacy levels in the schools had to be seen as not only institutional but also familial: the parents had to come to see themselves as partners in their children’s education; they had to become aware that their engagement, knowledge and understanding impacted on their children’s progress in school. It was thus critical to address the issue also with parents.

Table 2. **Mean Scores (2003, 2007) and gains for VANLEP and non-VANLEP classes**

| VANLEP classes |      |      |      | Non-VANLEP classes |      |      |       |
|----------------|------|------|------|--------------------|------|------|-------|
| School         | 2003 | 2007 | Gain | School             | 2003 | 2007 | Gain  |
| 1              | 12.6 | 29.3 | 16.7 | 1                  | 29.2 | 27.6 | -1.6  |
| 2              | 24.6 | 27.4 | 2.8  | 2                  | 25.0 | 26.0 | 1.0   |
| 3              | 24.0 | 21.1 | -2.9 | 3                  | 26.5 | 28.3 | 1.8   |
| 4              | 16.8 | 24.7 | 7.9  | 4                  | 23.4 | 20.6 | -2.8  |
| 5              | 21.1 | 18.4 | -2.7 | 5                  | 18.4 | 16.4 | -2.0  |
| 6              | 22.2 | 24.7 | 2.5  | 6                  | 16.9 | 18.4 | 1.5   |
| 7              | 19.5 | 26.6 | 7.1  | 7                  | 21.8 | 21.0 | -0.8  |
| 8              | 19.4 | 24.0 | 4.6  | 8                  | 20.2 | 22.4 | 2.2   |
| 9              | 22.5 | 22.8 | 0.3  | 9                  | 25.2 | 25.6 | 0.4   |
| 10             | 23.1 | 20.2 | -2.9 | 10                 | 24.3 | 18.6 | -5.7  |
| 11             | 20.4 | 20.4 | 0.0  | 11                 | 17.2 | 17.8 | 0.6   |
| 12             | 25.4 | 25.2 | 0.2  | 12                 | 24.2 | 24.7 | 0.5   |
| 13             | 22.4 | 27.6 | 5.2  | 13                 | 20.7 | 16.1 | -4.6  |
| 14             | 16.8 | 22.0 | 5.2  | 14                 | 13.7 | 16.7 | 3.0   |
| 15             | 18.6 | 24.1 | 5.5  | 15                 | 20.6 | 17.0 | -3.6  |
|                |      |      |      | 16                 | 20.7 | 19.1 | -1.6  |
|                |      |      |      | 17                 | 19.1 | 17.0 | -2.1  |
| Mean           | 20.6 | 23.9 | 3.3  | Mean               | 21.6 | 20.8 | -0.81 |
| Mean %         | 51.5 | 59.8 | 8.3  | Mean %             | 54.0 | 52.0 | -2.0  |

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## EUROPE





## The FLY Project in Hamburg / Germany

### Context

In autumn 2004, the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) and the State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development in Hamburg (*Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung*) started a family literacy pilot project (FLY) in nine locations (seven schools and two kindergartens) in socially disadvantaged districts in Hamburg involving the parents of 5 year-old pre-school children. The project is part of the German programme 'Promotion of Children and Young People with Migrant Background' (*FörMig: Förderung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Migrationshintergrund*, 2004–2009) carried out and funded by the 'Bund-Länder-Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion' (BLK). The BLK and the City of Hamburg each provided half of the funds for the project.

The project targets pre-school children, children attending kindergarten, and children with special literacy needs (many of them from socially disadvantaged areas). It recognises that an intergenerational transfer of language and literacy takes place between parents and their children. Family literacy is an intergenerational approach to enhancing the literacy skills of families. It focuses on helping parents support their children in acquiring written language skills at home.

### About the programme

The programme centred on areas of Hamburg with a high proportion of migrants: locations in the north (mainly Turkish migrants) and the south of the city (primarily Russian and other migrants). In response to a high demand from teaching staff from other schools, particularly those located in deprived or disadvantaged areas, the project was introduced in other schools. Today, around 25 schools in Hamburg are working with this programme.

FLY focuses mainly on children, aiming to improve their language and literacy skills by involving parents and giving them materials to work with at home. The project aims to promote children's early literacy skills, intensify links between the home and school environment, enhance the training of teachers and educators, and improve parents' literacy skills. These objectives are also supported by networking with other organizations providing German language instruction (Adult Education Centres Hamburg), classes on integration, etc.

### Key elements of FLY in Hamburg

The work with parents takes place in pre-school or day care centres and is based on three key elements:

1. Active involvement of parents in the class. It has proven helpful to start with an introductory parents' evening. Parents may then remain in class for a specified number of weeks on a particular weekday – for example, after bringing their children to pre-school. The expression "parents' taster session" reassures parents and allows them to decide whether to take part in family literacy after familiarising themselves with the programme.
2. Working with parents (without children) in parallel sessions. Parents generally go to another room for these sessions, which are led by a "language development teacher". During the sessions, parents produce materials that they can use with their children at home or in class. Often, the language development teacher or another expert provides parents with information on specific topics, such as the problems of child-rearing and language difficulties. Special projects are also planned and prepared (joint celebrations, excursions, and parent and child activities).
3. Joint out-of-school activities. Although these activities take place only a few times during each parent's course, they are often considered to be the highlight of the programme. They include excursions (to museums or libraries) and smaller-scale outings, such as "literacy walks" in the neighbourhood or a trip to a vegetable shop or a market. Joint celebrations are also organized.

### Materials and training

To promote the children's multilingual development at home and at school, parents and teachers need suitable materials. These should be simple and clearly structured, action-oriented and include a personal reference. Materials developed in the context of the Hamburg FLY project include: a collection of multilingual books, multilingual songs, rhymes, and storytelling bags.

Teacher training takes place at the State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development in Hamburg. The project's disseminators participate in an ongoing monthly seminar (now in its fourth year), where they receive supervision and "interview" (the opportunity to share and exchange positive and negative experiences among themselves). A key aim of the seminar is the development of a curriculum. Since the adults' needs must also be taken into account, the seminar deals with adult education with regard to issues such as culturally specific knowledge and adult literacy instruction.

### Project evaluation

The FLY project evaluation process seeks to determine its benefits using quantitative and qualitative methods, which include:

- a) guideline-based interviews with parents from different ethnic and social groups, educators from schools and day care centres, and headmasters;
- b) the opportunity for parents to sit in on and observe introductory events; parent and child groups in the morning; and advanced training courses for disseminators.

Children are tested on non-verbal intelligence and language competence at the beginning of the course. A systematic assessment of the children's performance is conducted at the end of the course. This involves testing in pre-schools and Grades 1 and 2 (language, reading, writing), as well as teachers' assessments of children's educational development. In addition, parents are interviewed before and after the course.

### Impact and lessons learned

The FLY project focuses on literacy and language support for children. However, it has many side effects, especially for mothers, who gain and improve their communication skills and self-esteem, as well as achieving better integration into German society.

Experience has shown that it is essential to include aspects of adult education in the FLY curriculum, such as a knowledge of specific cultural features or the use of biographical approaches. Parents and teachers are seen as equal partners. Family literacy programmes are tutorial programmes for all involved – not only for parents and children, but also for teachers and educationists. FLY promotes literary and linguistic competences and makes studying more enjoyable for children and parents alike.

Although two years remain before the FLY project ends, the organizers are already making plans to ensure the project's continuation after that time. One important objective is to issue a five-year project report to present the valuable knowledge gained from the work so that schools can benefit from it and implement change in the long term. To sustain the levels achieved though the project thus far, it may be desirable to extend the project to include parents of older pupils. The main challenge here would be to modify existing family literacy models and to apply them to the secondary school.

Many primary school educators have no prior experience of teaching mothers from a different cultural background. It is a new experience for them. This gives rise to new challenges for colleagues working in the schools and education facilities, as well as new requirements for all phases of teacher training. The dynamics and requirements of working with adults rather than children must be considered. How can teachers who have to date worked exclusively with children

be adequately prepared for teaching adults? What knowledge do they need to work with families?

By opening schools up to cater for parent learners, the FLY project has not only made headway in the field of family literacy; it has also succeeded in establishing links between existing institutions and initiatives, including adult education centres, the Hamburg Department of Culture's 'Book Start' project, and other projects that work with the target group families. Family literacy is thus bridging the gap between schools, families and other institutions, to the benefit of all involved. This applies particularly to parents with a migrant background, who often find it difficult to access German institutions. The FLY project has enabled them to become more involved in their children's school experience, develop a better relationship with the school itself, and play an active role on school committees. By continuing on this path, schools could gradually develop into socially integrated training centres in which family literacy makes an essential contribution to the lives of both children and parents, enriching them, and enabling them to gain access to study opportunities, and develop into lifelong learners.

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## The Parents' Schools in Greece

### Context

The General Secretariat for Adult Education (GSAE) of the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is the principal institution for planning lifelong learning programmes in Greece. Programmes implemented through the GSAE's Institute for Continuing Education of Adults seek to combat illiteracy and support continuing education in language and information and computer technology (ICT), as well as social education and distance education. They include courses in ICT, economics, crisis management, and health. In addition, they provide education and counselling to socially vulnerable groups.

Educational courses have been designed to address as many needs as possible of citizens from every age group and every educational, economic and social background. As a consequence, there has been a significant increase in participation in adult education courses in the last years. While the GSAE's courses were attended by 124,224 citizens in 2000–2004, the number of participants in courses increased by 483% in 2004–2008, rising to 848,543.

A recent law (3369/2005) systematizes lifelong learning in Greece. It specifies three institutions as providers of lifelong learning and training programmes:

- *Second Chance Schools.* Persons over 18 years of age who have not finished the nine-years of compulsory education can earn a high school degree by participating in this programme. Following a multi-literacy approach, the curriculum includes Greek and English language instruction, classes on mathematics, ICT, social studies, the environment, the fine arts, technology, and career counselling. A number of different teaching approaches are used – such as team teaching, collaborative teaching, project method, brainstorming – in order to motivate programme participants.
- *Adult Education Centres.* Located throughout the country, Adult Education Centres offer an array of about 120 courses. The chief thematic areas are Greek language and culture, European languages and culture, the environment and sustainable development, basic mathematics and statistics, ICT, active citizenship, leisure-time activities, and economics and business management. Special programmes also target illiteracy among socially vulnerable groups, such as ROMA, repatriates, the Muslim minority, and prisoners, and provide them with counselling services.
- *Parents' Schools.* The schools provide training to parents so that they are better able to address their children's needs and to meet the many challenges facing the contemporary family.

### Parents' Schools

Recognizing the need to support the institution of the family, the GSAE founded the Parents' Schools in 2003. They operate three tuition-free educational programmes in all the prefectures of Greece. The programmes are designed to improve parents' knowledge of their children's psychological, social and cognitive needs, to give parents the skills necessary to deal with difficult behaviour, to cultivate their communication skills, increase their involvement in school activities and cooperation with their children's teachers and reduce school drop-out rates. The Parents' Schools are financed by both European and national funds. For their first year of operation in 2003–2004, their budget was 651,278 €, and in 2004–2005 it was 784,335 €. The budget for 2005–2008 has grown to 3,675,438 €.

Parents of any age, educational, social, economic, or religious background, or nationality – but also future parents or caregivers – may attend the schools. Although the courses are designed primarily for the general population, courses are adjusted to meet the special needs of participants, such as parents with large families. The content and curriculum of each of the three programmes are set by a corresponding scientific committee, which is also responsible for training the instructors and developing the learning material given to the participants. Since January 2007, the learning material for two of the educational programmes (*Parents' Counselling and Relationship between Family and School*) has been provided through a distance-education platform, which allows parents to raise questions anonymously and to participate in forum discussions.

A new phase for Parents' Schools will be implemented in 2008–2013. The schools will offer more programmes focused on the role of ICT in family education, parents' contribution to their children's career paths, and gaining greater understanding of and skill in handling home economics.

In 2003–2004, Parents' Schools operated on a pilot basis in 14 prefectures; 4,514 parents participated. In 2004–2005, schools were set up throughout the country, and 5,647 parents took part. During 2005–2006, the number of participants increased dramatically to 16,378; in 2006–2007, there were 11,618. The estimated number for 2007–2008 is 8,000 parents. Statistical data gathered during 2006–2007 indicates that the majority of the participants in the Parents' School programmes are women who have completed secondary or tertiary education, work and are between 30 and 44 years old.

The curriculum of each of the three programmes is designed by the scientific committee responsible for the given programme:

- a) *Parents' Counselling.* This programme lasts 40 hours and deals with themes such as: child and adolescent development, family structures, communication and interpersonal relationships, behavioural problems, working parents, and sexual education.



- b) Relationship between Family and School. It lasts 20 hours and addresses the themes such as the Greek family, the developing person in the family, aspects of child and adolescent development, the school as a system, adjustment to school, student's performance, aggressiveness in the school environment, and cooperation between family and school.
- c) Education and Counselling Support of Families of ROMA, the Muslim Minority, Repatriates and Immigrants. Developed in cooperation with the Adult Education Centres, this programme lasts 150 hours. During the first 100 hours, participants improve their language skills in Greek and learn more about Greek culture. The next 25 hours focus on improving their knowledge and parenting skills. The themes dealt with include the physical and psychological health of children. The last 25 hours centre on health education, with particular emphasis on nutrition, child diseases, immunization, and HIV/AIDS.

Each class consists of 20–23 participants. The attempt is made to compose each group so that the participants have as many features in common as possible, such as the age of their children, the school their children attend, or their community. Facilitators are trained to run the groups as workshops, coaching the participants through cooperative learning, role playing and simulations. In addition to the curriculum of each programme, issues are addressed that are relevant to the particular group.

The participants do not take examinations on programme content. At the end of the programme, each participant receives a certificate of attendance and a book containing the learning material for that programme.

The evaluation of the Parents' Schools programmes is conducted by an external evaluator. Questionnaires are used to determine the needs of facilitators and participants and the quality of the learning materials. According to evaluation results thus far, parents prefer participatory techniques, more extended curriculum and more hours of training.

The facilitators at Parents' Schools – psychologists, social workers or sociologists – are required to attend an initial training seminar, which introduces them to the philosophy, aims and practices of Parents' Schools. Since 2003, five such seminars have been held. Each seminar lasts 30 hours and is combines the theoretical background of course content and the practical aspects of a workshop. In 2006, all facilitators participated in a retraining seminar in which the learning materials for parents were discussed and experiences were exchanged. At a conference held in May 2007, many topics were discussed, including issues confronting the contemporary family, best practices, and training programmes for facilitators. One of the main points raised there

was the importance of Parents' Schools programmes for motivating parents to participate in activities both at school and in the community.

The active participation of parents allows them to discuss their experiences and apply the theoretical information from the facilitators to practical and daily issues. The GSAE's distance-education platform also provides parents with the opportunity to raise questions in a comfortable and anonymous environment. Most parents who have attended one of the Parents' Schools programmes go on to enrol in a second one, as well as in other adult education courses provided by the GSAE. The workshop format of the programmes helps to increase the interaction of the participants and the bonds among the group members. After a programme has ended, many parents continue to meet informally and share their experiences.

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## The Hilti Programme in Malta

### Context

In Malta pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary/tertiary education is free for all up to graduate degree level. Primary and secondary schooling (5–16 years) is compulsory. Participation rates in pre-primary (kindergarten) and post-secondary/tertiary are 95% and 70%, respectively. The illiteracy rate has decreased from 11.2% in the 1995 to 7.2% in 2005. Interestingly, this decrease was registered across all age groups and was most marked in the older age groups, which previously had suffered from the highest rates of illiteracy. This indicates that the decrease in the illiteracy rate is due not to the death of the older generation but to upskilling across the board, with a marked emphasis on adult lifelong learning.

A National Literacy Survey of Reading Attainment for English and Maltese was conducted in March 1999 for all Year 2 students (about 6 years old). This was followed up by another survey of the same students in Year 5. The results showed that, on the whole, literacy at that level was satisfactory, though special attention needed to be paid to some regions in the country, disadvantaged families, state schools and boys.

### Family literacy programmes

The Foundation for Educational Services (FES) first developed the Hilti Programme (Hilti means 'my ability') in 2001. FES was conceived as a mechanism to enable the Education Division (the state provider and national educational regulator) to provide a range of innovative educational initiatives in the field of literacy support, parental empowerment and lifelong learning. It started operations by focusing on after-school, family-oriented educational services that would complement and reinforce teaching and learning in the day school through enhanced parental involvement; this was called the Hilti Programme. At the same time, it was envisaged that these after-school programmes would serve as potential catalysts that would infuse day-school provision with key good practices and attitudes, such as learning through play, differentiated learning, parental involvement in learning and parental lifelong learning through their involvement in their children's education.

Therefore, family literacy developed in Malta primarily in as a function of the increased awareness of the need, and the usefulness, of increased parental involvement in their children's educational development as early as possible. It is important to note that the entry route, rather than a concern with adult literacy, has given as particular spin to family literacy provision in Malta in general.

The Hilti Programme started in six state primary schools. The advantages of family literacy for both the families and the schools' teaching and learning processes was explained to the school administrations, staff and school councils, which include parent representatives. The schools that were invited to attend had the following characteristics:

- They were geographically distributed across Malta.
- They had a student population with demonstrated literacy needs.

- They had excellent school leadership that welcomed FES programmes.
- They had the necessary physical space for the dedicated rooms required for family provision.
- They had viable school populations to ensure a sufficient number of applications, though not too many, since rejections would lead to disappointed applicants.

In participating schools an introductory meeting was held for parents of a year-group identified by the school: say, families with children in Year 2 (aged 6–7) students. Each FES-provided tutor was responsible for 10–19 students, while another tutor worked with the parents. Different numbers of students were tried in different sites to compare the relative effectiveness of the different approaches.

The hosting school was also asked to identify students within the year group who would benefit most from participation, because of either literacy or social development needs. These students were given first priority if they applied, but the mix of identified to non-identified students was kept at not more than 40% to 60%, respectively. The school would also decide whether the focus for the particular programme would be literacy (Maltese or English) or numeracy.

A set of family literacy sessions was called a Hilti Club, and students wore special T-shirts to differentiate club time from school learning time. Sessions were held twice a week right after school for 1.75 hours, for roughly three months. In some cases, the clubs met for one semester (e.g. from September to February) so as to gauge the relative effectiveness of the two approaches.

FES have developed and tested an extensive bank of literacy and numeracy programmes: from Year 1 to Year 4, for Maltese, English and math, for terms 1, 2 or 3. Each of these programmes is based on the relevant national curriculum and is intended to strengthen class-based learning. Depending on the parameters of the requested programme (age of students, focus requested by parents or school, time of year, etc.), a number of programmes can be selected.

Provision for parents mirrors the programme for children; tutors are trained to use non-formal adult learning methods to support learning in the adult participants.

Initially the target population for the Hilti Programme was a mix of families within vulnerable communities. Hilti and its day-school equivalent is now recognized as an integral family learning tool that is relevant to all communities.

All FES full-time and part-time staff are expected to be qualified and experienced teachers. Additionally, to be able to provide a consistently high quality of family literacy service, FES has invested heavily in the continuous professional development of its staff, since the concepts and practice of family literacy and parental involvement in schools were new.

A mixture on ongoing and external tools is used for monitoring and evaluation. These include:

- Regular site visits by senior FES staff
- Regular meetings with site staff
- Review of learning contracts in Nwar programmes, and evaluation of programme effectiveness through contract fulfilment
- Regular formal and informal meetings with parents to assess their perceptions of provision
- Regular review of school feedback
- External expert evaluations

### Impact and lessons learned

The Hilti Programme was assessed extensively in June 2003. Four interrelated attitudinal tools were used for: participating parents; participating children; day-school teachers whose students participated in Hilti Clubs; and heads of schools hosting Hilti Clubs.

Practically the whole cohort – 257 parents and 365 children – took part in the parents' and children's evaluations, respectively. Both parents and children were requested to complete a questionnaire in the last separate session of their Hilti Club. Parents were asked 12 questions related to their perception of their children's educational development and their own lifelong learning development, whilst the children discussed the questionnaire items with their tutor and then filled in their responses. Practically the whole cohort of day-school teachers whose students were participating in Hilti – 104 teachers – also answered a questionnaire, and all 22 heads of schools answered a separate questionnaire on administrative and educational attainment issues. The sum of the results showed that:

- There seemed to be a strong correlation between parental presence and participation in their children's education and the children's educational progress in terms of literacy learning, participation in classroom activities and personal and social skills. Data collected from day-school teachers showed statistically significant correlations ( $p < 0.005$ ) between children's increase in literacy and parents' rate of participation, and also between children's participation in the programme and a corresponding increase in literacy learning and development of personal and social skills.
- Teachers tended to feel that children's and parents' participation in family literacy programmes is beneficial, and indicated a degree of value added for family literacy over and above education progress due to day-school efforts.
- Parents and children felt strongly that participation in family literacy programmes is very beneficial for both education and personal and social development. Children said that the programme helped them to read and write better and try harder to succeed in literacy tasks. There was no apparent gender distinction in these perceptions among children.
- Heads of school felt strongly that the family literacy experience in their school was very positive. Approximately 90% stated that programme outputs were effective in terms of

children's and adults' learning experiences and actively encouraged parental participation in the school.

The added value for family literacy provision as developed in Malta lies in its potential for:

- Enhancing children's social and literacy development, even where there are severe literacy needs
- Enhancing parental lifelong learning
- Empowering parents to become leaders and therefore significant resource persons in their educational community
- Enhancing home-school links and the school's perception of the potential for parental involvement

After six years of operation, experience has shown us that the Hilti Programme has needed to be fine-tuned to maximize effectiveness. Changes carried out include the following:

- Parent participation was made mandatory.
- The optimum length of a Hilti Club was one scholastic term, and the optimum number of student participants per tutor were 8–12.
- The programme is most effective with children up to Year 2 (i.e. to the age of 7).
- It is most effective as an early intervention literacy strategy rather than a literacy remediation one. It was also effective as a personal and social development strategy both in early intervention and remediation modes.

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## Parent Empowerment for Family Literacy in Romania

### Context

Family literacy is still in its early stages in Romania. Literacy is not nationally and formally connected to the family. Nor is family literacy connected to the school. Nevertheless, education in general is increasingly perceived as a family issue by decision-makers and the media. To change this situation, Club Europa (CE), a small Romanian association founded in 1995, has sponsored the programme 'Parent Empowerment for Family Literacy' at a number of kindergartens and primary schools in Romania.

### The programme

The Parent Empowerment for Family Literacy (PEFaL) programme was first developed, tested and implemented as an EU Grundtvig project in 2001. Over three years, the project partners combined their experience and expertise in the field of adult education, family literacy, child psychology, pedagogy, school-community link development, project management and dissemination, research and publishing.

The aim of PEFaL is to boost literacy of primary school children through parent participation and by transferring learning strategies to the home via an extracurricular school-based programme. An underlying principle is that parents are the actual educators of their children and possess a wealth of practical teaching experience. In Romania we chose to implement the PEFaL in primary schools in areas with high unemployment rates, in poorer suburbs of Bucharest, and a smaller town.

The PEFaL programme is structured such that in each session the tutor is able to work with children and parents first separately, then together, followed by a separate period of reflection by children and parents on what was done in the joint session. A set of rules of conduct is expected from the group of families to work out together with tutor support for compliance by everybody over the three-month programme.

The approach to parents builds on their previous teaching and learning experience as parents and former learners in their own childhood. They are also introduced to new learning strategies. Parents' creativity and crafts skills are used extensively to involve children in developing teaching and learning resources. The "homework" over the weekend is designed to involve other family members in reviewing literacy activities done the previous week.

The PEFaL programme includes the following modules:

1. Who Am I and Where Do I Live? This module aims to build group and family communication and outline the literacy potential of the home and living environment.
2. Discovering Books and Exploring Feelings through Reading. The aim here is to stimulate children's curiosity about books and interest in reading, as well as to build parents' skills to identify and acquire appealing reading material.
3. Playing with Words and Storytelling. This module aims to develop children's vocabulary and reading comprehension, as well as a reading environment at home, through nursery

rhymes, children's songs, puppet shows and story bags, while doing drama, role-playing and playing games.

4. Making My Own Story aims to raise children's interest in the written word by exploring and making comics, fun puzzles, playing with writing and drawing letters and words.
5. Making Family Story Bags. In this module, children and parents assemble and present to the group a family literacy resource for future reading and writing family experiences.
6. Visit to the Neighbourhood Library. Children and parents go to the library to register as readers.
7. Closing celebration. At the end of the programme, all gather to celebrate the success of the families.

### Facilitators

The tutors of parents and children were selected from among the primary school teaching staff based on the school principal's recommendation and the teachers' willingness to participate. (They were teachers during school hours and tutors after school.) All the partner institutions participated with a number of teachers who received training on how to work as tutors in a family literacy programme, how to develop a needs-based family literacy module, and how to do the class work. The theoretical and practical training lasted three months. At the present training courses are given by teacher training centres and directly to those schools that wish to implement our programme as an extracurricular.

### Challenges and how they were met

PEFaL was not well-received at first. Initially, illiteracy was regarded as something superfluous in a school and shameful for most parents. We had to replace "family literacy" with "family learning" to gain acceptance for the programme in schools.

The school managers were also disappointed that the project did not offer money for buying equipment, furniture and refurbishment. The project team had to convince them to participate by supporting their bids to become involved in other European projects and by offering them a high profile in the dissemination conferences and meetings at a ministry level. To produce a stable school environment for project implementation, Club Europa concluded protocols of agreement with the school management.

The teachers were hesitant about the parents' ability to meet the programme requirements due to their low level of education. They also resented doing a completely different kind of work, which sometimes was more time-consuming. But when they realized that the programme training would lead to either a promotion or raise in salary and a small token payment during the project, they were convinced to participate.

The parents behaved like the "victims" of the school's bad habits; most were used to short individual meetings in the corridors when they had been asked to come to the school to discuss

their child's bad behaviour or bad marks. We got them to see that what really mattered was their children's wish to participate. The primary school children were happy to stay after school and play in a way that made them feel special.

### Programme structure

The initial programme included five modules and was designed for primary level. It included 20 sessions, held twice a week over ten weeks. Each session lasted about one and a half hours and involved 10–12 families. (More families in one go would make the programme fail to reach all the participants. Fewer families would not be productive in a school environment.)

The modular structure of teacher training and resource development helped in the design of other needs-based modular family learning programmes for disadvantaged area.

Pre-school modules to support parent involvement in children's reading and writing skills development were also developed and implemented in a number of private kindergartens.

Late in 2007, four high schools in Braila requested a new type of family learning programme. We have completed the teacher training for this new programme and have entered the phase of mentoring and monitoring the family programme implementation to conduct to a public debate competition on family and children's legal rights.

### Key elements of the programme

The innovative aspect of the programme is that at the end of the training period the school has got trained tutors, an adapted family literacy/learning programme and resources. Mentoring and monitoring are really effective and conduct to good programme implementation

Post-project training consists of an individual on-line introduction, 40 hours of hands-on training, post-training support and monitoring accompanied by mentoring during implementation. The training lasts three months, at the end of which the school has enough expertise to continue.

A full set of project resources, which were translated into Romanian in 2007, includes the Parent Training Programme, the Child Training Programme, the Teacher Training Course, a set of evaluation and assessment tools. They accompany training when necessary and are also provided to Teacher Training Centres where this training course is given.

### Impact and lessons learned

The programme's impact is visible primarily in its continued growth. In 2005 a national conference was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. It focused on the school-family link and aimed to train over 200 teachers and school managers in the PEFaL approach. In 2006 we developed a family learning course portfolio for the Centre Education 2000+ as

in-service training opportunities for school teachers. In 2007 high schools became interested in the programme and we are working them on how to implement PEFaL in a way tailored to their needs.

The main evidence of an impact of this programme is that Club Europa continues to receive requests from different types of schools and extends the PEFaL model to other European projects.

We have learned that the programme will have to continue to be extracurricular until teacher training is generalized. It must also comply with the national regulations concerning school management, in-service teacher training and curricular development. Otherwise, it will not be possible to integrate it in the school environment, which will mean that the programme will not survive.

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## Programmes for Mothers and Fathers in Turkey

### Context

Turkey does not have a standardized, widespread system of early childhood education. The existing services in early childhood development and education are supervised by the Ministry of National Education (MNE). Nearly all services are centre-based and located in the large cities. Few children aged 6 years or less attend any sort of educational institution: 14% of 3–6-year-olds, 21% of 4–6-year-olds, and 32% of 5–6-year-olds.

Since its founding in 1993, Turkey's Mother-Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) has sought to empower disadvantaged people through education to improve the quality of their lives. It has focused on the youngest children in society, those aged 0–6 years, since there is strong evidence that this period is the most critical in a person's life and, by extension, for society.

We describe two interrelated programmes here, the Mother-Child Education Program (MOCEP) and the Father Support Program (FSP).

### Mother-Child Education Program

The Mother-Child Education Program (MOCEP) targets both the child and the child's immediate environment rather than the child alone. The programme aims to promote school readiness by providing children with cognitive enrichment and by creating an environment that will provide optimal psycho-social health and nutritional development. The programme also targets child management methods and communication with the child, emotional security, as well as mothers' self-esteem, family planning and reproductive health. Thus it is both an adult education and a child development programme. MOCEP reaches children and parents before the children start formal schooling. Mothers tend to be more receptive to new information during this period.

MOCEP targets children who are "at risk" due to their environmental conditions. Lasting 25 weeks, it has the following three main components:

**Mother enrichment:** Through group discussions guided by a trained group leader, this component aims to raise mothers' awareness about subjects such as child development, health, nutrition, care and creative play activities, discipline, mother-child interaction, communication, expressing feelings and mothers' needs. Awareness of these issues enables mothers to better support their children's development.

**Cognitive training:** Using 25 worksheets and eight storybooks, this component seeks to foster children's cognitive development and to prepare them for school. Each week's materials contain exercises designed to strengthen eye-hand coordination, verbal development, pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills and problem-solving skills. Each mother does the exercises with her child each day at home. This part of the programme is further supported by home visits by teachers.

**Reproductive health and family planning:** In group discussions, mothers are made aware of issues concerning the female reproductive system, healthy and risky pregnancies, contraceptive methods and general reproductive health.

### Implementation

Different approaches have been adopted to implement these components. For two of the three components, Mother Enrichment and Reproductive Health and Family Planning, a group-dynamics approach was found to be more appropriate. Mothers attend group discussions and are expected to carry out the group decisions at home. The consequences of these decisions are followed by the group leaders in subsequent meetings. For the Cognitive Training component, a mediated learning approach is adopted. The aim is to promote school readiness through interaction with an adult who is instructing the child. The mothers therefore become the teachers of their children. They provide their children with a foundation to maximize their intellectual competence and growth. Mothers are expected to do exercises with their children, especially in pre-numeracy and literacy skills. During these exercises, through asking questions, making suggestions, instructing and answering questions, mothers help the children to integrate their developing cognitive skills and create an opportunity to function in their surroundings.

So far, MOCEP has reached 237,000 mothers and children and been implemented in 74 provinces. The programme's annual target is 30,000 mothers and children.

### Impact and lessons learned

MOCEP began to expand its implementation throughout the country in 1991 in collaboration with the MNE. To analyze the short- and long-term effectiveness of the nationwide programme, an evaluative study was conducted. The evaluations were conducted immediately after the programme ended and after the first year of primary school.

The evaluations revealed that pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills were significantly better in that the trained group than in the untrained group. Furthermore, children coming from environments with different levels of stimulation were compared in both skills. While no significant differences in either skill were found for the trained-group children coming from either stimulating or non-stimulating environments, there was a significant difference for the untrained group: children from stimulating environments in the untrained group had stronger skills than children from non-stimulating environments. Moreover, children in the mother-trained group from different environments had significantly higher scores than the children in the untrained group from a stimulating environment.

The results obtained at the end of the first year of primary school are in line with the short-term findings. Children in the trained

group not only had stronger literacy and numeracy skills but also had higher passing grades and learned to read earlier than children in the untrained group. Furthermore, the differences in the environmental stimulation index were maintained after one year.

The evaluations showed that mothers who participated in the programme not only displayed positive changes in their child disciplinary methods but also in their child-rearing practices. Mothers who had participated in the programme had more self-esteem and perceived themselves as better mothers, better spouses and successful individuals.

The present state of the pre-school education system in Turkey clearly shows that expansion of MOCEP is required. MOCEP supports the multifaceted development of children by developing mothers' potential as educators. Because it is a low-cost programme, it recommends itself for use in larger populations.

Findings indicate that the programme is able to overcome the distressing effects of disadvantaged environments and show the importance of such programs for a fair start at school. These characteristics make it possible to reach the children "at risk" that constitute a major part of the child population in Turkey by the Program. Targeting not only the child, but also the mother, and consequently the family enables the continuity of the development achieved in pre-school years later on by the support of the family.

### Father Support Program

The idea for the programme came from women attending MOCEP. They were learning a lot about child development and parenting, but there were still problems at home with child-rearing because fathers were not involved. Thus AÇEV has developed the Father Support Program (FSP) in 1996 to support fathers who play an important role in their children's development. The FSP targets fathers with children aged 2–10 years.

The purpose of the programme is to increase fathers' awareness and knowledge of child development and education. The programme helps fathers to improve their communication skills and thus to adopt more democratic attitudes. Fathers also learn to do certain literacy activities and spend time with their children.

### Implementation

The programme is conducted in the form of group discussions. A forum is created where fathers can share their ideas and feelings, and are expected to find solutions to problems as a group. The group is limited to 15 people and meets one a week for about 2.5 hours in the evening or on the weekend since most fathers work during the day. AÇEV-trained volunteer educators and social workers conduct the courses, which follow a participatory model of education. Meetings take place in primary schools or in adult education centres. So far the FSP has reached 19,870 fathers and children and been implemented in 16 provinces.

### Impact and lessons learned

Fathers' self-reports indicated that they benefited from the group experience. They reported a change in their perception of children, noting that they had started to view their children as individuals and had become more tolerant and more careful about keeping their promises to them. Moreover, their self-reports reflect that they had started explaining, talking and listening to their children, as well as spending more time with them and showing more affection. Fathers also reported that they now used alternative methods of discipline instead of punishing and/or beating their children. Fathers also mentioned that they felt proud of themselves because they had done something useful for their children.

Following the pilot studies, effective strategies were sought for the expansion of the FSP. It was decided that the most effective institutions for the implementation of the FSP would be primary schools and the voluntary teachers working in those schools.

Greater emphasis could be placed on helping father to apply what they learn to relationships outside the family. It would also benefit his children to see their father behave differently in a wide range of contexts.

Volunteerism is important. When the father is a volunteer, he places more trust in the group leader, actively participates in the group and becomes more receptive. When the group leader is a volunteer, he runs the group because he believes in its social value and wants to make contribution to the society.

One major focus is on expanding the audience and scale of the FSP. There is a need for adapting the FSP for fathers who are very poor and have very limited ability to read. Such a programme would complement existing programmes for low-literate mothers, for example, in south-eastern Turkey.

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## Family Literacy in the United Kingdom

### Context

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland comprises the Kingdom of England, the Kingdom of Scotland and the Principality of Wales, all within the island of Great Britain, and the province of Northern Ireland. While Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each has established its own administration with a Parliament (Scotland) or an Assembly (Wales, Northern Ireland), England (with 85% of the total population) has not done so, for the UK Parliament in London serves both England and the whole UK. The great majority of the population is of white ethnicity, with substantial black and Asian minorities, especially in the larger cities of England and Scotland. Most of the population is monolingual English-speaking, but there are indigenous communities of Welsh-speakers in Wales and of Scots Gaelic-speakers in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. In addition, as a result of immigration since the 1960s, there are, especially in the larger cities, substantial numbers of speakers of other languages from around the world, the most frequent community languages being several from the Indian subcontinent.

State-provided and -funded pre-school, primary, secondary and post-secondary/tertiary education is available free for all between 3 and 18 years of age, though about 7% of children attend fee-paying independent schools. Primary and secondary education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16 years, but schooling as such is not – parents have the right to educate their children at home, though the numbers choosing to do so are very small. The UK government has recently announced plans to raise the school-leaving age to 17 in 2011 and to 18 in 2013 – already over 90% of 16–18-year-olds are in education, training or employment with a training element. It is estimated that about 90% of 3–4-year-olds attend some form of pre-school provision. 'Crude' illiteracy is rare (under 1%), but about 20% of the adult population is thought to have less than functional literacy. The rate of functional illiteracy varies across age groups, diminishing up to about 30 years of age, then remaining low for a decade or so, then rising again in later middle age and into retirement.

National surveys of schoolchildren's reading attainment in English have been conducted in England since 1948 and from various, slightly later dates in the other countries of the UK. Parts of the UK have also participated in a number of international school-level reading literacy surveys, in particular PIRLS (Progress in International Literacy Survey) in 2001 and 2006, and PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) in 2000, 2003 and 2006. There have also been sporadic national surveys of schoolchildren's attainment in writing since 1979, and two national surveys of adults' reading attainment, in 1996 (as part of IALS, the International Adult Literacy Survey, 1994–1998) and 2002–2003. The surveys at school level have mainly concentrated on children aged 11 and 15–16 years, and show that average scores rose from 1948 to about 1960, then remained stable until the mid-1990s, when they rose again. The international survey results have fluctuated.

### Family literacy programmes in the country

The Basic Skills Agency (BSA, now merged into the NIACE, National Institute for Adult Continuing Education) set up the first family literacy programmes in the UK in 1994. These were four demonstration programmes, three based in England and one in Wales. Much of the thinking behind them was derived from practice in the USA. They had the threefold aim of boosting children's literacy, boosting parents' own literacy, and boosting parents' ability to help their children's development. Consistent with this, they had three elements: parents' sessions, children's sessions and joint sessions. An evaluation in 1994–1995 showed benefits to parents and children, and these were sustained in follow-up studies up to three years later. In 1996, the British government rolled out family literacy (and, a little later, family numeracy) provision on the BSA model across England and Wales, and programmes were also set up in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The BSA model remains central in England and Wales, but especially since 2001 there has been increasing diversity of approaches and programmes (see Table 1 for those funded by the government in England). A total of approx. £37,000,000 (€55,000,000) was invested in family literacy and numeracy programmes in 2006 alone, and 95,000 families took part in family programmes that year. An international review of family literacy and numeracy programmes was conducted in 2005–2006. A fresh evaluation of family literacy programmes in England has recently been commissioned, and will be carried out in 2008–2009.





Table 1: **Government-approved family literacy, language and numeracy courses in England, 2000–2005.**

|  | Children's age range | Parents/ caregivers only, or child also? | Taster/workshop (usually 2–4 hrs) | Introductory (usually 9–13 hrs) | Short (usually 30–49 hrs) | Intensive (usually 72–96 hrs) |
|--|----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Play and language  | 0–3 years            | Parent/ caregiver and child              | ✓                                 | ✓                               |                           |                               |
| Early start: Baby talk 0–1 year; Small talk 1–2 years; Talk together 2–3 years | 0–3 years            | Parent/ caregiver and child              | ✓                                 |                                 | ✓                         |                               |
| Playing with language  | 3–5 years            | Parent/ caregiver and child              |                                   |                                 | ✓                         |                               |
| Family literacy  | 3 years +            | Parent/ caregiver and child              | ✓                                 |                                 | ✓                         | ✓                             |
| Family numeracy  | 3 years +            | Parent/ caregiver and child              | ✓                                 |                                 | ✓                         | ✓                             |
| Combined family literacy and/or language and/or numeracy                       | 5 years +            | Parent/caregiver and child               | ✓                                 |                                 |                           | ✓                             |
| Keeping up with the children   | School age           | Parent/ caregiver only                   | ✓                                 | ✓                               | ✓                         |                               |
| Skills for families springboard  | School age           | Parent/ caregiver only                   |                                   | ✓                               |                           |                               |
| Family finance   | School age           | Parent/ caregiver and child              |                                   |                                 | ✓                         |                               |
| Grandparents Family Literacy Project   | Primary              | Grandparent & child                      | ✓                                 | ✓                               | ✓                         |                               |

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