



2008/ED/UNLD/PI/EP/26

United Nations Literacy Decade

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Presented at the UNESCO sub-regional Conference *Addressing Literacy Challenges in South, South West and Central Asia: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches*. (29 - 30 November 2007, New Delhi, India)

Programme name: Family Literacy: An Intergenerational Learning Initiative

Implemented by: Children's Resources International (CRI) Pakistan

BASIC FACTS

Country: Pakistan

Starting year: 2003

Outreach: 1220 participants per year

Target Population: parents, grand parents and older siblings of children in the partner schools

Language of instruction: English and Urdu

Operating in: Islamabad Capital Territory (rural and urban); Rawalpindi District and Karachi City District

Facilitator/Beneficiary ratio: 10 learners per trainer

Main Funding: USAID

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Pakistan is a country with a literacy rate of 54% in general and 42% for women in particular. In rural areas it would be as high as 95%. Education for girls and women is not considered a basic right but a privilege. Sometimes it just remains a dream to enter the school. State is the main provider of education and has schools in extremely poor condition with no learning materials and untrained teachers. Parents are not allowed to enter school premises except to deposit school fee. School and home are two separate entities. All of the above contribute to 40% drop out in grades 1 and 2. In this challenging environment alongside reforming Pakistan's primary education school system, CRI Pakistan is also contributing to increasing the country's literacy rate. CRI Pakistan's programmes encourage parents to participate in school activities and in their children's learning. Since CRI Pakistan works with marginalized schools, the parents of most of these children are illiterate and have

low income. They cannot effectively participate in the education of their children. To make these parents a part of their children's progress at school, CRI started the Family Literacy Programme. The "Family Literacy Program" is an intergenerational initiative that helps increase the literacy levels of parents and older siblings of children in the CRI partner schools linking parents with the methodology. This equips the parents to play a more productive role in their child's education. The programme targets not only parents but also older siblings and grandparents. CRI's Family literacy programme offers them the opportunity to learn how to read and write for free.

RATIONALE

CRI Pakistan works in marginalized public schools where parents of most of the children are illiterate and are from lower strata of the society. Parental involvement is one of the strong components of the program. The illiterate parents show reluctance in coming to the classroom and being a part of school activities. Also a standard public school does not allow parents to visit the classroom.

The Family Literacy Program is giving meaning to the life of those denied the basic right, the right to education and instilling in them the desire to learn more.

This programme is not only enhancing literacy skills but also empowering women and producing a batch of confident and committed learners. Families have the greatest influence on their children. They are their primary educators and partners who play a critical role in their educational process. What research is talking about CRI Pakistan is implementing it.

OBJECTIVES

The Family Literacy Program is an inter-generational initiative aiming at making parents literate by linking parents with their child's learning. The objective of the programme is two-pronged: to generate sufficient parental interest in education to ensure continuity of schooling and avoid drop-outs and to give an opportunity to adults to read and write and become learners along with the family.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND METHODOLOGY

The programme offers 100 lessons in basic literacy and math skills developed by international adult literacy experts translated and adapted by CRI Pakistan according to requirement of our society. The contents of the lessons are based on the concepts taught to children in the morning in their class rooms. Like if the children are learning shapes, colours counting or making sentences or learning about plants the parents also learn similar things in literacy sessions. Some of the lessons are linked with easy to read and understand story books carefully selected and are provided to the parents free of cost. The learning is reinforced through repetition and activities.

i) Selection of Teachers

Two teachers from partner school are selected for the Family Literacy Program. These teachers are the same who teach children in the morning. By conducting two trainings in 100 lessons in two phases (1-50) & (51-100) the selected teachers are equipped with variety of interactive activity based techniques to conduct the literacy sessions.

ii) Logistics

Literacy classes are held twice a week for one and a half hour after school in the school premises.

iv) Assessments

In order to assess the progress of the entire group of learners, the family literacy inventory, an assessment tool specific to the programme, is used at the beginning as well as at the end of the session.

v) Methodology for Training of Teachers

Teaching to adults is entirely a different experience for the teachers who are teaching children in the morning. By attending initial trainings trainers learn in detail the essential needs of adult learners (individual differences, individual needs), time management skills, how to handle challenging participants, skills required for communicating with adults, methods for making learning active, how to develop effective learning environment for adults, preparation required to conduct sessions, ways to encourage and mobilize learners towards program.

The family literacy trainings offer variety of ways to the trainers to develop understanding about the program through methods, such as group discussion, group work, multimedia presentations, overheads and handouts, role play, presentations, and brainstorming activities.

INNOVATIVE FEATURES

The main innovative feature of the program is that parents and their children learn together. The children bring their mothers for enrollment in these sessions. Each lesson taught in literacy class requires practice at home. This is the first initiative of its kind where mother's education is directly related to their child's learning in classroom. The parents are given home work based on activities which they have to do with children. This creates an environment conducive for learning which in turn reflects on the improved academic performance of children.