



Linking literacy to development in South Africa



Key lessons from some
of the projects funded by
Rockefeller Brothers

1998 – 2004



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Editor

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Acronyms

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABEDST	ABE Development Services Trust
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AETASA	Adult Educators and Trainers Association of South Africa
CAE	Centre for Adult Education
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CLRU	Children's Literature Research Unit
CODAL	School of Community Development and Adult Learning
CRISP	Crisp Research, Facilitation and Training
DFID	Department for International Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ELRU	Early Learning Resources Unit
ERU	English Resource Unit
ESL	English Second Language
FLP	Family Literacy Project
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
HPF	Homeless People's Federation
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
IPT	Independent Projects Trust
MTL	Mother Tongue Literacy
NASA	Natal ABE Support Agency
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NLC	National Literacy Co-operation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PALCs	Public Adult Learning Centres
PD	People's Dialogue
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PROLIT	Project Literacy
RBF	Rockefeller Brothers Fund
REFLECT	Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques
SETA	Sectoral Education and Training Authority
SMMEs	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises
SOUL	Social Uses of Literacy
TCEC	Tembaletu Community Education Centre
UCT	University of Cape Town
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa
VKZ	Vukuzenzele

The context and commissioning of this report

The ‘Lessons learned’ project

In late 2003 the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) commissioned the authors of this report to investigate the lessons learned in South Africa in a number of RBF-funded projects that made connections between literacy/ABE and development. The process by which this was to be done was primarily through a substantial review of project documentation, supplemented with interviews with project grantees, project beneficiaries and visits to at least one beneficiary site per project. The summary of projects and lessons learned was primarily intended to be of practical benefit to future projects of this nature and was not intended to be highly theoretical or academic in its content or style.

The process consisted of the following:

Review of project documentation

Project documentation consisted of at least the following:

- the initial project proposal to the RBF
- annual reports to the RBF (including financial reports).

Additional documentation for some projects included where available:

- evaluation reports
- reports from partner organisations
- academic publications relating to the project
- mass media articles relating to the project.

Interviews with RBF grantees

The authors interviewed at least one person from each grantee organisation (and some of their partner organisations) using an interview schedule specifically designed to elicit ‘Lessons learned’ (see Appendix A and B for letter to projects and interview questions). In some cases this process proved to be complex and this has been indicated where relevant in the detailed reports on each project.

Site visits and interviews with beneficiaries

The authors attempted to visit at least one implementation site per RBF grantee and to interview at least one beneficiary – usually at the implementation site. In four cases this was not possible mainly due to the fact that the projects had closed.

Writing summaries of each project

Each project was written up under the following headings:

- Project summary
 - Project title
 - RBF Grant Number
 - Grantee
 - Partner Organisation/s
 - Total Budget
 - Planned Duration
- Context
- The proposal
- Implementation
- Successes
- Challenges
- Lessons learned
- Conclusion

Sending drafts of summaries to grantee and major partner organisations

Grantees were sent drafts of the summaries of their projects and asked to respond if they felt that there were inaccuracies. Where feedback was given, every attempt was made to incorporate this.

Key questions

The 'Lessons learned' project was not intended as an evaluation in the conventional sense and the issue of whether the particular projects were successful or cost effective is not at the centre of focus. Rather, what the case studies and findings in this report do focus on is the identification of lessons learned about the complex process of linking literacy work to other development activities.

Key questions were:

- Does this project show that there is potential for literacy to work well (or best) when linked to other activities?
- What are common pitfalls associated with the implementation of literacy and development projects?
- What can be learned from this particular project?
- What are common trends that run through the ABE/development projects funded by the RBF in South Africa?

Some provisos

Inevitably the process of reviewing documentation, interviewing grantees and beneficiaries and visiting sites resulted in evaluative comment from the authors of this

study. We have attempted to remain reasonably dispassionate and to rely mainly on the sources outlined above but do not pretend that our own views and analyses have not contributed to the final product.

The discrete projects funded by the RBF only formed part of the work of the organisations (grantees) under consideration. It was often difficult for interviewees to separate the discrete RBF-funded project from their work more generally. This points to a more general funding problem which is dealt with in the body of the report.

RBF projects reviewed

The following projects, listed alphabetically according to main RBF grantee organisation, followed by the project proposal title were reviewed in the 'Lessons learned' study:

ABE Development Services Trust (ABEDST):

ABE Course for Early Childhood Development workers (Putting the T into ABET)

ABE Development Services Trust (ABEDST):

To research and extend the integrated Adult Basic Education/Early Childhood Development programme.

ABE Development Services Trust (ABEDST):

Linking learning to livelihoods

Children's Literature Unit, UNISA (University of South Africa):

Family literacy project for pre-school children

English Resource Unit (ERU):

Get the basics – Rural Women's Literacy and Micro-Economic Development Project

Family Literacy Project (FLP):

Partners in Family Literacy

Operation Upgrade:

Literacy against AIDS

Project Literacy (PROLIT):

Increasing access to quality primary health care in relation to HIV/AIDS preventative education, counselling and care. Development of a cost effective deliverable educator training course that utilises existing infrastructure and resources.

Tembaletu Community Education Centre:

Adult Basic Education and Training Policy Dialogue – KwaZulu-Natal

Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies, University of Cape Town:

The development of a Social Uses of Literacy Model for the promotion of literacy, numeracy and information technology amongst unschooled adults within development projects.

In the report, the projects are grouped thematically rather than in alphabetical order. The themes are as follows:

- Family Literacy
- Early Childhood Development
- HIV/AIDS
- Income generation
- Social practices (Housing)
- Policy

Within each of these themes projects are presented in alphabetical order according to the grantee organisation. In the report, projects have been given short headings which attempt to indicate the essence of each project.

The context

Literacy and NGOs in the first decade of South African democracy

1990 was the start of a transition to a democratic society in South Africa. Since then the education field has been characterised by great efforts to develop new educational policies and significant failures to really transform the South African education system. This has been in the context of a very harsh economic climate in which South Africa has rejoined the highly competitive global economy. In the field of Adult Education, the story of the 1990s and the early 2000s has been one of immense energies going into policy development (largely for Adult Basic Education and Training), serious weaknesses in implementation, and a dramatic decline of the NGO and Higher Education bases for adult education thinking and action.

After the April 1994 election, Adult Literacy and Adult Basic Education (ABE) activists were disappointed by the seemingly slow pace of development in the ABE sector. It did not seem to be a major concern of the new Government of National Unity or of the national Ministry of Education. Since then, although impressive policies have been written, targets chosen, implementation plans designed, some legislation passed (on Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs)) and a mass literacy campaign proposed, results have been lacklustre. National resources for Adult Basic Education (and Training) (ABET) remain meagre (mainly foreign aid has been devoted to its development by government). Alongside this, South Africa's acceptance of the international trends towards a standardisation of skills training and qualifications has led to ABE being seen very much in formal certificated terms and shifting towards this.

For NGOs, from 1995 onwards there was a growing sense of crisis as their main foreign donors now preferred to work directly through bilateral agreements with government and these agreements were slow to be finalised and implemented. Older NGOs began to downsize and retrench staff and many of the best known eventually closed (the one exception being Project Literacy which became a national provider of some substance). Through the failure of the state to rapidly reallocate resources, NGOs were thus unable to benefit from new openings in a democratising society. The real beneficiaries tended to be well-capitalised commercial providers contracted by industry and commerce. The

Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a modest but influential player in the South African ABE field, was one of the few funders that continued to retain a presence in the ABE sector by funding a number of NGO projects that it saw as having developmental capacity.

By the end of 1990s, the future of many NGO ABE(T) providers remained doubtful, if not bleak. This was largely because of the funding uncertainties created by the introduction of bilateral agreements between foreign government funding agencies and the South African government, the loss of experienced staff and often poor management and administration. This was exemplified in the collapse of two umbrella bodies: the National Literacy Co-operation (NLC) in January 1998 and the Adult Educators and Trainers Association of South Africa (AETASA) in 2001. It is not clear to what extent the collapse of these two umbrella organisations was due to the above factors or to the very formal direction which ABE in South Africa took.

New directions and connections for ABE

The rather sobering scenario outlined above helps explain why many NGO providers of ABE were extremely interested when in the late 1990s and early 2000s various funding opportunities started to become available for ABE to be more directly linked to various skills training and development activities (notably those related to income generation).

The reasons for this new trend of connecting literacy to development are complex but the following factors have all played their part:

- ❑ the economic decline in much of Africa
- ❑ the need for sustainable income generation by the poor
- ❑ development and funding agency support for projects which link literacy to development and skills training activities
- ❑ studies and projects linking literacy to various social and educational practices.

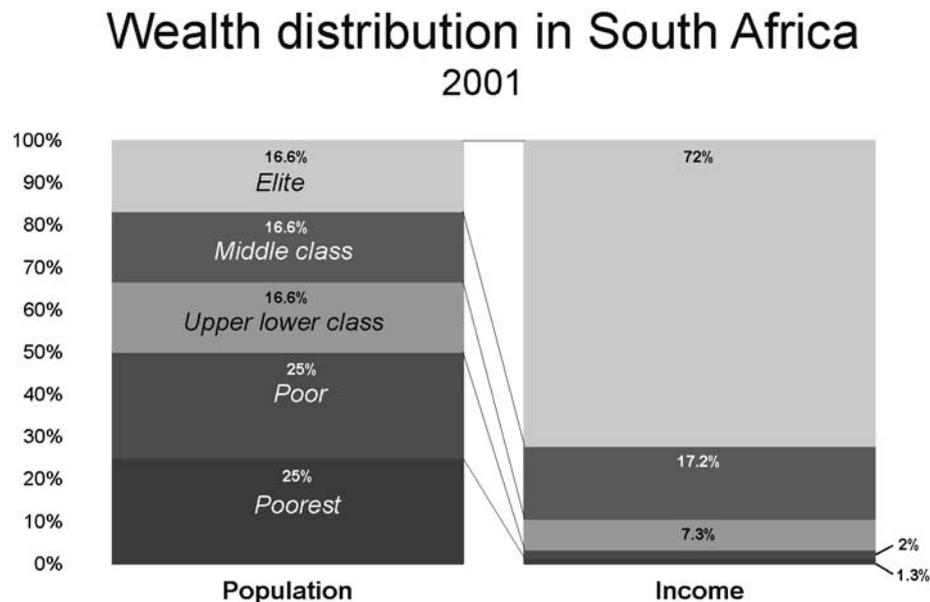
There have been various manifestations of the literacy/development link, most notably: directly linking literacy to livelihoods training; linking literacy to social practices; linking literacy to issues which impact on development more generally.

Linking literacy to livelihoods

Generally, Africa has been in economic decline for decades and difficulties in the global economy at the turn of the millennium exacerbated these problems. South Africa itself was faced with growing structural unemployment and impoverishment of the majority and a starkly unequal distribution of wealth (as shown in the graph on following page).

Despite significant progress in certain sectors of the South African economy, structural unemployment remained unacceptably high and the discrepancy between rich and poor increased. Income generation, particularly through the development of the informal sector, became a prime necessity in South Africa because of the lacklustre economy (which had not grown as predicted and planned for in government policies) and the huge unemployment figures.

Meeting the challenge of development and income generation in this setting was a priority and the suggestion was that ABE might play a role. A number of studies (some



Terreblanche, S. 2002. *A history of inequality in South Africa 1652 - 2002*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, p. 36

of them emanating from the work of the World Bank) began to appear that highlighted the connection between literacy and development and, most importantly, suggested that literacy work might be more effective when linked to skills training in some way. Major international donors also began to respond to these arguments that saw literacy as an adjunct to development and skills training. Thus, for example, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) focussed on a 'Literacy for livelihoods' approach.

One of the most influential studies which emerged was the one by John Oxenham and colleagues. Oxenham, speaking at the Project Literacy Conference held in Johannesburg in late 2001 (significantly on the theme of *The role of adult education in sustainable development*) reported on research done for the World Bank in Africa (later published as *Skills and literacy training for better livelihoods* (Oxenham et al 2002)).

The researchers identified and studied five models for linking literacy (ABE) and livelihood training:

1. Literacy is a **prerequisite for further training** in livelihood activities (people seeking occupational training are required to learn how to read, write and calculate first).
2. Literacy (valued in itself) may be **followed by separate livelihood training** (for which literacy may not necessarily be a prerequisite).
3. **Literacy instruction follows after livelihood training** (the usefulness of numeracy, along with writing and reading, is 'discovered' through learning a livelihood and learners may then seek or demand literacy instruction or be encouraged to seek it).

4. Livelihood training and literacy are **integrated and engaged in simultaneously** (with the literacy content often initially derived from livelihood vocabulary and discourse).
5. Livelihood training and literacy training are both valued and take place in **parallel but separately**.

The report concluded that:

1. Effective programmes based on all the above models are possible, provided they are well run by competent, reliable and properly supported instructors and are well adapted to the interests and conditions of the learners.
2. Using livelihood training to drive literacy content and instruction seems most promising.
3. Generally, agencies focussed on livelihoods seem more effective at linking literacy and development than do agencies focussed on education.
4. Incorporating training in savings and credit and organising access to credit can reinforce success in both livelihoods and literacy.
5. Working with already established groups of learners seems more promising than recruiting learners individually.
6. For the 'average' learner, 360 hours of tuition in reading, writing and calculating seems to be a safe minimum to achieve lasting skills. (Note: most adult learners are part-time learners who attend classes on average for 4 to 6 hours a week. Achieving sustainable literacy skills would therefore require two years of study. The addition of literacy in a second language such as English, extends the estimated time considerably).
7. Combining livelihood training with literacy training requires two types of instructors: livelihood specialists and literacy instructors. In other words, it is not reasonable or practical to expect livelihood specialists to be able to teach literacy and vice versa.

Linking literacy to social practices

Another more diffuse influence on the way in which literacy relates to development is the New Literacy Studies which sees literacy (or rather literacies) as deeply embedded in social practices in particular contexts and is critical of the perception of literacy as an autonomous skill which can be taught in a decontextualised way. According to the New Literacy Studies, literacy is a highly ideological construct. Contrary to the common belief that it is an autonomous set of technical skills of more or less universal application, 'literacies' consist of sets of social practices that are context bound, and embedded in the social and power relations of particular societies.

Typically New Literacy Studies researchers use ethnographic research methods to examine the actual, everyday literacy practices of particular communities and the extent

to which these differ from the more formal, schooled, institutionalised literacy possessed by the more powerful elements in the society and which are often taught in formal contexts. The view is that formal 'schooled' literacy is often of little practical use in the everyday lives of learners.

The importance of linking literacy to specific contexts and investigating ways in which literacy acquisition can be fostered through informal and mediated means is therefore often emphasised.

Linking literacy to issues which impact on development more generally

Other trends and influences are those which identify the links between literacy and other types of educational or health practice such as family literacy, early childhood education and health education (notably in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic). These trends, although less directly related to development (particularly economic development), indicate a growing consensus that literacy has a key role to play in development generally. The connection is not as direct as linking literacy specifically with livelihood training. However, the significance of the link between literacy and, for example, increasing prospects for children to succeed at school, or reducing the catastrophic impact of HIV/AIDS on all aspects of social and economic life in South Africa, cannot be underestimated. Consequently, Family literacy, ECD and Literacy/HIV/AIDS projects have become increasingly prevalent in the South African context.

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Family literacy – focussing on pre-school children

Project Title:	Family literacy project for pre-school children
RBF Grant No.:	#01 - 122
Grantee:	UNISA (Children's Literature Research Unit)
Partner organisation:	Project Literacy
Total Budget:	U\$98 000 (R889 277.75)
Planned duration:	2 years (2001 and 2002)

Context

The project was a co-operative undertaking between the Children's Literature Research Unit (CLRU) at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and Project Literacy. Both are based in Pretoria. The Children's Literature Research Unit (the grantee), functioning under the Department of Information Science of UNISA, seeks to promote children's literature and reading through study, research, community programmes, reading promotion activities, and to further UNISA's participation in community service. The Family Literacy Project for Pre-school Children formed a major part of the Unit's work during the period of the project.

Project Literacy is a large NGO that has been in the ABE field for more than thirty years. It is involved with a range of training and materials development projects and serves both state and corporate sectors. Part of its mission is to deliver a wide range of ABET training programmes to educationally disadvantaged adults by way of adult education centres, teacher training, curriculum development and community outreach. The Family Literacy Project for Pre-school Children formed a small component of Project Literacy's work during the period of the project.

The proposal

The project proposal pointed out the importance of literacy in the home environment as an indicator of children's success in schooling. It is based on the premise that if parents or other caregivers provide models of reading and literacy-related behaviour in the home and read to children often, children come to understand a great deal about books and print material. The proposal pointed to a number of factors contributing to poor school achievement, notably the fact that many children enter school lacking pre-literacy skills.

Factors directly contributing to this are:

- ❑ the lack of involvement of many South African parents in their children's schooling
- ❑ the fact that many parents themselves have very limited literacy skills, and tend to see the education of their children as entirely the responsibility of schools and teachers
- ❑ attempts by schools to get parents to adopt the school's attitude toward literacy and reading have little success.

The proposal claimed that there is more potential for success in projects that accommodate and address the needs of parents as well as the needs of schools and children, and that attempt to take into account cultural differences between the school and pupils' homes.

The central aim of the project was to teach parents attending ABET classes to use their recently acquired literacy skills to establish the practice of reading stories to their own or other young pre-school children in the community in which they lived.

Project Literacy was to select adult learner groups who were at an appropriate level of competence (presumably neither absolute beginners nor highly competent in literacy skills) who were either the parents of pre-school children, or who had access to pre-school children. It was decided that for the purposes of drawing conclusions from the pilot project, that at least 50 children would need to be involved.

Implementation was planned to take place over two years.

It was planned that staff of the Children's Literature Research Unit (CLRU) would train adult learners in Project Literacy groups to read to young children, and would subsequently monitor progress and assess the academic progress of the children once they started school. It was planned to compare the progress of children who had participated in the project with children who had not been part of the project and had not had the opportunity to develop pre-literacy skills. The project therefore had a strong research component although this was not detailed in the proposal. The proposal suggested that monitoring of the project would be used to inform the implementation of the project as it progressed.

The project proposal did not go into detail about the nature or duration of the training except to state that workshops would be held in which parents would be encouraged to read to their children and that their literacy teachers and facilitators would explain the importance of reading to young children and continually motivate the parents.

The proposal did not specify the number of Project Literacy groups that would be targeted or their geographical spread. At the time, Project Literacy was involved in the Ikhwelo project, and these sites were used for the Family Literacy Project. Project Literacy identified functioning Ikhwelo sites around the country that they thought would be suitable for accommodating family literacy.

Intended outcomes and indicators of success

The proposal was very optimistic about the expected benefits of the project, stating that they expected the results to be 'extremely positive', and suggesting that Project Literacy would be enabled to replicate the project at its different sites of operation, and, as a result, to effect positive changes in literacy competence at dual levels (that of both parents and children), without having to change its primary focus.

Expected benefits listed were:

- ❑ that the regular reading sessions would benefit both the newly literate adult participants as well as the children and would afford the children the opportunity to master new vocabulary and grammatical structures¹
- ❑ that reading to their own children would provide adult learners with a non-threatening environment to practise newly acquired literacy skills
- ❑ that because of the enrichment of the literacy environment in their homes, the children would acquire pre-literacy skills which would be of help to them when they started school

¹ This could have happened only if the books were in participants' home languages. Participants could learn a lot about the written form of their own language.

- that gains that people perceived to be associated with the project would motivate more learners to join Project Literacy's ABE classes, or to continue to attend classes for longer than they would otherwise
- that the regular practice of reading would help adult learners retain skills that they had learnt in ABE classes.

Implementation

The project took longer to implement than originally planned and was ultimately spread out over 3 years rather than two. In the first phase of the project there were seven sites: three were in Limpopo Province, two in the Eastern Cape, one in Free State Province and one in Mpumalanga. Late in 2002, another six sites were added, four of which were in Gauteng, one in the Eastern Cape, and one in Limpopo. The most notable deviation from the original proposal was that all the sites were not predominantly Project Literacy ABET sites and the adults who were trained were not predominantly ABET learners.

The 14 sites consisted of the following:

- 5 pre-schools
- 5 ABET centres (including one based in a female prison where young children were allowed to live with their mothers)
- 1 farm school
- 1 primary school
- 1 AIDS orphanage
- 1 creche in an informal settlement.

The adults who were trained to read to young children therefore consisted of a broad range of parents, caregivers, pre-school teachers, ABET learners, ABET facilitators and high school pupils.

The general model for the project was to have a meeting with the potential participants, followed by an initial one-day training workshop. At this workshop each participant was given 20 titles consisting of 20 x 6 small books (for individual reading), 20 big books (for group reading) and each participant was given a manual on how to read to young children. Books supplied for reading to children were simply written so that they would be within the level of reading competence of the adults. They were written in the African language spoken in their area, which meant that books in Tswana, Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu and Sepedi were distributed. English books were given to participants at one site in Johannesburg (the crèche in the squatter camp, where the caregiver spoke English and had a linguistically heterogeneous group of children in her care).

The pre-literacy skills of the child beneficiaries at suitable sites were assessed towards the beginning and at the end of the project. Of the total of 14 sites, children were assessed at 10 sites. Continuous assessment of the children was only done at the sites that functioned relatively well.

Each site subsequently received monthly monitoring and support visits with all functioning sites receiving additional one-day follow-up workshops.

A third phase of the project was added which specifically targeted six community libraries in Soweto, Alexandra (Gauteng) and Rustenburg (North West Province). The participants were librarians at these libraries as well as parents and caregivers. A specific purpose was the distribution and testing of the 'enhanced' family literacy pack which included a training video. Children were not assessed during the library phase of the project.

Numbers of participants in the project shifted at each site during the course of the project, and at most sites there were many more adult participants than the number of young children assessed. The numbers of adults or older school pupils who participated in initial training held at each site ranged from 11 to 56. The total number of adults who attended training as participants was 265. A total of 93 pre-school children were involved.

In the training, the importance of reading to children, and the links between reading in the home and achievement in school was communicated to the adult participants. CLRU's reports record a very positive response from the adult participants, with many of them expressing enthusiasm about their anticipated participation. Participants were supplied with books that would be suitable for reading to children, in addition to the easy to read books for adults which were available in the libraries.

Successes

Development of materials

The development of the enhanced literacy pack is a definite success. This consists of a video on how to read storybooks to children, a participant's manual and posters. The video is available in five languages: English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho, and project staff report that the response to the video has proved to be very positive.

The production of the manual is also an achievement. It is available in English, but Project Literacy might consider translating it into the African languages in the future. It contains very simple and practical information on how to read to young children and is long enough to contain ample information but not so long that it puts people off reading it. The manual was well-received by participants but they did not relate well to the stylised illustrations and preferred photographs or realistic illustrations. Plans were in place for Project Literacy to adapt and modify the manual with a view to having it published by Maskew Miller Longman.

Changes in reading practices and access to books

Project staff believe that now that the project has ended and there will be no more support visits, books may still be used at some project sites and read in the way the project aimed to promote. They believe that the project might have given some people a

glimpse of a way of living that involved reading books for themselves as well as reading to their children. They are of the opinion that although their focus in this project was aimed specifically at storybook reading activities, the initial expectations had been too high, and did not adequately take into account that the time needed to change deeply embedded cultural practices was longer than had initially been anticipated. However, at the very least, the project gave some children experience in handling and getting used to books. This would have stood them in good stead at school and in any situations that demanded familiarity with books and print materials.

CLRU also believe that it was useful to have identified sites and to have worked in conjunction with other organisations, although this did require more negotiation than they had originally anticipated.

Research findings and dissemination

The research component of the project was strong. In terms of publicising the results of this project, there were three newspaper reports on the project, a series of 11 educational write-ups appeared in the Sunday Times supplement on reading in the family literacy context, four articles were published in accredited academic journals, three papers were presented at conferences in South Africa, one at a conference in Uganda and two at a conference in the United States.

Although the findings are of necessity tentative, there are strong indications that the development of pre-literacy skills does make a discernible difference to the performance of children once they enter primary school. Valuable lessons which could contribute to future projects of this nature are also contained in the research articles.

Challenges

Communication difficulties

One of the major problems related particularly to communication difficulties. This was partly because of the very wide geographical and linguistic spread of the project. Participants in the project spoke different languages, and sites in rural areas were far from any major centres, and hundreds of kilometres from Pretoria. Easy telephone contact was not possible because there were often no telephones or cell phone communication at project sites, and the method of people passing on messages proved unreliable. On a number of occasions, when staff arrived at these sites to run training or to carry out observation and support visits, it was discovered that some other important event in the area, usually pension payouts, had coincided with the scheduled day. This meant that the visits were often in vain, and project staff were frustrated that local participants had not communicated with them.

Personnel changes

The tragic death of the Project Literacy staff member who had initiated the project and was most involved with this project was an enormous blow. Her work on the project,

specifically on the training manuals she was writing, had to be completed by other staff members. In addition, another Project Literacy staff member, who played a central role in the project left Project Literacy, which meant that there was another interruption to communication and continuity. The consultant employed to take over the co-ordination of the project emigrated before the final conclusion of the project.

Partnership roles and responsibilities

Although CLRU was the grantee and lead partner, they envisaged the relationship with Project Literacy as a partnership with close and clear working relationships. This was complicated by the key personnel changes outlined above. Project Literacy's perception of the partnership was different from that of CLRU. The director of Project Literacy perceived Project Literacy's role as merely being the sub-contracted provider of specific services. It is noteworthy that Project Literacy staff working on the project had other responsibilities and although committed to this project, sometimes felt frustrated and that their work on the Family Literacy project was sidelined within Project Literacy. The fact that Project Literacy staff were essential, but not dedicated solely to the project, sometimes led to frustrations from both sides.

Scarcity of books

Scarcity of easy to read books for children in African languages was also a challenge. Some of the books that are available in African languages are translations from English, which is less than ideal, and the illustrations are often difficult for the children to interpret. Illustrations need to be appropriate, or at least accessible to readers, and readers' ability to understand graphics needs to be developed.

Perception of libraries and lack of a culture of reading

Many South Africans believe that the purpose of libraries is merely to provide a venue for study. To change this attitude to libraries is a challenge. People in disadvantaged communities do not readily borrow books or read for pleasure. Because of the lack of a reading culture and limited access to libraries, some adults and children feel uncomfortable in libraries and uneasy with borrowing books. Adults in particular are often afraid that borrowed books will be damaged in their homes.

In South Africa, librarians themselves are often not readers, and not familiar with the idea of reading to children simply for the shared enjoyment of the practice. Therefore, often both parents and librarians are at a loss when confronted with the task of selecting and using children's books.

Finance and administration

The location of the project within a university led to particular problems. A common practice at universities is for the finance office to claim a percentage of external project funding for administrative costs. When this happened, CLRU staff felt frustrated since they felt that they got no help from the university. They had difficulty fathoming UNISA's financial system and found the financial reporting difficult and burdensome.

Lessons learned

About the promotion of reading:

- ❑ it is very difficult to introduce new literacy practices into family and even school systems which have always functioned without them. Reading is even seen by some participants as anti-social, and some participants did not readily accept that there was a link between reading story books and achieving well at school.
- ❑ superficial changes in attitudes and behaviour happen quickly but meaningful, sustained change occurs much later, if at all.
- ❑ in terms of developing a culture of reading, children slump when they reach school. It seemed to project workers that this was because very little literacy development happens once children enter the formal schooling system. Observing this led project workers to conclude that it would be better to target the school as a whole and to promote reading across all grades.

About project organisation:

- ❑ the motivation of participants depends largely on the extent to which authority figures in the community perceive the benefits of the project and buy into it.
- ❑ the degree and quality of organisation and supervision at each site is important.
- ❑ although there are benefits in co-operating with other organisations on this kind of project, differences between aims, ethos and expectations of each organisation need to be acknowledged and accommodated.
- ❑ monitoring needs substantial investment in terms of time, effort and funding.
- ❑ since management of sites close to the home base of projects is always easier, sites in remote areas, which have the greatest need, tend to be disadvantaged.

About project design:

- ❑ a more focussed, carefully controlled and monitored, longitudinal study would have been more effective in terms of project impact.
- ❑ a longer project, possibly of five to ten years, would have been more effective in the light of the time that it takes to bring about significant changes in attitudes and behaviour. Expectations of fast revolutionary change are unrealistic.
- ❑ a more focussed effort into training librarians and teachers would have more lasting impact, since they would have a better understanding of the central aims of the project.
- ❑ fewer sites, closer to home would have more chance of success (this contrasts with points made in 'About project organisation' above).
- ❑ dedicated staff within one organisation would have more chance of success than staff from more than one organisation working on a range of projects.

In sum, it was felt that fewer sites, tighter control over the project, more monitoring and a longer time period were crucial factors that would be given stronger emphasis in future projects of a similar nature.

Conclusion

Improving school achievement by developing pre-literacy skills through the reading of stories to young children is an ambitious aim. The Family Literacy Project for Pre-school Children was a bold attempt to make a difference through focussed interventions in a wide range of sites – geographical and functional. Even though this project might have failed to effect the adoption of literacy practices to the extent aimed for in its funding proposal, it exposed a large number of people to the idea of reading to children and reading for pleasure. There is real value in this, perhaps particularly in influencing teachers' attitudes to the value of reading, and to promoting reading in the homes of their pupils. There is also a lot of information in the lessons learned in this project that would be invaluable to organisations planning related initiatives.

Interviews and documentation

Interviewees

Children's Literature Research Unit, University of South Africa (UNISA)

Dr Lilli Pretorius (Director: Academic Literacy Research Unit, Department of Linguistics, University of South Africa (UNISA))

Prof. Myrna Machet (Head: Department of Information Science, UNISA)

Nicoline Wessels (Lecturer: Department of Information Science, UNISA)

Project Literacy

Leonie du Plessis (Curriculum department)

Dudu Job (Trainer: Family Literacy Project)

Yvonne Klagsbrun (Fundraising and communications)

Regina Mokgokong (Client relations)

Andrew Miller (Director)

Michael Westcott (Curriculum department)

Sol Plaatje Creche

Meisie Dondolo (Creche principal)

Site visit

Sol Plaatje Creche

Documentation

Proposal

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Family Literacy Project – replicating the model through partnerships

Project Title:	Partners in Family Literacy
RBF Grant No.:	#02 - 271
Grantee:	The Family Literacy Project
Partner Organisation/s:	Woza Moya Centocow Leadership and Training Project Women's Leadership and Training Project Boston Family Literacy Project Faithway Christian School
Total Budget:	U\$52 000 (R521 430)
Planned Duration:	2 years (2003 and 2004)

Context

The Family Literacy Project (FLP) started in March 2000 with three rural sites in the Drakensberg area of KwaZulu-Natal. By 2001 the project had expanded to seven rural sites. The FLP up to this point was funded by a range of funders, mostly those with a focus on Early Childhood Development (ECD). In 2003 five more sites were established in partner organisations. The focus of this report is on the process of establishing the FLP model in partner organisations. This component was funded by the RBF. This report does not focus on the work of the FLP as a whole but rather on its attempt to expand its work through a partnership model. It is however important to summarise the FLP generally in order to contextualise the partnership aspect of the programme.

The FLP model which formed the basis for the proposal

The FLP utilises a relatively complex model of literacy with three components:

- ❑ structured adult literacy classes
- ❑ family literacy activities outside of the classes
- ❑ development work.

None of these components are meant to dominate or precede others. Rather, they are seen as mutually reinforcing and proceed simultaneously within various groups. The anchor and initial attraction however, is the structured adult literacy component.

There are many other models for Family Literacy, but they can be broadly divided into whether the focus is on adult literacy contexts or ECD contexts. In the former, adults form the focus of interventions (an 'adults first' model). It is assumed that these adults will then interact with their and/or other children or grandchildren. When the focus is on ECD institutional settings, the focus is on children, and adults are drawn in through the children. It is assumed that adults will be sufficiently interested in their children's development to make the effort to develop their own literacy skills alongside those of their children.

The FLP is more complex than many Family Literacy programmes in that it not only attempts to promote the literacy skills of adults and children but also attempts to promote ECD more generally due to the deprived contexts in which many young children grow up in rural areas. This more general development of young children is also achieved via the adults. In addition the FLP also attempts to promote development through income generation projects which arise through the groups. It is therefore a complex and demanding model to implement and sustain.

The literacy classes for adult participants are based on units which have the following components which are combined in each unit:

- ❑ participatory tools such as the matrix used in the REFLECT approach
- ❑ literacy and numeracy based on particular themes
- ❑ early literacy – developing understanding of various aspects of ECD
- ❑ reading.

Outside of the formal classes there are a number of activities, directly and indirectly related to the structured instruction:

- ❑ home visits
- ❑ the establishment of community libraries in 2 sites
- ❑ library boxes in pre-schools
- ❑ short courses for parents in ECD
- ❑ child to child groups in primary schools (children reading to each other)
- ❑ a penfriend network
- ❑ a project newsletter
- ❑ parent-child notice boards
- ❑ community notice boards.

In the past activities also included:

- ❑ storytelling sessions for children affected by AIDS
- ❑ workshops in maternity wards.

In terms of the organisation of the project, the FLP has a strong commitment to remaining a small, responsive and flexible organisation and to ongoing staff development. The coherence of the programme and staff development are achieved primarily through monthly team meetings in which organisational and educational issues are addressed.

Successes of the FLP generally

The FLP generally remains vibrant with a core of facilitators who have been with the project since its inception and are committed to its work. This is in itself a unique accomplishment. The project has been evaluated on a number of occasions and has also resulted in scholarly papers and two masters degrees. It is therefore well-documented and its successes outlined in detail. Notable amongst the successes is the progress which pre-school children make in comparison with their peers who have not been exposed to the programme and the progress which the adult learners in the programme make in terms of their confidence and literacy skill development. Development projects in the form of income generation are less uniformly successful although progress has been made in some groups with projects such as sewing projects. Income generation is not considered to be central to the work of the FLP.

The model requires voluntary work on the part of the adult learners who are asked to make house visits and read to mothers and children. This is difficult to implement because there is no money for salaries. This has been partially dealt with through giving food parcels to volunteers which are commensurate with the amount of effort which a particular participant has put in. The vast majority of FLP group members visit other mothers in their homes.

Additional successes have been the development of libraries which are not only a resource for the FLP groups but for the community generally. The FLP has also

developed a number of resources which are available for use by other projects such as videos and booklets.

Challenges

Many of the problems which the FLP experiences are common to many interventions, particularly in rural areas.

1. Absenteeism is a common problem and attributed to the following often inter-related issues:
 - ❑ pension days
 - ❑ AIDS
 - ❑ funerals
 - ❑ looking after sick people
 - ❑ short-term employment like the government's 'Working for Water' project.
2. Men generally do not attend the classes. This could be due to the stigma associated with illiteracy and/or to the FLP model itself. Tasks relating to children are generally perceived as 'women's work' particularly in rural areas.
3. Eyesight. Many learners need glasses and the project does not have the resources to supply these.
4. Sustainability. The model requires intensive and ongoing support of facilitators for a range of issues ranging from materials to the resolution of practical problems.

The proposal

After nearly three years of successful operation, the FLP developed a proposal to extend the work of the project through partnerships with other organisations in the area. The key idea was that the FLP itself would be able to remain a small organisation but at the same time enable other projects to replicate the successful FLP model and benefit from the materials, methods, experience and expertise of the FLP. The RBF and various other donors were the funders of this particular project.

The proposal was that the FLP should partner with 5 established but small NGOs or CBOs for two years. Activities would include the following:

- ❑ fundraising by the FLP (this proposal was the first step in this process)
- ❑ discussions and contracts with partner organisations setting out roles and responsibilities within the partnership
- ❑ selection of a facilitator by each partner organisations
- ❑ training and support of the facilitators by the FLP
- ❑ provision of materials by the FLP
- ❑ formative and summative evaluation by the FLP to be shared with the partner organisations.

Roles and responsibilities

It was proposed that roles and responsibilities of the various parties would be clearly defined and contracts signed before the project began.

Selection of facilitator

It was envisaged that the facilitator would be a new member of staff of the partner organisation but provision was made for accommodating existing staff if they had the time and interest. Criteria were clearly outlined by the FLP. The facilitator would:

- ❑ have a Senior Certificate
- ❑ speak, read and write Zulu and English well
- ❑ not have any formal training as a schoolteacher or as an adult literacy teacher.

Facilitator training and support

The training would follow a similar model to that of the original FLP model and would consist of the following training for all the new facilitators (in chronological order):

- ❑ REFLECT approach training (3 days)
This included conducting a participatory rural appraisal using REFLECT tools with the target community. This was done by the trainee facilitator with a partner facilitator from the FLP who would be the trainee's 'Support Sister' for the duration of the project.
- ❑ Reporting on the REFLECT exercise
This would be done by each Support Sister and consolidated by the REFLECT trainer.
- ❑ Adult literacy training (Part 1)
This would be done by Operation Upgrade, an ABET organisation in Durban (see page 60).
- ❑ Setting up of the Family Literacy group
- ❑ Adult literacy training (Part 2)
This would be done by Operation Upgrade.
- ❑ Training in the use of Family Literacy units
This would be done by the FLP and the REFLECT trainers.
- ❑ Training in early literacy
- ❑ Support visits from the FLP Support Sister
It was planned that each facilitator would receive 2 support visits from their particular Support Sister as well as be in telephonic contact with them.
- ❑ Support visits from Operation Upgrade
One support visit for the year by Operation Upgrade was planned.

Each partner project would be responsible for management of funds and payment and management of facilitators. The project would have a strong HIV/AIDS focus through the FLP units on the topic. It was envisaged that not only the facilitator but the whole partner project would benefit from this.

Differences between the original FLP model and the Partnership Project model

The original Partners in Family Literacy Project model differed from the FLP in fairly significant ways. Instead of direct support from the FLP, the facilitators were grouped with a 'Support Sister' – a facilitator from one of the established FLP groups. The role of the Support Sister was to assist the new facilitators in all aspects of their work. The original plan was that each Support Sister would conduct two support visits in addition to one provided by Operation Upgrade. The Support Sisters would also be available for telephonic support. Another significant difference was that instead of attending monthly team meetings (such as those of the FLP where problems were discussed and resolved and staff development took place), the facilitator from the partner organisation would participate in the meetings of the partner organisation.

Implementation

The project ran with five partner organisations:

Woza Moya, Buddhist Retreat Centre, Ixopo

- Woza Moya is an organisation supporting people infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Centocow Leadership and Training Project, Centocow

- Centocow Leadership and Training Project is a development organisation focussing mainly on environmental and women's issues.

Women's Leadership and Training Project, Ndawana

- Women's Leadership and Training Project is a development organisation focussing mainly on environmental, rights and HIV/AIDS issues.

Boston Family Literacy Project, Boston

- Boston Family Literacy Project is a group offering enrichment classes to primary school children.

Faithway Christian School, Himeville

- Faithway Christian School has a community outreach programme focussing on development issues.

As can be seen from the summaries above, the organisations differed in their primary purpose. Most were focussed on development work generally, one had an exclusive HIV/AIDS focus and one had a Family Literacy focus but one that was different from the FLP model. Only one organisation already had a structured adult literacy class (Women's Leadership and Training Project).

The Partner Project facilitators were put through a similar training process to that which the original FLP facilitators had received and which had been outlined in the project proposal. Each facilitator was asked to set up two groups of about 20 people after their initial training in REFLECT techniques.

There were minor differences in the way in which the training component was implemented in comparison with the project proposal:

- ❑ training in REFLECT techniques (3 days) and introduction to early literacy (1 day)
- ❑ PRA and Early literacy sessions conducted by Partner Project facilitators and some Support Sisters with potential target groups
- ❑ training in Adult literacy teaching (2 sequential blocks of 10 days each)
- ❑ training in using FLP units (5 days) – handing out of materials
- ❑ workshop on ‘AIDS and our organisations’.

There were some significant ways in which the implementation differed from the proposal. Instead of each facilitator receiving 3 support visits in the first year (two from FLP Support Sisters and one from Operation Upgrade) the model was changed to accommodate problems which emerged. Instead of two support visits from the FLP it was decided that the partner facilitators would replace one of the support visits with a visit to the FLP facilitators in order to see more experienced facilitators in action and observe how well-established groups operate. Operation Upgrade decided to bring all the facilitators to Durban for a refresher course together rather than conduct individual visits with each facilitator. This was due to the fact that the problems which the facilitators were experiencing were similar. Therefore, instead of receiving 3 support visits on site, the facilitators only received one. It also meant that Operation Upgrade did not see each facilitator teaching.

At the end of 2003 the FLP decided to continue as originally planned with only two of the five partner organisations: Faithway School and Women’s Leadership and Training Project. It was decided that a relationship with Woza Moya would be continued but would involve reconceptualisation of the project. The relationship with the remaining two organisations would be stopped as FLP does not have the capacity to take on organisational support for partner organisations.

A significant change was that the facilitators from these organisations would begin attending the monthly FLP team meetings.

Successes

One of the successes was that as planned, a thorough evaluation was carried out and a lengthy report written. Many of the successes and challenges are documented in this evaluation. The primary objective of the evaluation was to review the success of the project in terms of the replicability of the FLP model.

The evaluation concluded that the partnership model as originally conceptualised had basically been successful with two of the five organisations and that the Partner Project

should be continued with these two organisations into the second year. It also concluded that the project had been partially successful in a third organisation (Woza Moya) but that it should be reconceptualised and integrated into the work of the organisation. In other words, not continue as a partnership.

The planned stages of the Partner Project all took place. This meant that the five facilitators all received the training that was planned for them. They therefore learnt a number of skills relating to PRA, adult literacy and early childhood education. In addition, they received training relating to HIV/AIDS. Each facilitator set up and ran a group. Although there were varying degrees of success, literacy groups were set up at each of the sites. Each facilitator received support from the designated Support Sister in the form of a support visit and help with setting up the groups.

Challenges

General Problems

Some of the challenges were fairly typical of adult literacy classes:

- ❑ absenteeism and dropout of learners
- ❑ venues
- ❑ lack of furniture and basic equipment such as pencils
- ❑ learners wanting to learn English and start income generation and (i.e. wanting more immediate rewards)
- ❑ learners in the same group speaking different home languages (Xhosa and Zulu), which made it difficult to teach literacy.

Problems with the model

Schedule of training

The way in which the stages had been planned meant that the facilitators were away from their groups for quite lengthy periods of time during the early phases of the projects. This was disruptive for both participants and facilitators.

Problems with Partner Project facilitators

There was insufficient understanding of the methods on the part of the facilitators (particularly about how to integrate the 3 components: PRA/Development, Adult literacy and Early literacy). Certain facilitators also had insufficient content knowledge and understanding (particularly in relation to numeracy and the practicalities of development work).

Problems with Support Sisters

The Support Sisters were not always equipped to deal with the problems which emerged and the logistics of this system of support proved to be very difficult.

Problems with partner organisations

The leadership of the partner organisations did not understand the FLP model, had not

been taught about it, had therefore not bought into it and were consequently either unable or unwilling to provide the essential support to the facilitators. The partner organisations tended to regard the Family Literacy programme as an ‘add on’ rather than an integral component of the organisation. Despite the efforts of the FLP to ensure that the partners were responsible for the programme, the partners saw the FLP as being responsible for and in charge of the programme and the facilitators.

Lessons learned

Careful choice of partner organisations

In this kind of co-operative initiative, partner organisations should be chosen carefully, particularly in relation to the way in which Family Literacy fits in with the core business of a particular organisation.

Commitment

Working with partner organisations only works if someone in the partner organisation is committed to Family Literacy. Real commitment (‘buy-in’) is required from partner organisations.

Organisational capacity

Partner organisations need to have some strength in terms of organisational capacity. This is not always easy as it is precisely organisations in rural areas which are often most lacking in this area. In other words organisations that need help the most are the ones that lack sufficient organisational strength to absorb new initiatives or spheres of work.

Training of leadership

The leadership of partner organisations needs to be trained in the methodology as well as overall conceptualisation of the FLP model.

Classification of roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities of the partner organisation and staff members within that organisation need to be spelt out in relation to the Family Literacy programme.

Planning, monitoring, support and evaluation

Planning, monitoring, support and evaluation need to be carefully planned and structured to facilitate the success of the FLP programme within any particular organisation.

Models

The dominant model of ‘literacy first’ is a difficult one to change and this influences the degree to which literacy is or is not integrated with development and people’s daily lives. Certain models such as PRA are time-consuming and require intensive ongoing support of facilitators. It is sometimes simply not possible to take shortcuts with this.

Models need to be adapted to fit particular circumstances. For example, the Woza Moya project which focuses on AIDS cannot operate on the basis of weekly classes, due to the fact that the target group may be housebound or ill when the classes are run.

A different option in terms of spreading the FLP model would be to properly train trainers and senior staff of organisations which may be interested in adopting and integrating the model. This would be more along the lines of a 'train the trainer' model than a cascade model. The FLP could then be called upon for technical support. This would require the targeting of stronger organisations with capacity.

Conclusion

The FLP has been operating successfully for a number of years. It has chosen to remain small, flexible and responsive. This limits the potential impact it can make which is the reason for the piloting of the partnership model. The above account illustrates the difficulties of replicating a model which is based on intensive, high quality work. Attempting to transplant the model into organisations with different focuses, contexts and problems leads to new problems and, to a certain extent, a dilution of the model. This is not a problem unique to the FLP and remains a challenge to all who want to emulate and expand successful small-scale projects.

Interviews and documentation

Interviewees

Snoeks Desmond (Director: Family Literacy Project)

Pierre Horn (Project Co-ordinator: Family Literacy Project)

Nelli Tshezi (Facilitator: Family Literacy Project – Stepmore Group)

Adult learners: Stepmore Group

Site visit

Family Literacy Project – Stepmore Group

Documentation

Proposal

Family Literacy Project. 2000. *Partners in Family Literacy. A proposal submitted by the Family Literacy Project to extend the Family Literacy Approach to five partner organisations: 2003 – 2004*. September.

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Literacy and early childhood development

Project Title:	ABE Course for Early Childhood Development workers (Putting the T into ABET)
Grant No:	#98 - 6
Grantee:	ABE Development Services Trust (ABEDST)
Partner organisation:	Early Learning Resources Unit
Total Budget:	US\$33 000 (R191 400)*
Planned duration:	One year (February 1998 - January 1999)

* 1998 Rand value not specified. Used average exchange rate for 1998 (R5.80 to dollar)

Context

Background to ABE Development Services Trust (ABEDST)

ABEDST is a non-governmental organisation and an educational trust established in 1993 to provide specialised support in first language ABET. Their work up until the time of this project focussed on:

- Curriculum and materials development – developed and published three ABET courses in different languages: Fundani 1 and 2 in Xhosa, Zulu, Afrikaans and Sotho, and Fundani 3 in Xhosa and Afrikaans.
- ABET trainer training – assisted ABET organisations based in rural areas to develop internal ABET teacher training capacity thereby minimising their dependence on outside training organisations. ABEDST developed a course of 4 one-week workshops over one year, written assignments and monitoring and support in the classroom.

Background to the Early Learning Resources Unit (ELRU)

ELRU is an independent organisation working in the education of black pre-school children. The focus of their work at the time of this project was on designing and developing courses and materials for teacher trainers, parent educators, supervisory and teaching staff and child minders. They had been operational for 15 years.

ABEDST and ELRU had previously worked together on a project that began with ABEDST conducting workshops in ELRU training courses on the issues surrounding adult illiteracy. This led to the development of an easy reader called 'We learn through stories' (published by Juta and Co). They had also worked together on a pilot project which attempted to integrate ABEDST's ABET level 1 course with ELRU's ECD Level 1 course (level 1 on the NQF i.e. a much higher level than ABET level 1).

The proposal

This project involved the integration of two organisations' materials – thereby creating an ABET/ECD course – to enable people working with young children to develop their literacy skills, using content that was relevant to their daily lives. In addition, the course had the potential to give ABET learners income generation skills.

The ABET/ECD course aimed to provide:

- first language literacy skills to childcare workers
- child-minding skills
- the job-skill component to ABET learners who wished to become childcare workers (i.e. possibility of income generation).

Intended products and outcomes of the project were:

- to develop and pilot integrated Fundani/ECD courses at ABET levels 1 and 2

- ❑ the publication of the courses by Juta & Co. Courses would act as a model for other customised versions of Fundani (for example, for health workers and for the building industry etc.)
- ❑ to develop an ECD library of 8 supplementary readers each dealing with a key concept and including activities and exercises
- ❑ to run teacher-training programmes (run by partner organisation, ELRU) in the use of the new materials for experienced ECD trainers, who would then teach adult literacy as well as ECD
- ❑ to train 10 experienced trainers (representing two language groups – Xhosa and Sesotho) from various provinces in Cape Town (a 5 day orientation workshop would be conducted by master trainers from ABEDST and ELRU)
- ❑ to track and evaluate the progress of childcare workers participating in the pilot.

Literacy/Development model

The model proposed was that ECD and ABET/ECD training sessions would run in parallel (i.e. regular ECD training sessions followed by sessions using the new literacy materials).

On completion of the Fundani/ECD course, learners would be able to earn credits in Communications at ABET level 1. Learners would also be in the process of being prepared to write examinations in ECD at Level 1 on the NQF. It was hoped that this would result in added learner motivation and that the acquisition of basic literacy skills would happen faster and be consolidated earlier than in traditional literacy classes. ABEDST would provide the ABET expertise (either by training an ELRU staff member or by participating) in the ELRU training of experienced ECD trainers in the use of the new materials.

Monitoring

The proposal stated that the ABET training would be ‘tagged on to an ELRU training course’. ELRU would support and monitor ECD trainers and collect feedback for inclusion in the final version of the new course to be published by Juta and Co.

Indicators of success

ABEDST indicated in their project proposal that success would constitute ECD learners achieving sustainable literacy and at the same time continuing with their ECD studies.

Implementation

The project actually started April 1998 and was completed in March 1999.

ELRU reported that 10 ECD trainers attended the ABET training course in Cape Town. Six of the trainers left confident that they would start literacy programmes in their ECD organisations. However a national ECD pilot project took precedence and this did not

happen. Of the original 10 ECD trainers, only two implemented the integrated model: one was from Lesedi Educare Association (Lesedi) and the other from a self-help association in Gauteng, called African Self Help Association. For the duration of the project, Lesedi was supported by ABEDST and ELRU but Gauteng was not. Consequently, the integrated Lesedi programme was relatively well-documented but the Gauteng programme was not.

Lesedi had identified a need for literacy support for their pre-school teachers. It had trained teachers from 148 schools in farm and rural communities in the Eastern Free State. Two experienced ECD trainers at Lesedi chose to take on the literacy portfolio within their organisation. One of them had attended the week-long training course in Cape Town. A further week's training and assistance in starting the project was provided by ABEDST and ELRU. The original plan for ongoing support and monitoring from Cape Town was changed and a local person from the Free State with a background in literacy work was contracted to perform these roles.

Seven childcare workers were identified who would benefit from the Fundani/ECD programme. Three two-hour sessions a week were scheduled in the township library. The materials and the language of instruction were in Sesotho. As information about the course spread through the pre-school management committees, parents and grandparents came forward to join the classes. When enrolment closed at the beginning of the course, the composition of the class was 5 childcare workers and 10 parents or grandparents.

ABEDST's final narrative report to funders stated that the progression of learners through the course was slower than expected. At the beginning of the course, the ECD content was only touched on in a half hour discussion every fourth lesson. Further on the course returned to the ECD themes, which also provided the basis for reading and writing exercises. The ECD component of the course had not yet been covered at the end of this pilot. The implementation of the training was different from the way it was envisaged in the proposal (i.e. regular ECD training sessions followed by sessions using the new literacy materials).

Successes

Integrated course had broader relevance

Learner numbers increased as the programme progressed (a departure from the normal high drop out rate in literacy classes). This is attributed by ABEDST to the ECD component of the course, which made the course relevant to parents and grandparents as well as ECD workers. ABEDST see this as a feasible mix for a learning group.

Learners' stated needs were met

The report to funders states that the Fundani/ECD programme proved relevant to the stated literacy needs of learners (literacy practices like filling in forms, reading post office slips, leading hymns and/or prayers in church). This was also seen as contributing to the increase in the number of learners in classes.

ECD facilitator adapted easily to literacy training

The experienced ECD trainer had no problem adapting to literacy training. She received a week's training (with an additional week of on the job support) and the Fundani materials include a tutor's handbook in which theoretical and practical explanations are provided. In-service support was given and said to be very important. The trainer on this project and the learning group won an award the year the integrated programme was offered. Nevertheless, and despite the effectiveness of the facilitator in this pilot project, ABEDST recommend two separate facilitators for each specialist area (ECD and literacy) who should work co-operatively (see 'Challenges' section for more on this).

Strong, stable organisational support

The organisation that delivered the programme is stable and has been in operation for a long time. It has experienced and motivated staff and had the capacity to support this pilot. The trainer had organisational and professional support, she was confident and motivated and this contributed to retention of learners in the programme.

Replication of the model

The success of the pilot motivated one other ECD organisation to embark on a similar programme.

Challenges

Facilitator training

The main focus of an ECD trainer is training and support of childcare workers. ABEDST has reported that it is not advisable for this same person to also be required to teach literacy in an effective and sustainable programme. The ECD NGO involved in this pilot subsequently moved towards ECD trainers who specialised in different types of work, for example, literacy provision, health care etc.

The disinvestment of the ABET publishing industry

The publishing industry (and Juta and Co in particular) began to withdraw from ABET publishing due to financial considerations, at the time these integrated courses were ready to be published. Thus, the integrated ABET/ECD courses and accompanying readers were never published as intended.

Learner progress was slower than expected

The following factors contributed to this:

Very low initial literacy levels

The classes started with literacy and oral ECD. It had been hoped that it would be possible for more integration to take place sooner, but only a limited amount of ECD content was possible as the learners had very low levels of literacy. ECD content had to

be introduced orally and gradually. In fact, when ABEDST reported on this grant, learners had not yet reached the training component – they were still busy with the acquisition of literacy skills.

The logistics of the management of the project

ABEDST had little control over the timing and delivery of the classes. This, combined with a facilitator who was over-stretched, affected the pace of implementation.

Mixed language ability

When interviewed, the staff of ABEDST said they were not sure whether language assessments were done prior to the commencement of training. They stated that the medium of instruction depended on the training organisation. The language ability of the learners was varied and this influenced the speed at which the group progressed. The initial proposal had aimed to provide first language literacy skills to ECD workers at ABET Level 1 so it is unclear why this became a problem.

Lack of information on the effectiveness of the training

ABEDST attempted to implement a structured documenting of the training which was the responsibility of the trainer and the host organisation. This was not done (probably because the trainer was already over-extended) and it was difficult for ABEDST to 'enforce' from a distance.

Lessons learned

Tailor-made courses – integrating literacy with specific content

Childcare workers alone did not constitute a large enough group. The group became a feasible size when the programme was offered to a wider audience (parents, grandparents and committee members).

ABEDST suggest that integrated courses should be tailored to specific content areas (such as Agriculture, Health etc.) rather than be custom-made for particular groups. One idea they have is to develop a template that allows for the insertion of specific content into the generic Fundani literacy course.

Using existing trainers to teach the literacy component

Despite the fact that the ECD trainer in this project had no difficulty adjusting to teaching literacy, this pilot demonstrated that literacy teaching is demanding and time-consuming. In order for a literacy programme to be effective and sustainable – dedicated, committed, well-trained and supported staff are essential. It is not advisable to add literacy-teaching responsibilities to an already busy staff member's workload.

Develop integrated courses or train teachers how to integrate?

ABEDST believe that the materials influence the way that literacy or ABET is taught. They say that the notion of integration is so foreign to facilitators that it is better to embed content into the learning materials. This way, facilitators do not have to do as much lesson planning for themselves and learners can progress more quickly towards their ultimate goal. ABEDST see it as much more difficult to train teachers to integrate the specialised content with the literacy teaching (or vice versa) than to provide them with ready-made integrated materials.

Low levels of learner drop-out/Increasing learner numbers

In this pilot, learner numbers increased as the project progressed. In addition to the wider appeal of the integrated model, the reasons for this are given as:

- ❑ positive reports from existing participants
- ❑ a highly motivated, well-supported teacher
- ❑ increased motivation of learners because of the link between the course and their ECD training and day to day work
- ❑ a strong organisational base.

Monitoring and evaluation of new programmes

Without proper monitoring and evaluation, it is difficult to assess the merits (or distil the lessons) of a new, innovative programme. Despite the best intentions of projects, however, this aspect is often neglected or overlooked in the implementation phase. ABEDST strategy now when they embark on new projects is to collect baseline data by developing learner profiles, tracking learners half way through and evaluating after the programme.

Not quite a model, but a lesson in the integration of communications and other content areas

The pilot did not act as a model for adapting Fundani for other content areas. It did, however, serve as a lesson to ABEDST as to how to integrate communications and other content areas.

Conclusion

The pilot achieved the first two of its primary aims, which were to develop and pilot a course that would give:

- ❑ first language literacy skills to childcare workers, and
- ❑ child-minding skills.

The third aim (i.e. to provide the job-skill component to ABET learners who wished to become childcare workers) was not yet met at the end of the grant period. ABEDST were not sure whether any of the learners managed to get an ECD NQF 1 certificate. Given the initial level of learners, this was highly unlikely in the time period under consideration.

There was insufficient time to track and evaluate the progress of participating childcare workers participating in the pilot. This would have been very valuable information when assessing the lessons learned from this pilot. What was reinforced by this pilot project is that the acquisition of literacy skills takes a very long time, especially when learners have very low levels of literacy when they join the programme.

The most important lesson for ABEDST was that they tested a concept (i.e. the integration of literacy instruction and specific content in one course) and they realised that the integrated programme had more merit – to such an extent that if they were to print a new version of their ABET course, they would publish the integrated ABET/ECD version.

Unexpectedly, the integrated ABET/ECD course ended up being much more general than originally intended. The target audience became any people involved with young children (parents, grandparents, ECD workers) rather than only workers or people intending to become ECD workers. It appears that the model has unexpected and positive potential as a Family Literacy model.

Interviews and documentation

Interviewees

Wendy Walton (ABE Development Services Trust)
Barbara Hutton (ABE Development Services Trust)

Documentation

Proposal

ABE Development Services Trust. 1998a. *Proposal to develop an Adult Basic Education course for Early Childhood Development Workers (Putting the T into ABET)* January.

Reports and correspondence

ABE Development Services Trust. 1998b. *Response to questions*. E-mail from ABEDST to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 12 January.

ABE Development Services Trust. 1998c. *Further responses*. Fax from ABEDST to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 14 January.

ABE Development Services Trust. 1999. *Final narrative report to Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Grant period April 1998 – March 1999*.

Rockefeller Brothers Fund. 1998. *Questions/Comments on the proposal*. Fax from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to ABEDST, 8 January.

Literacy and early childhood development – extending the pilot project

Project Title:	To research and extend the integrated Adult Basic Education/Early Childhood Development programme.
RBF Grant No.:	#99 - 282
Grantee:	ABE Development Services Trust (ABEDST)
Partner Organisations:	Early Learning Resources Unit (ELRU) Lesedi Educare Association
Total Budget:	U\$ 86 000 (R601 930)*
Planned duration:	2 years (2000 - 2001)
Phase 1:	January - February 2000 (2 months)
Phase 2:	March - December 2000 (10 months)
Phase 3:	July 2000 - June 2001 (12 months)
Phase 4:	July 2000 - December 2001 (18 months)

* 2001 Rand value not specified. Used average exchange rate for 2001 (R7.90 to dollar)

Context

Background to ABEDST

General background to ABEDST has already been covered in the previous report on the first grant to ABEDST for developing and piloting the Fundani/ECD course.

At the time of this project, the specific context of ABET in South Africa was one where the focus was on formal ABET provision under the National Qualifications Framework. ABEDST wanted to remain focussed on servicing the needs of those not provided for, i.e. 'the poor, rural and marginalised' (ABE Development Services Trust 1999a).

The partner organisations

In terms of the proposal for this project which would involve researching and extending the original project, appropriate partner organisations would be identified during the course of the project. These partner organisations would work with ABEDST to adapt, extend or develop the ABET/ECD programme to suit their needs.

The proposal

After piloting Fundani 1 and 2/ECD at Lesedi Educare Association, ABEDST realised that the requests they were receiving indicated that further research was necessary.

The project proposal stated the following aims for the project that was divided into 4 different phases:

- Phase 1: To conduct detailed research into the broader needs for the integrated programme and the appropriate models of training and provision with different ECD and ABET providers
- Phase 2: To respond to needs identified/To develop the programme
- Phase 3: To support the implementation of the programme
- Phase 4: To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the programme

The overall aim was to evaluate whether the aims of the integrated ABET/ECD programme were being achieved, whether the target audience was being reached and whether the content, methods and media continued to be appropriate i.e. to explore the extent to which the course and delivery model used for the pilot could be replicated for different contexts.

Intended products/outcomes of the project:

- Phase 1: A research report with recommendations.
- Phase 2: Identification of appropriate providers of the programme. The adaptation, extension or development of the programme for use with facilitators and learners from different provider organisations.
- Phase 3: Implementation, training and support of facilitators (in collaboration with ELRU) in 3 possible provinces: Western Cape, Gauteng and Free State.

Phase 4: Measurement of the success of the programme in each delivery site to determine whether a generic programme is possible or whether they should be site-specific. Monitoring and refining the programme for further and more extensive usage.

Literacy/Development model

The project was implemented in order to test the wider applicability and suitability of the initial integrated ABET/ECD programme used in the pilot i.e. literacy and ECD sessions running separately but concurrently with increasing amounts of ECD as literacy levels improved.

Indicators of success

These were not specified in the proposal although a process of data collection for the purposes of evaluating the success of the implementation of the programme in the different sites was outlined.

This involved the following:

- ❑ critical comment from subject experts, the course team and teachers and learners on all aspects of the programme (texts, teaching and models of delivery)
- ❑ piloting the course in the field as it was being developed thereby being able to refine and revise the course for use with a wider audience
- ❑ a summative evaluation of the project by partner organisations (ABEDST and Early Learning Resources Unit (ELRU)) which would include a review of the methods, materials and models used to discover what did and did not work, with the aim of delivering appropriate courses in different contexts. The evaluation methods suggested in the funding proposal are casual evaluation (i.e. taking note of drop out rates, complaints, praise etc.) and more formal and deliberate evaluation (i.e. discussions, interviews, questionnaires etc.).

Implementation

The first phase of the project involved ABEDST researching the broader need for an integrated ABE/ECD programme and the extent to which the course and delivery model used for the Lesedi pilot could be replicated for different contexts. This aspect of the project was supposed to last 2 – 3 months, but it took much longer. Twelve organisations were interviewed (9 of whom were in the Western Cape, 1 in Gauteng, 1 in the Free State and 1 in KwaZulu-Natal). Many of them saw the need to improve the communications skills of their trainees, but could not see a way to incorporate it into their training programme. No research report was produced at the end of the first phase of the project as originally intended.

In the end ABEDST only worked with 2 organisations for this project – Lesedi Educare Association in the Free State (which had been the key project in the pilot) and ELRU in Cape Town.

Learners in the Lesedi Educare Association group had literacy/ECD lessons and stand-alone ECD training in a parallel curriculum. The group met 3 times per week for 2 hours at a time. The final report on this grant to the funders indicated that ‘a less intensive teacher support and monitoring strategy was adopted in order that a more realistic assessment could be made around the implementation and delivery aspects of this programme’.

ABEDST also worked with a group of women who had been working with the Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU). This group consisted of women who were employed by informal day-care centres in informal settlements in Cape Town. They had never had any ECD training. The programme for this group incorporated ECD content into ABET level 3 mother tongue literacy classes and gradually moved into English communications. As the confidence of learners grew, the course gradually became totally integrated. The classes were held once a week for a full day. ECD training and English communication lessons were offered by two separate facilitators.

Successes

Developing and extending the partnership set up for the pilot

One of the groups ABEDST worked with was the same organisation that they had worked with on the pilot project (Lesedi Educare Association). Lesedi decided to continue with the integrated programme because they had experienced the ECD benefits and because their learners started seeing other opportunities as a result of their literacy. Each partner organisation had clear roles and responsibilities with regard to the management of the project.

Income generation

At the end of the grant period of this project Lesedi had started a clay bead-making project with a local potter. The report to funders states that ‘this project (has) required the learners to take responsibility for the management and production of the orders.’ Thus they were able to supplement the income they derived from childcare work.

Combination of languages used in training and materials

Training using a combination of languages with a mixed language ability group was effective in this project. Staff at ABEDST report that the learners in the ELRU group who were weakest in English at the beginning of this programme, learned the most. This is ascribed to the fact that they had to battle to understand the material in the English texts (although most of the training was done in Xhosa).

Co-teaching results in development of new skills in facilitators

The two facilitators in the ELRU group in Cape Town worked together to plan, prepare, teach and evaluate the programme. The more they did this, the more they were both able to train ABET and ECD interchangeably.

Development and empowerment of individual learners

Both the Lesedi group (who did the Fundani/ECD level 1 and 2 mother tongue integrated course) and the ELRU group (who started at level 3 mother tongue and went on to English communications) reported and demonstrated increased self-confidence. The ELRU trainer is reported to have said that in all the ECD training she had conducted she had never experienced the development and empowerment of individuals to this extent.

Positive spin offs for children in learners' care

Learners in the Lesedi group indicated that they 'had a deeper and broader understanding of the ECD content' and that 'their literacy skills have had a ripple effect on the children in their care' (ibid).

Challenges

Difficulties involved in co-operating across sectors

Despite the fact that potential partner organisations that ABEDST interviewed had similar needs and could see the value in offering literacy alongside their core business, it took them a long time to work out how they would implement integrated programmes. No partners were found outside of the ECD sector. Most of the potential partners interviewed were in the Western Cape which also limited the range of possible partners.

The ECD sector in South Africa is in itself highly competitive and fragmented and it is a difficult sector in which to work. ABEDST therefore ended up working with one of the same organisations (i.e. Lesedi) as they had in the pilot.

Expense of piloting integrated courses

The development of integrated courses (particularly for many different contexts) and the training of facilitators in the use of such materials is a very expensive exercise.

Close physical location of project partners

Despite the harmonious working relationship between the partners in this project, they found the distance between partner organisations a hindrance. They recommend partnerships between local organisations.

Lack of carry-over from training to practice

ABEDST mention in their funding report that there was a lack of carry-over from the training to practice. This is a common problem with a lot of training endeavours. ABEDST have since developed strategies to try and increase carry-over (discussed below under 'Lessons learned').

Level and language issues

When the focus of a learning group is on communications, it is relatively easy to select participants by screening them and assigning them to a particular level. However, when offering integrated courses, where ECD is the main focus, communication ability cannot be the criteria for selection or group formation. The problem is that if the ECD training is text-based (which the higher level/skills based qualifications usually are), then how can people with very low levels of literacy be accommodated? (See 'Lessons learned' for more on this.)

No research report was ever written nor was the information gathered disseminated

The title of this project was 'to research and extend the integrated ABE/ECD programme', yet none of the information gathered in the research phase of the project has been recorded. The project therefore did not provide further information as to whether there is a broader need for integrated courses and what the issues were for the organisations interviewed that did not participate in the project.

Lessons learned

Identification of needs and setting up partnerships

ABEDST learned that projects work better when organisations identify their own needs and approach a partner organisation - rather than an 'outside' organisation 'offering' an intervention.

Increasing carry-over of training into practice

One of the challenges mentioned above was the lack of carry-over from training to practice. ABEDST suggest that training has to be structured in such a way that learners are expected to practise a few small tasks in their contexts before the next session. This can be done without the trainer actually going to watch it being done, which reduces the labour intensiveness of the process. Behavioural change is slow and laborious and is better done through repetition of new small tasks. To increase carry-over into practice the training needs to be sustained and regular, learners have to recycle the new information, they have to be reminded of new behaviours and they must be given the opportunity to practise. ABEDST have also learned that training two people from the same organisation is ideal as they can support each other at their delivery site.

Problems of mixed language ability groups can be overcome if content is familiar to all learners

One of the groups ABEDST worked with was literate, but had differing levels of English ability. The materials were in English but had ECD content (which was familiar to them). The training of this group was done mostly in Xhosa. The lower level learners struggled, but according to ABEDST, this did not matter because the focus of the course

was on ECD, not on communications. That is, ‘the language was the vehicle rather than the focus’ (Wendy Walton in a telephonic interview, June 2004).

No matter what the plan, multilingualism and immersion is the way training seems to actually be carried out in mixed language ability groups.

A model school/training centre for pilots

To help to reduce the cost of developing and piloting new programmes, ABEDST see a role for a model school/training centre where programmes could be piloted and different organisations could send their ECD workers for training.

Geographical location of project partners

Partnerships between organisations located geographically close together make for easier and more effective management of projects.

Mode of delivery is a more important consideration than language ability when forming groups for skills training

ABEDST say that the mode of delivery that is going to be used is more important than the literacy levels of learners when forming learning groups for integrated courses. That is, if the skills training is to be text-based the literacy levels in the selected group need to be higher.

The consequences of not integrating learning areas or disciplines

ABEDST did a study for the Western Cape Education Department that found that unless learning areas are integrated, it would take approximately 14 years for a learner to progress from illiteracy to NQF 1.

Conclusion

The overall aim of this project as outlined in the funding proposal was ‘to explore the extent to which the course and delivery model used for the pilot could be replicated for different contexts’.

The results of the project do not throw much more light on whether the model could be replicated for different contexts because ABEDST continued to work in the same context and integrate the same skills with literacy development as they had in the pilot (i.e. ECD/ABET). Also the model was not only applied to ECD workers but to any adults involved in the care of young children.

One of the intended products of this project was a research report containing recommendations arising out of phase one (researching the broader need for the integrated programme and the appropriate models of training and provision with different ECD and ABET providers). This would have provided useful information as to whether there is a broader need for the type of integrated programme developed by

ABEDST. It was also supposed to outline appropriate models of training and provision with different ECD and ABET providers. This report was not written, but ABEDST's subsequent proposal to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund provides a summary of the different models they had used in previous projects (ABE Development Services Trust 2002).

Interviews and documentation

Interviewees

Barbara Hutton (ABE Development Services Trust)

Wendy Walton (ABE Development Services Trust)

Documentation

Proposal

ABE Development Services Trust. 1999a. *Proposal to research and extend the integrated Adult Basic Education/Early Childhood Development programme.* 26 August.

Reports and correspondence

ABE Development Services Trust. 1999b. *Responses to questions.* Fax from ABEDST to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 29 September.

ABE Development Services Trust. 2000. *1st year Report to the Rockefellers Brothers Fund for period January – November 2000.*

ABE Development Services Trust. 2002. *Final Report to Rockefeller Brothers Fund for the period January 2000 – May 2002.* 30 July.

An integrated model for linking literacy to livelihoods

Project Title:	Linking learning to livelihoods
RBF Grant No.:	#02 - 157
Grantee:	ABE Development Services Trust (ABEDST)
Partner organisations:	False Bay College for Further Education and Training (together with Two Oceans Craft and Culture Trust and Nomzekelo Training and Facilitation, Noordhoek) Iziko Lobomi, Hout Bay Ikamva Labantu, Cape Town
Total Budget:	U\$ 46 000 (R406 910)
Planned duration:	July 2002 - July 2004 in 4 phases

Context

In this project ABE Development Services Trust (ABEDST), whose work is described in more detail on page 30, worked with partner organisations to develop and implement new models for integrating the education, training and development needs of various groups with a focus on livelihood activities. Due to the significant differences between the partner organisations, projects will be identified informally according to partner name (or host partner where there was more than one partner), geographical area and livelihood focus.

Site 1: False Bay College, Noordhoek (Beadwork)

In this site, the initial partner organisation with whom ABEDST made contact was Two Oceans Craft and Culture Trust who worked in collaboration with False Bay College for Further Education and Training and Nomzekelo Training and Facilitation. False Bay College became the host site where training took place.

False Bay College is a Further Education and Training College which offers techno-entrepreneurial skills training courses for unemployed and unskilled people from the surrounding communities.

Nomzekelo Training and Facilitation is a registered company providing capacity building interventions to grassroots communities – through courses such as beading skills and business management.

Two Oceans Craft and Culture Trust is a registered trust which was established to develop, maintain and manage a craft and culture centre in the Noordhoek Valley, to promote tourism training skills, enterprise development and the social and economic improvement of the community and to facilitate the trainees'/community's entry into the market.

Site 2: Iziko Lobomi, Hout Bay (Mosaic making and Paper making)

Iziko Lobomi (Hearth of Life) is a community-based organisation that services the needs of very poor people in an informal settlement in Hout Bay (an up-market suburb in Cape Town).

Site 3: Ikamva Labantu, Cape Town (ECD training)

Ikamva Labantu (Future of the people) is a Cape Town based umbrella organisation for a range of projects and activities at different sites. The organisation has a network of childcare centres that provide care for children that come from very poor families. The staff of the childcare centres are mostly untrained and often exploited.

The proposal

The main aim of this project was to find ways to address the problem raised by the following quote from a potential adult learner 'If this literacy does not put bread on the table, I am not interested' (ABE Development Services Trust 2002).

ABEDST, based on the experience of a number of previous projects, were already in the process of developing a generic, integrated model of learning where ABET/literacy would be integrated with other core life and livelihood skills. This was based on the view that in this way 'learning has a better chance of being effective, meaningful, and of contributing to a sustainable livelihood'. The core of the emerging model was on the livelihood activities in which a particular group was engaged.

Literacy and development model

The key features of the model for this project were:

- ❑ conscious structuring and development of specific learning experiences and processes into the content of a learning programme
- ❑ flexible content and delivery, responsive to the needs of the particular community
- ❑ a core programme dictated by the main activity of group with other skills and knowledge structured around it
- ❑ communications (mother tongue or English) and numeracy structured and integrated into the programme
- ❑ all underpinned by critical outcomes such as problem solving, teamwork, accessing resources, communicating effectively (which was seen as essential for transformation and development, as well as for an educationally sound and sustainable intervention).

Delivery of the programme would be by either:

- ❑ a qualified ABET facilitator trained to teach the entire programme
- ❑ a co-teaching approach using an ABET trained teacher and a teacher from the partner organisation
- ❑ a facilitator from the partner organisation trained to teach the entire programme.

The funding proposal expressed the following aims for the 4 phases ABEDST envisaged for the project.

Phase I:

To explore how best to collaborate with potential partners in linking ABET more directly to the income-generating activities of adults with little or no formal education. This phase was already in progress when the proposal was written.

During the first phase of the project ABEDST would:

- ❑ conduct workshops and site visits and consult with other organisations to consolidate partnerships and explore implementation of integrated models
- ❑ respond to requests received for integrated programmes.

Phase 2:

To assist partner organisations to develop and implement models for integrating the education, training and development needs of their learner groups.

During this phase ABEDST planned to:

- ❑ develop integrated curricula and learning programmes with partner organisations
- ❑ identify appropriate service providers
- ❑ recruit learners
- ❑ set up training groups
- ❑ conduct needs assessments with participants
- ❑ develop integrated programmes that respond to the expressed needs and the development needs of the community
- ❑ contract necessary specialised input from service providers to either train trainers or learners
- ❑ identify and develop the most effective way to teach the integrated programme.

Phase 3:

To develop capacity in trainers to implement, monitor and evaluate the integrated programme.

During this phase ABEDST planned to:

- ❑ develop and implement teacher training for the specific learning programme and partner organisation
- ❑ set up and maintain links with content specialists.

Phase 4:

To track and document the effectiveness of the programme.

This would be achieved by continuous assessment of progress through:

- ❑ baseline data collection
 - interviews with each learner at the inception of the programme
 - written 'Life stories' of participants information about *inter alia* individual learning levels and needs, participants' social circumstances etc.
- ❑ regular review of the progress of the programme, learners and educators
- ❑ educators' journals and records of learners' progress
- ❑ assessments for certification and accreditation of learning on request.

Indicators of success

The project proposal indicates that the project would be deemed successful (by ABEDST) if learners:

- ❑ internalised critical outcomes and were able to use them in their daily activities outside the classroom
- ❑ were more literate, numerate and confident in English
- ❑ were demonstrably more self-confident (evidenced by being better able to access resources and negotiate systems around them)
- ❑ learned a livelihood skill and became more economically self-sufficient
- ❑ had a greater awareness of relevant social and development issues and an understanding of how to be more proactive about them
- ❑ used resources and the environment in a sustainable way.

Implementation

The first phase of the project, which consisted of establishing partnerships and exploring and developing implementation models, took a good deal longer than had been expected. This was due to the length of time it took to finalise project partners. Some organisations had to consult their own constituencies and others were not clear how they would fit ABET content into their programmes. The second phase (implementation), only began in the second year of the project.

In the end, ABEDST worked with three key partner organisations in three different geographical sites. These project sites had very different focuses and modes of working and will be dealt with in detail separately. As described in more detail below, the Noordhoek site which focussed on beadwork was prematurely closed due to significant problems, the Hout Bay site was successful with a small group of 5 mosaic workers and the Cape Town site continues to flourish with two groups of 48 childcare workers.

Site I: Noordhoek – False Bay College of Further Education and Training

This was the most complex project in terms of organisation and the nature and number of partner organisations involved. In addition to ABEDST, there was the key partner organisation which was an NGO (Two Oceans Craft and Culture Trust); a formal Further Education and Training College (False Bay College of Further Education and Training); and a commercial training company (Nomzekelo Training and Facilitation).

A joint venture agreement was signed between all the partner organisations in which roles and responsibilities were identified. All parties had representatives on a management team. False Bay College was responsible for entrepreneurial skills training. Nomzekelo was responsible for the beadwork training. ABEDST, in addition to providing the funding for the project (through the RBF) was responsible for curriculum development, monitoring and providing the life skills and communications component

of the programme which was linked to the beadwork and enterprise training. Two Oceans was responsible for facilitating marketing and sales of the beadwork.

ABEDST followed the process used by False Bay College, the host partner. This involved full time attendance which involved a combination of training and production time. The model which was followed in the college generally was that learners could earn money from production while they were studying. The learners received two sessions of Communication/Life skills per week for a 3 month period.

An existing beadmaking group of women who had originally expressed an interest in this programme through Two Oceans did not register. Finally a group of 15 women were recruited and started the programme. They were not a pre-existing group and had no previous beadwork experience. They were school leavers and had 12 years of formal schooling.

Attendance was sporadic due to the women leaving for temporary employment and piecemeal work elsewhere from time to time. Their expectation was that they were going to earn money from the outset and when this did not happen, their commitment wavered. By the time the project was well under way, a core group of only 6 women continued.

Existing tensions between the College and the community also contributed to the withdrawal of some of the women, who believed that the College was receiving more than it was entitled to and was depriving them of their rightful earnings. The women did learn the skill of beadmaking and some were producing saleable items by the end of 2003. In January 2004 only 2 women returned to register and the programme was terminated by ABEDST and False Bay College.

Site 2: Hout Bay – Iziko Lobomi

Originally two groups were identified: a mosaic making group (consisting of 5 women) and a paper making group (consisting of 3 women). Both groups had been functioning for at least two years but were heavily reliant on mentors to keep functioning. The focus of the project was therefore to develop the wide range of skills necessary for running a sustainable business. Once implementation began a decision was taken to merge the two groups as they had similar needs and it was not viable to run two separate programmes with such small groups. The educational programme was run on one morning a week so that their full-time production could continue. They were taught by an ABEDST facilitator.

ABEDST's role was to develop the programme to build the business skills of the women who were involved in making paper and mosaic products. The aim of the programme was to decrease the groups' reliance on their mentors (who had been helping the women financially and with product development).

The two groups functioned effectively until the paper making group moved to a venue far from the training venue halfway through the project. This and other factors led to

the 3 women dropping out of the programme. The mosaic group continued and were, at the time of writing, setting goals and further training needs in workshops facilitated by ABEDST. ABEDST have reported that they are 'delighted' to be leaving the group 'on the brink of taking over the running of their own enterprise'.

Site 3: Cape Town – Ikamva Labantu

This project was focussed on the training needs of caregivers at the childcare centres which formed part of the Ikamva Labantu network. The caregivers in these centres have little or no ECD training and are often exploited by the owners of the childcare centres. The programme aims to provide an integrated approach to ECD training which meets the needs of the caregivers and takes into consideration the context in which they live and work. The training has focussed on building relationships and meeting each others' needs, as well as the needs of the children in their care.

At the time of writing, the project at this site was ongoing and is scheduled to finish in December 2004. Training began in April 2004 with participants from 26 childcare centres (2 childcare centres were subsequently suspended from the project). The participants consist of two people (the principal and 1 caregiver) from each of the remaining 24 centres. The 48 participants are taught in two separate groups. They attend a day's training once a week for 34 consecutive weeks. Attendance is reported to be consistently good.

Plans to also train Ikamva Labantu trainers (thereby developing internal capacity to use the model in other centres) did not work out. ABEDST has received positive feedback on the impact of the training on attitudes and practice in the field.

Successes

Skills development provides a context for ABET in existing groups

ABEDST found that skills development and training was a meaningful context in which to offer ABET/literacy and gave it a greater chance of success. This is especially true where there is an existing income generating group (as in the case of the Iziko Lobomi group).

Self-reported increased confidence and business skills of participants at the False Bay College site

When interviewed, beneficiaries of the beadmaking programme reported that they were in a position to run their own beading business. They were also confident that they would be able to fill in forms to apply for business funding. They said their families and friends had noticed their increased confidence. They said they could do their own marketing, but did not have money to do it (although staff of ABEDST did not agree that they *could* do it).

Business skills and increased confidence/independence reported by the mentors at the Iziko Lobomi site

The mentors from the Hout Bay community on whom this group were very dependent have indicated that the mosaic making women are far more able to take responsibility for the business side after this course. They also report a marked increase in the ability of these women to express themselves and their confidence in doing so.

Success of non-formal sites

The two sites in which the partners were NGOs were relatively successful. In contrast to the False Bay College site, the programme at the other two sites (in partnership with community-based organisations) was flexible and could change direction if required. In this way it was seen to be meeting the real needs of the participants.

Very good attendance at the Ikamva Labantu site

The consistent attendance of caregivers has been very pleasing and surprising. This suggests that the focus of the programme is meeting the needs of the participants who work in very difficult circumstances.

Challenges

Context within which the project operated at False Bay College for Further Education and Training

The initiative at this site must be seen in the context of the restructuring of the Further Education and Training sector which was underway at the time. The institution in which it was housed was in the process of changing from Noordhoek Valley Community Centre into False Bay College and this project was inevitably affected by some of the related issues. For example, there was no full time trainer for the beading project and the partner organisation normally responsible for the entrepreneurial side of the projects was not involved.

ABEDST have concluded that 'it is difficult to introduce a new programme into a rigidly prescribed model' (ABE Development Services Trust 2004) and that the rules and policies of a formal institution were at odds with the flexible, non-formal nature of the programme being offered.

Expectations of the group at False Bay College of Further Education and Training

The community in which the project at False Bay College of Further Education and Training was located is extremely impoverished with a high rate of unemployment. The beading group had 12 years of formal schooling and their primary motivation for joining the group was income generation. They said in an interview that there were 'no jobs' for them. They had seen a group of ceramic pot makers from the same centre make a relatively large amount of money from a similar type of skills development/income

generation project. Their expectation was that they would also earn a substantial amount of money while they learned the skills. When this did not happen, the relationship between the group and the college deteriorated.

Formation of a new group compared with working with an existing skills group

The group at the False Bay College site were not an established, up and working skills group. In the Iziko Lobomi group, by contrast, the integrated course was offered to an established group that already had the necessary skills component. The integrated programme complemented the existing competencies of the established group.

Choice of income generation activity

The Production Manager of the False Bay College said in an interview that he did not believe that arts and crafts were a viable way to develop communities. He said that beading was laborious and time-consuming for a small amount of profit and that unless people had a particular interest in it, they quickly lost motivation.

Partners' vision of development

Where a number of partners are involved (as in the False Bay College site), it is essential that all partners have the same vision and goals for the learning group. If this is not the case, it is difficult for partners to work together and make an effective contribution.

'Literacy' needs of the group

At the False Bay College site, the learners were not in need of Adult Basic Education, since they were all in possession of a Grade 12 school leavers' certificate. Thus at this site the programme did not integrate *literacy* with income generation skills, as outlined in the proposal to funders. It was, in effect, a skills development programme with a business skills component.

Lack of continuous assessment of the new programme

The proposal indicated a comprehensive strategy to assess the progress of this pilot programme. This was going to be done through *inter alia* baseline data collection and regular review of the programme, learners and educators. This was not done and therefore no data is available on the various pilots at the various sites. Clearly, this is not ideal as it makes objective assessment of the success of the various attempts impossible.

No certification or accreditation

No certification or accreditation has been asked for or worked out for this programme. One of the motivations given for offering integrated courses is that they have the potential to speed up learners' progress in the formal system. However, obtaining the necessary accreditation is time consuming and laborious and in the case of these courses, it has not begun.

Lessons learned

New, integrated programmes work better at non-formal than at formal sites

Developing new models for integrating literacy and livelihoods requires flexibility and responsiveness. This is often not possible in a formal context where there are inflexible established procedures.

Move away from formal ‘literacy only’ provision

ABEDST report that the work done in this project has moved them away from formal literacy provision. In practice this has meant that they adopt different ways of working in new projects. They now firmly believe that if literacy/communications learning is offered with specific content, it becomes relevant and worthwhile.

Integration *is* the tailoring of adult learning to the life circumstances of learners

Allied to the above point, ABEDST’s experiences have convinced them that adult learning must be tailored to the life circumstances of learners and therefore adaptations of integrated models is the best way to proceed.

Forming and sustaining partnerships

ABEDST’s experiences confirm that it takes a long time to set up partnerships and it is often a frustrating experience. However, for a new model of co-operative training across sectors to be effective and sustainable, all organisations involved have to understand and accept the process and content before proceeding. This takes time and programmes should not commence until everything is in place.

Essential to building the internal capacity of organisations involved in the pilots

Unfortunately, not many of the organisations involved in these pilots had a staff member who was trained in the new integrated programme. ABEDST are of the opinion that they should build in a salary for a trainee teacher for future pilots or organisations that they work with must raise the funds for a teacher. In this way the capacity of the organisation will grow.

The facilitator is the key to a successful intervention

Allied to the above point – unsurprisingly, ABEDST found that the key to a successful programme is the facilitator. Integrated programmes are more difficult to facilitate and the more skills, information and experience the facilitator has, the more likely the programme is to meet its goals.

Selection of participants

At the False Bay College site, the group selected were not in need of ABET Communications skills as they had already had 12 years of formal schooling. Thus the project did not end up integrating literacy development with skills development. The educational level of the group was such that their need was for business and life skills rather than literacy development. This project therefore does not offer any lessons learned about linking *literacy* with development work.

Skills development vs poverty alleviation

Allied to the point above – participants at the False Bay College site perceived the project to be primarily a source of potential income and attendance became erratic when the money did not roll in. Participants did not properly grasp the fact that they had to *learn* to produce saleable items and that even when they did produce items of a high enough quality to sell, they did not get the total selling price of the item.

The ABEDST interim report for the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003 states – ‘it is becoming clear that it is possible to learn and earn at the same time’ (ABE Development Services Trust 2003). Yet when interviewed, the beneficiaries said they did not earn enough and this was one of the contributing factors to the ultimate failure of this project. ABEDST staff are now of the opinion that learners should not be paid while they are in training because this caused confusion.

Business skills component

The learners in this project received ‘business skills’ training from one of the project partners at the beginning of the project. This consisted mainly of learning to prepare business plans. It did not cover aspects such as calculating the cost price of an article, mark-ups, profit share, etc. The business skills component had to be supplemented with other business skills training by ABEDST. This was partly due to the early withdrawal of the partner responsible for the business skills component.

Limited general knowledge of beneficiaries

Allied to the above point, in an interview with the beneficiaries at the False Bay College site it was clear that they had very little understanding of how capitalism works. A major cause of dissatisfaction related to the fact that they received for example only R11 for a choker which they subsequently saw for sale in the tourist outlets for R30.

This misunderstanding demonstrates the need for a broader approach to business skills development – from explanations of economic systems to specific training in costing of items. Clearly, however, this is a tall order as the issues are complicated and covering them would be time-consuming and difficult in a project of this nature.

Conclusion

The pilots described in this report reinforced ABEDST's hunch that they (and everyone else in the literacy field) needed to 'get more real' about literacy. They tested their model in the formal context offered by the tertiary institution and it did not work particularly well. However, in the community-based organisations the flexibility of the integrated approach was key in meeting the real needs of learners.

The failure of the project at the False Bay site reiterates the importance of clear communication, and of beneficiaries and delivery organisations having common aims and objectives agreed prior to the commencement of the programme. It is worth noting that there were more project partners than participants at the False Bay College of Further Education and Training site and that, despite a formidable looking legal agreement, the project partnerships did not work. This was in part due to no one partner organisation taking responsibility for the programme.

In the Hout Bay site and in the work with Ikamva Labantu participants learned while they earned – which, given the pressure on adults in need of basic education, is a real achievement. It must be remembered that these groups already existed as income generating groups prior to the educational intervention and that this was a key element in their success. The group that had no skills base and no commonly identified needs did not succeed.

In the conclusion of their final report to funders, written in September 2004, ABEDST say that they 'hope to find appropriate forums and audiences to share this learning, but (we) have already begun sharing and implementing these ideas in new projects (we) have become involved in.' In these times of scarce resources, it is indeed a pity if others in the field are not privy to the highlights and pitfalls of a new way of doing things, and the funders should ensure that any other organisations looking for funding for similar projects liaise with ABEDST and learn from them. It is unfortunate that these pilot projects, like so many others, failed to produce incontrovertible results in that monitoring and tracking (especially longer term) were not budgeted for.

Interviews and documentation

Interviewees

ABE Development Services Trust

Wendy Walton

Barbara Hutton

Nomthinjana Makalamina

False Bay College of Further Education

Stefan Kruger (Skills Development Manager: False Bay College of Further Education and Training)

Qondiswa Qwayi (Beadworker)

Nandipha Gumenke (Beadworker)

Thandiswa Ngxengani (Beadworker)

Site visit

False Bay College of Further Education and Training

Documentation

Proposal

ABE Development Services Trust. 2002. *Linking learning to livelihoods*. April.

Reports and correspondence

ABE Development Services Trust. 2003. *Interim report to Rockefeller Brothers Fund for period 1 July 2002 – 30 June 2003*.

ABE Development Services Trust. 2004. *Final report to Rockefeller Brothers Fund 'Linking learning to livelihoods' for period 1 July 2003 – 30 June 2004*.

Literacy tutors intervene against AIDS

Project Title:	Literacy against AIDS
RBF Grant No.:	#01 - 233
Grantee:	Operation Upgrade of South Africa
Total Budget:	U\$50 000 (R477 000)
Planned duration:	One year (October 2001 - October 2002)

Context

The context of the project was the existence of large numbers of illiterate adults in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (over 20% of people aged 20 or more have had no schooling at all) and the extent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the same province (an estimated 30% of the adult population is infected). This is most notable amongst the poorer sections of the population.

Operation Upgrade of South Africa, (Operation Upgrade) one of South Africa's oldest literacy organisations has been in operation for more than 35 years. Its major focus is on the training of ABET facilitators and the provision of ABET learner and facilitator materials. Since the early 1990s the organisation has focussed on literacy in the context of development, particularly rural development.

The proposal

In August 2001, Operation Upgrade submitted a proposal on Literacy against AIDS to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Though Operation Upgrade had since 2000 included family health and HIV/AIDS related material in its literacy/ABET teacher training, the organisation considered these inputs inadequate to the task in the situation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in KwaZulu-Natal. Something more substantial was required. The project aimed to provide the following HIV/AIDS training to ABE tutors:

- ❑ information about HIV/AIDS
- ❑ counselling skills relating to HIV/AIDS
- ❑ home-based care skills to assist AIDS sufferers and their families.

The information, counselling and home-based care training would be provided to 140 Adult Basic Education tutors (drawn from 600 people who had already received a 20 day ABE tutor training programme) who would in turn reach 2,100 learners (that is, about 15 learners each) through whom some 10,000 secondary beneficiaries would be reached.

The objectives of the project were to:

1. develop a 10 day tutor course which integrated literacy lessons with AIDS awareness and AIDS home care, and developed counselling skills
2. train 140 ABET tutors to teach community members and literacy learners about AIDS, and home care for AIDS sufferers, and give them the counselling skills they needed
3. give AIDS sufferers and their families basic training and the means to improve family nutrition and income
4. provide field support for the tutors in their programme of literacy against AIDS.

These tutors (who had already received Operation Upgrade's basic training) would provide AIDS information to Adult Basic Education learners in the course of their normal classes. In addition, it was expected that the ABET AIDS educators would become community resources themselves. They would provide counselling for anyone in the community (and especially for AIDS sufferers and their families), help them to start food gardens and small-scale income generation, and access other resources for them which would help to deal with AIDS, such as home care packages, child care grants and medical care. In this way their impact would extend into the community.

These high expectations were also seen in the list of indicators of success. These were that each tutor would have, within the four-month period after attending the course:

- ❑ given literacy lessons which cover HIV/AIDS awareness
- ❑ run at least one home care training session
- ❑ provided at least one counselling session
- ❑ identified AIDS resources which he or she can approach for their areas
- ❑ established a plan for small business development for HIV/AIDS related sufferers and affected people, or encouraged people to join existing programmes.

The proposal rested upon six important assumptions:

- ❑ ABE tutors were community workers and had the motivation for community AIDS education
- ❑ ABE tutors were respected community members
- ❑ ABE tutors would be able to work with community leaders to set up AIDS education
- ❑ every community worker should be able to speak knowledgeably about AIDS
- ❑ the tutors would be able to manage on their own after four months of support.

The model

The project was based on a five-stage model.

Stage 1: Course material and resource development (8 weeks)

Stage 2: Recruitment of tutors

Stage 3: Tutor training (4 groups over 6 months)

Stage 4: Implementation (immediately after each group trained)

Stage 5a: Monitoring (immediately after each group trained – extending for 4 months per group)

Stage 5b: Evaluation (immediately after each group trained and extending for 12 months)

Tutors were expected to submit a Monthly Report.¹ In addition, within two weeks of completing the training course, they had to submit a 'Community Profile' which asked them to identify local AIDS support services and individuals, details about clinics, hospitals, AIDS orphanages, three AIDS affected families and to plan four activities related to their four roles (AIDS instruction in ABET teaching, community education, counselling, and home care).

Tutors would be paid a monthly stipend of R150 per month for four months to cover expenses such as travel, phone calls, faxes and posting monthly activity reports to Operation Upgrade.

It is important to note that there were to be no special project sites *per se*. The tutors would either provide information on HIV/AIDS through the existing ordinary ABET lessons they gave to classes or groups, or in talks they would give to community groups. They would also make home visits for counselling and home care.

Implementation

Recruitment of tutors for the project was easy (and even people who were not ABET tutors applied, many attracted by the stipend offered) and selection criteria were applied. As planned, 140 tutors were trained (81 from urban townships, 22 from informal settlements in urban and peri-urban areas, 11 from urban suburbs, and 26 from rural areas).

Four training courses of 12 days duration each were held. 35 tutors were trained in each course. The courses were run by three organisations in addition to Operation Upgrade. They were: Independent Projects Trust (IPT), Crisp Research Facilitation and Training (CRISP) and Sinosizo Home Based Care. CRISP also conducted the evaluation.

- IPT and CRISP covered basic HIV/AIDS information and basic counselling skills (5 days)
- Sinosizo covered basic home care training (5 days)
- Operation Upgrade covered integration of AIDS content with literacy lessons and the role of tutors (1 day at the end of each 5-day block = 2 days).

Support given to the tutors by Operation Upgrade included visits to small groups of tutors to give advice and support, one day meetings/workshops for larger groups of tutors for support, problem solving and debriefing (five of these were held), and the monthly

¹ The three page Monthly Report required the following information:

- details on lesson(s) given on HIV/AIDS; talks to any community groups; any counselling done; any home care done
- estimate of HIV/AIDS demographics in area
- details of helpful organisations and individuals in area
- extra help needed by AIDS sufferers in area and how tutors thought Operation Upgrade could help meet these needs

reporting system. In addition tutors themselves came for counselling at the Operation Upgrade offices or phoned in for it.

An average of five tutors a day visited the Programme manager, tutors phoned the Project manager and she made 76 phone calls to tutors. About 15 visits a month were made to literacy classes according to a set timetable and three large community meetings were attended.

Successes

Good reporting

The project produced two 'formative reports' (one every four months) and an external evaluation at the end of the twelve-month programme.

A positive evaluation

The evaluation was undertaken in October 2002 by three staff from CRISP. The evaluators noted that their organisation had been involved in some of the project training. The evaluation was highly positive and was based on:

- ❑ examination of documentation
- ❑ analysis of the end of training course evaluation form and the tutors' monthly reports (a sample of 75)
- ❑ interviews (8 trainees) and focus groups (20 trainees)
- ❑ interviews with the project manager at Operation Upgrade and staff at some associated organisations.

It did not examine the financial management of the project (which seems to have been unproblematic).

A successful training course

The training course (run by IPT/CRISP, Sinosizo and Operation Upgrade) was described as having a logical flow of information and more than adequate content. As planned, 140 tutors were trained and given certificates of attendance. The training was well received by the participants though some thought it could have been longer (and there was a waiting list of over a hundred people awaiting future courses). The content of the training course, including counselling and home-based care, reportedly helped the tutors find solutions and gave them increased confidence to deal with HIV/AIDS related issues. They felt that they were better at their jobs as ABET tutors as a result of the course.

The HIV/AIDS content was integrated with ABET using the same principles which inform all of Operation Upgrade's tutor training. When tutors are trained to plan lessons, this lesson planning has two lesson outcomes – one literacy and one development outcome. The topic is introduced at the beginning of the lessons and discussed. After the discussion during which the tutor usually provides information as

well as discussion guidance, the literacy work, based on the topic, takes place. This literacy work is geared toward the literacy levels of the learners ranging from writing simple sentences based on the topic, to summarising the important points of a small group discussion.

Tutors were able to integrate HIV/AIDS into their ABET teaching. This is evident from lesson plans developed during the training course, sample lesson plans sent in from tutors in the field and reports from the field.

Effective implementation by tutors in the field

Teaching about HIV/AIDS

According to the monthly reports sampled by the evaluators, 97% of the trainees had included HIV/AIDS content within their ABET lessons. Data from the evaluation indicated that, during a sample week, on average 101 people attended per class or event and that the average time spent per week on HIV/AIDS specific content was 1.6 hours.

On the HIV/AIDS content included in ABET lessons the evaluators noted that this was valuable because of the prevailing ignorance about HIV/AIDS:

The mere inclusion of this content into a context (ABET classes) that has credibility as a learning process can have a major impact in the acceptance of the information and its possible translation into contextual information.

Crisp Research, Facilitation and Training 2002.

The final funding report mentions a 'small study of our literacy learners which was carried out by interns from Laubach Literacy International. They assessed knowledge and attitudes about AIDS among 40 learners, men and women, and found that they were now well-informed and positive about how AIDS can be handled.' No further details are given of this report.

Reporting on progress

The required monthly reports from the tutors were received regularly. The fact that the payment of the stipend depended on submission of these reports is probably a significant factor.

Provision of basic counselling

Some 69% of 75 monthly reports examined by the evaluators indicated that some form of basic counselling had been done, mainly in relation to clarifying information about HIV/AIDS and responding to issues related to death. (It is clear that most tutors certainly knew of large numbers of deaths from HIV/AIDS in their communities.) Focus group respondents indicated an average of 11 individual counselling contacts lasting between 30 minutes to 2½ hours each. (As with the teaching data it is impossible to verify this data. The number of hours spent counselling seems extraordinarily high – an average of at least 5½ hours per week.)

Providing home-based care

A very high proportion (81%) of the 75 analysed monthly reports reported some home-based care intervention such as providing education about it or assisting family members to provide it or both. Most tutors said that they assisted between 1 to 4 individuals. The

focus group tutors said that they engaged in about 10 home-based care contacts per week.

Overall success

The final report to funders describes the project as ‘one successful intervention in the AIDS epidemic in KwaZulu-Natal’. It argues that, having trained 140 tutors and extrapolating data collected from the first group of 35 trainees that the whole group of tutors reached 2,500 adult learners through their literacy classes. It assumes that these learners are now well informed about HIV/AIDS. A similar extrapolation suggests that if each tutor counselled five people, then 700 people would have been counselled.

Replication of model

Another impact claimed is that a party of 4 people from the Eastern Cape Department of Education ABET Unit attended the 4th course. They funded their own travel (from King William’s Town in the Eastern Cape) and accommodation. They had subsequently been set up by the Eastern Cape Education Department as a travelling AIDS education unit, reaching thousands of ABET teachers throughout the Eastern Cape.

Challenges

Stress and trauma

It became apparent through the field support and the Monthly reports submitted by the tutors that HIV/AIDS counselling and home-based care had been traumatic for many of the tutors, partly because of people’s denial of the fact of their being infected, their belief in witchcraft and their reliance on traditional healers to cure them. The evaluators summed up concerns as follows:

- ❑ the potential for these counselling and home-based care sessions to result in high levels of stress for tutors
- ❑ the dire need for competent counselling and accurate information for people engaging as clients in these individual sessions
- ❑ the apparent value of availability of ABET tutors to provide a basic counselling service.

In fact the five support workshops became ‘a trauma debriefing exercise for the tutors’.

The evaluators made this recommendation:

Ongoing loss, or exposure to contexts where high levels of loss are endemic often lead to burnout and post-traumatic stress for tutors. Dealing with loss at this level requires, without doubt, the provision of education and skills that provide tutors with coping mechanisms. Failure to engage in this form of response at a professional level could result in high dropout rates among tutors, or a move away from HIV/AIDS issues as a focus of their work.

Nutritional and income generation training and support

The objective to provide nutritional and income generation support was difficult to achieve and only a few small projects started. Unlike the other project objectives (tutor training, integration of HIV/AIDS content with literacy, counselling and home-based care), the nutritional and income-generation component was considered to be over-ambitious and only partially achieved. Nine very new income generation projects were reported – vegetable gardens (5), beadwork (2), grass hats (1), chalkboard making (1). Some success was achieved in the development of local networks.

The reality of desperate poverty

Hunger was a devastating reality among AIDS victims and there was an urgent need for direct relief such as provision of food. The harsh context would make achievement of income generation impossible even for the most perfectly implemented project.

Field support after the first four months of the project

Another objective only partially achieved was the provision of field support to the tutors, especially after the intensive four-month post-training period. The evaluation report provides no details about the quality or quantity of the field support except that some post-training workshops were held. The evaluators recommended that the tutors be provided with some form of ongoing support network (possibly in the form of structured peer support groups) or debriefing system. Clearly this would need to be considered in any extension or expansion of the project.

This was the most ethically problematic issue in the project. It would seem that support is necessary for the tutors, both during the intensive phase of engagement and subsequently, particularly given the stress and psychological trauma that was inevitably a part of this intervention. Addressing this would make the intervention much more expensive.

When this issue was discussed in interviews with Operation Upgrade staff, they said that the project expectations were that the tutors would in some way continue as AIDS-related community resource persons despite this lack of structured support, and that some degree of 'each one teach one' would expand their impact. Operation Upgrade believed that while there was some degree of 'burn-out' after the initial four months of the project, in practice they did give continuing support. This is, however, not enough.

The training of the tutors trained to handle the stress and trauma

Although this topic was covered in the first block of training which covered counselling, the impact of stress was underestimated and attempts were made during the progress of the project to provide more support. Counselling training would need to be considerably enhanced both in the training course and in field support and the building of support networks.

The lack of monitoring data

As is typical of small NGO projects and programmes there is very little substantial verifiable field data on which to base conclusions. Though there is a wealth of detail in the monthly reports submitted by tutors for the first four months, the extent to which it is reliable is a moot question since they were unverified self-reports. Unless there was observation data recorded in the field to verify at least a sample of the monthly reports it would be unwise to place too much reliance on these reports. Yet it is the monthly reports which are most suggestive of the success of the project.

Ongoing application of the new information and skills

The answer to the question of whether educators continue to apply the new information and skills would require the project to have the capacity for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. This raises the sub-question, 'In the long term, is the project a volunteer project?'

The impact of the stipend

The fact that what in effect was a stipend was paid to the trainees creates an enormous evaluation problem. To what extent was the enthusiasm for the project driven by the stipend rather than the intrinsic interest or potential benefit of the programme. (Of course, the use of a stipend may be an important factor in the design of such projects in the future.)

Lessons learned

The model has potential to work

The major lesson learned from this project is that linking or embedding a particular important content/practice area into conventional literacy or ABET tutor training programmes may work, particularly if this additional instruction or training is seen as having immediate value. This means more than simply gaining the interest of the educators being trained but also effectively making use of this training in real educational or community settings with targeted beneficiaries.

Time frames need to be realistic

The project was based on a model which assumed a short intensive training intervention followed by an intensive four-month monitoring and support programme (including the payment of an allowance). After this, the allowance stopped and it was assumed that the HIV/AIDS component would organically be continued. The time frame of a very demanding project of this nature needs to be extended.

Expectations of ABE tutors need to be realistic

This highly ambitious project assumed that ABE tutors would be able to integrate HIV/AIDS content into their regular classes; counsel individuals about HIV/AIDS; provide, and train families in, home-based care for HIV/AIDS sufferers; as well as help families improve family nutrition and income. This last expectation (nutrition and income) proved to be the most difficult for the ABE tutors to implement and with good reason. It would probably be better to have more modest but realisable expectations of ABE tutors rather than expecting them to achieve multiple objectives which involved them playing multiple roles.

HIV/AIDS interventions need structured ongoing support for implementers

Despite the fact that support for the tutors was a planned feature of the project, the psychological impact of dealing with the devastation of HIV/AIDS was underestimated. This support needs to be extended both in terms of time and depth. Training in and provision of high stress counselling is needed in any environment in which HIV/AIDS has a high impact.

Effective monitoring, evaluation and research is needed

Pilot projects such as this, need more effective research monitoring to enable them to be evaluated as successful models of delivery.

Conclusion

Operations Upgrade's own conclusions about the project taken from their final report to funders are:

Operation Upgrade has a broad interpretation of Adult Basic Education – closer to non-formal education as used in other developing countries. We see literacy as the vehicle for establishing learner groups who then must be given access to knowledge about as much as possible. We know that for this to happen, the teachers themselves must have a broad knowledge of other subjects and issues that affect learner's lives.

Although we attempt to develop the teachers in our basic training, we have never been happy with the results. Our literacy programme is very sound, and the focus of the basic teacher training is on teaching literacy. The result is that serious subjects such as human rights, small-scale income generation and AIDS have not been given sufficient time in the basic training. While the learners consistently get good results in literacy examinations, we are not sure that the teachers are offering them enough information about real-life matters that affect them closely.

The implementation of the HIV/AIDS project has enabled Operation Upgrade to achieve part of its stated mission – social change through literacy. We know beyond doubt that most of the teachers have brought AIDS as an issue into literacy classes, and that they have become community educators

about AIDS. We know that they have given AIDS counselling and home care. We had the financial support to provide sound training in HIV/ AIDS, and to support and monitor the teachers as they implemented the training. The results are very satisfying and we are convinced that the model can be used again for teacher development to enhance the learner curriculum. We plan to expand the model immediately to include teacher development in Justice, Human Rights and Democracy, and in Small Business Support, for existing teachers with classes.

So we can say with conviction that the Rockefeller grant has enabled Operation Upgrade to expand its model of literacy for social change.

Operation Upgrade 2002b.

With these conclusions one can but concur. The project appears to have been modestly beneficial to all the parties concerned, the educators, Operation Upgrade, and the recipients of instruction and counselling. It was a project that did genuinely reach illiterate poor people – a hard to reach community not well served by the mass media and printed information. There may be considerable wisdom in getting existing literacy organisations who already have a network of past trainees and who are truly embedded within communities to add-on various educationally and socially desirable roles.

It was a short project and the question arises whether it ought to have been conceptualised as a pilot project. Its progress suggests that it presented a fairly simple (and fairly cheap) model of rapid but good training given to existing literacy educators who are already teaching groups of learners and who are already located within communities (and respected as educators) and can achieve some modest success in conveying public health messages (in this case relating to HIV/AIDS).

A second important finding is that literacy educators can also function as community health counsellors after a relatively short period of training. There are, however, a number of negatives, problem areas and queries that would need to be taken into account before any repetition, extension or replication of this worthwhile project.

Interviews and documentation

Interviewees

Operation Upgrade

Pat Dean (Director)

Thombi Bhengu (Literacy against AIDS Programme Manager)

ABET/ AIDS Educators

Philisi Mbene

Hlengiwe Dlomo

Sindi Ngcobo

Tondo Nyathikazi

Mabusi Sikakane

Documentation

Proposal

Operation Upgrade. 2001. *Literacy against AIDS. Proposal to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.* August.

Reports and correspondence

Crisp Research, Facilitation and Training. 2002. *Evaluation of the Literacy against AIDS Programme provided by Operation Upgrade of South Africa.* November.

Operation Upgrade. 2001. *Proposed October grants.* E-mail from Operation Upgrade to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 19 September.

Operation Upgrade. 2002a. *Literacy against AIDS. Interim report to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.* 10 July.

Operation Upgrade. 2002b. *Literacy against AIDS project. Final narrative and financial report to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.* December.

Literacy and HIV/AIDS – the development and delivery of a course for ABET educators

Project Title:	Increasing access to quality primary health care in relation to HIV/AIDS preventative education, counselling and care. The development of a cost effective deliverable educator training course that utilises existing infrastructure and resources.
RBF Grant No.:	#01 - 30
Grantee:	Project Literacy
Total Budget:	U\$120 000 (R1 074 534)
Planned Duration:	2 years (2001 and 2002)

Context

Project Literacy is a large NGO that has been in the ABE field for more than thirty years. It is involved with a range of training and materials development projects and serves both the state, NGO and corporate sectors. Project Literacy has headquarters in Gauteng Province in Pretoria with a staff of approximately 50. It also has regional offices in all the other provinces of South Africa.

The proposal

According to the initial proposal, the project would consist of two components:

- 1 the development of an educator training course, an educator's guide and training file and the collation of exemplars of 'currently available learner resources', with *Power of Positive People* cited as an example
- 2 a training component, in the form of workshops in four provinces that would be 'piggy-backed' onto existing Project Literacy educator training courses.

The proposal acknowledged the availability of a range of South African materials designed to inform people about HIV/AIDS, and about living with the disease. It pointed out, however, that available material was accessible only to people who were literate and numerate, and in addition concentrated on medical and nutritional information, excluding other important aspects, such as socio-legal aspects of HIV/AIDS. It stated that a book for ABET learners under development at the time by Project Literacy (funded by the European Union), would deal with socio-legal implications of the disease. It described this book as written in simple English and therefore accessible to adults who have 'only a barely sustainable level of literacy'.

The proposal suggested that the potential for use of HIV/AIDS resources in adult education was further limited by educators' lack of understanding of HIV/AIDS and its implications in social and employment contexts. It pointed to the need for education of the educators themselves on the implications of HIV/AIDS, and stated that Project Literacy was in a good position to undertake training of this sort. It proposed the development of a 'short, direct delivery training course' for educators, supported by 'distance education materials'.

In making a case for direct or face-to-face training, the proposal acknowledged that this appeared to be an expensive model in comparison with the apparently more cost effective options of distance education and cascade training. However, it argued that distance education depended on high literacy levels and effective infrastructure such as good postal systems. It also argued that cascade training resulted in loss of quality control which was particularly dangerous when dealing with 'a socially, politically and emotionally charged issue' such as HIV/AIDS in South Africa (Project Literacy 2000).

It therefore proposed to run one day face-to-face training courses to reach poor rural communities in four provinces: Limpopo, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. It reasoned that the initiative would benefit from the use of experienced

trainers of adult educators. By 'piggy-backing' these one-day workshops onto existing Project Literacy training courses, this would mean that there would be no significant costs beyond those of course development. In spite of this, though, the proposal included a budget of R500 000 for these one day workshops.

It was envisaged that the project would rely on existing resources and infrastructure by working with the Public Adult Learning Centres already serviced by Project Literacy, working educators and existing educator support services. Further, it would supply already developed material (including Home-based care manuals and materials, and Project Literacy's regular publications, *The South African Reader* and *ABET News*, to functioning adult learner groups in Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs). The proposal suggested that were the package to be reproduced and purchased by buyers in the private sector, income from the sales would support the delivery of the training course to more disadvantaged communities.

Aims stated in the project proposal as pre-development processes were:

- ❑ to survey target groups to establish their attitudes, skills and knowledge relating to HIV/AIDS and relevant local resources
- ❑ to consult local stakeholders
- ❑ to liaise with governing bodies of PALCs to ensure 'comprehensive buy-in' on the part of ABET educators, learners and management
- ❑ to establish understanding of and agreement with the project at centre, regional and provincial level
- ❑ to develop an accreditable learner and training curriculum, and materials
- ❑ to develop monitoring, assessment and evaluation instruments
- ❑ to have a 'corrective review' of learner and training materials by partner organisations.

Organisations listed in the proposal as proposed partner organisations for Project Literacy in this initiative were:

- ❑ The National AIDS Education Trust
- ❑ The Centre for the Study of AIDS, University of Pretoria
- ❑ The National AIDS Consortium
- ❑ The National Association of People living with HIV and AIDS
- ❑ Perinatal Research Unit: Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, University of Witwatersrand
- ❑ The AIDS Counselling and Care Training Trust
- ❑ The National Department of Health.

It was planned that by the end of 2001, the training course would have been developed, tested and refined in 10 Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) and that implementation at the remaining 136 PALCs in the four provinces would take place during 2002.

Implementation

The project ran over the planned two year period. In the first year, a training workshop for educators was designed and a Workshop manual and Trainers' guide produced. The Workshop manual was designed to enable adult educators to use Project Literacy's book for learners, *Positive People* in their classes. The Trainers' guide was designed to enable trainers to run the 1-day training workshops. In the second year of the project, one-day training workshops were conducted in eight provinces as opposed to the four for which the training was originally planned according to the project proposal (The Northern Cape was the only province in the country in which training was not carried out). According to the final report, 462 educators underwent training, each of whom was expected to reach 20 learners. These educators were fairly evenly spread across the eight provinces, with an average of more than 50 educators in each of the provinces where training was done. Some, but not all, of these educators were Project Literacy ABET educators (approximately 500 educators currently work as independent contractors for Project Literacy). The work was done under the auspices of Project Literacy's provincial offices, which operate with an increasing amount of autonomy in relation to Project Literacy's Pretoria office.

Funding reports to the RBF indicated that there seems to have been some blurring between the development of *Positive People* which was not part of the proposal and had been funded by the European Union, and what Project Literacy staff came to see as part of the implementation of this project. The first funding report focussed primarily on the development of *Positive People*. It appears that although the development of *Positive People* had not been initially presented as part of the project, its development happened during the lifespan of the project, and all aspects of the project related to it. As a result, it clearly came to be seen, possibly by both Project Literacy staff and funders, as the focal point. Thus the production of this book, published by Project Literacy in 2001 as *Positive People: Managing HIV/AIDS in the workplace and community* was eventually funded by both the European Union and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. According to an e-mail communication from a Project Literacy staff member, 5 329 copies of the *Positive People* book were sold in 2003, and by February, 687 copies had been sold during 2004.

The project reports did not mention other goals stated in the project proposal such as a survey of the attitudes, skills and knowledge of target groups in relation to HIV/AIDS and relevant local resources, or the consultation of local stakeholders, or any communication with governing bodies of PALCs, or with office holders at regional and provincial level. Nor did they mention any funding of delivery of the training course to poorer communities as a result of selling the course and material to buyers in the private sector. During interviews in 2004, Project Literacy staff said that a great many copies of *Positive People* had been given away because the organisation had found it difficult to sell the book.

Divisions of labour within Project Literacy make people's areas of work quite separate. Consequently, there is no one person in the organisation who has in-depth knowledge about the progress of this project as a whole. Different people have different pieces of information and the nature of what the project has required has meant that there has not been a need to share this information with each other. This might have come about

because the originator of the project left Project Literacy soon after the start of this project, at which point different aspects of the work became the responsibility of people working in separate areas.

One of the effects of this division of labour is that the reports do not contain any in-depth analysis of the gains made or problems faced in the course of project implementation, since the writer of the reports did not appear to have much communication with or information from staff involved in the implementation.

Successes

The development of a stand-alone course for ABET learners on HIV/AIDS and workplace rights

Although the development of *Positive People* was not the focus of the project under consideration, it was the focal point of the training materials and the training course. The book is professionally laid out and well-illustrated, with appropriate illustrations with which the target audience are likely to identify. The language level and layout make the book more accessible to adults with low literacy levels, although the use of English creates a number of problems which are discussed under *Challenges*. The course meets some requirements of the formal ABET learning area: Human and Social Sciences.

The establishment of working relationships with other organisations

The establishment of working relationships with other organisations working in the field of HIV/AIDS such as the Department of Health, the University of the Witwatersrand and Soul City was considered to be a success of the project by Project Literacy staff. The hiring of an expensive team for the development of the material in order to ensure that the information was accurate was also considered to be a very worthwhile investment.

The development of the training workshop and workshop guide for ABET educators

The training workshop and guide for ABET educators, although not produced in commercial form, can be used by Project Literacy staff for future workshops.

Running training workshops in eight provinces and reaching poor people in rural areas

In reporting on the training workshops they had run in this project, Project Literacy staff spoke of dealing with many misconceptions amongst educators such as the belief that AIDS deaths were the result of witchcraft and that if you put a condom into water, worms came out! This clearly shows that HIV/AIDS education, which was the main focus of the project, continues to be very necessary.

The training was carried out in twice as many provinces as were originally budgeted for. There appeared to be no clear explanation for this apart from interviewees' explanations that the training was carried out in most of Project Literacy's offices in the different provinces.

Although there was no systematic plan for how educators would use the information, it is clear that people learnt about HIV/AIDS through this project. For example, the educator who we visited had run a number of workshops for the community in which she lived.

Challenges

Primary focus of the project

As described under 'Implementation' above, there seems to have been a shift in what people regarded as the primary focus of this project. In the proposal what was clearly presented as the primary focus was an educator training course (in the form of workshops) and an educator's guide and training file. However during the implementation phase, report writers and people interviewed in 2004 at Project Literacy seem to have regarded the production of the *Positive People* book as the primary focus. Possibly as a result of this shift, the elements of the project that had been foregrounded in the project proposal appear to have ultimately been somewhat neglected.

Changes to the original model

The original model assumed that existing ABET educators would attend the workshops and incorporate HIV/AIDS into their teaching programmes. It is not clear to what extent this was achieved due to the fact that many people who attended the training workshops were not ABET educators.

Target audience for *Positive People*

A limitation of the book for ABET learners, *Positive People*, is that it approaches the issue of HIV/AIDS primarily from the perspective of employed people. Yet, as a result of the very broad training programme eventually conducted, the book is used not only with formally employed workers, but also in NGO/CBO contexts where people are unemployed, or whose contexts of employment in no way resemble the formal urban context assumed in the material. This means that much of its content is not relevant to many of the people that are taught by trainers who have been trained in its use.

Focus of *Positive People*

The focus of *Positive People* is on HIV/AIDS in relation to the workplace. While the book gives useful information on HIV/AIDS generally, and the status and rights of HIV positive people in the workplace, it does not deal with a number of areas: for example, what happens as sufferers lose their health and strength and need home-based care; the prevention of mother to child transmission; bereavement and burials. Some members of Project Literacy staff acknowledged this, and spoke of vague plans to follow *Positive People* with other related courses.

Literacy level and language of *Positive People*

A further limitation of the material is that notwithstanding claims made in the original proposal which indicate that this book as accessible to adults who have 'only a barely

sustainable level of literacy' it does in fact require a fairly high level of English literacy to read it. To illustrate this, a paragraph taken at random from the book reads:

It is against the law to discriminate because of HIV/AIDS in the workplace. People with HIV or AIDS should receive the same benefits as people with other illnesses. *The Labour Relations Act* says that any unfairness between employers and employees regarding benefits is an unfair labour practice.

Positive People 2002, p. 65.

This paragraph could probably only be read by readers whose English competence was at ABET level 3 (which is equivalent to approximately seven years of schooling). It is not simple English. The fact that the book was only available in English limited its use.

Distribution and availability of *Positive People*

The original intention was that each educator would receive 20 copies of *Positive People* for use with their learners. This did not happen uniformly. Some educators who attended the one-day training workshop only received a single copy of the book which limited the effectiveness of the training programme. This was confirmed by our site visit where the educator who had attended the training programme said that she had only received 1 copy of *Positive People*. When she ran workshops, she had to write notes from the book onto newsprint.

It is likely that in ABE programmes in formal workplaces, which tend to be fairly well resourced, each learner would have access to a book. In poorly resourced NGOs or CBOs, it is much more likely that only the teacher would have a copy of the book.

Distribution generally

Selling the book proved to be difficult. In the first print run, 10 000 copies were printed. But sales, at a price of R45, were very slow, and ultimately thousands of copies were given away.

Follow-up and support of educators

Because of the way the project was planned and implemented, there was no systematic monitoring, follow-up or support for educators once they had been on the original training workshop. This would be particularly difficult for educators who were not working on Project Literacy programmes and therefore did not have regular access to the trainers in the organisation.

The fact that this monitoring and support was not part of the project, meant that there was no way to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. It was up to each educator to decide how to use the information that they had obtained in the one day workshop, and to decide who to target and how.

Educators' guide and training material

In interviews in 2004 Project Literacy staff expressed disappointment with the Educator's guide and training material, which they saw as lacking in substance. A more substantial, publishable manual had been expected, and staff felt that the lack of this weakened the project .

Dealing with the wider implications of HIV/AIDS

Particularly in rural areas where the impact of HIV/AIDS is experienced most acutely, teaching people about HIV/AIDS without providing the means for them to engage with wider practical development issues such as the provision of food, is problematic. The project beneficiary who we interviewed said, 'Just counselling is not enough. People have no food, no medicine, no gloves and no money to bury their relatives.'

Attitudes towards HIV/AIDS generally

During the course of the project it became clear that negative attitudes towards HIV/AIDS remained prevalent. The title *Positive People* was chosen precisely to counteract negative attitudes about HIV/AIDS and the negative associations attached to books about HIV/AIDS, but still it became clear to Project Literacy staff that people don't like to be seen reading it. Also, Project Literacy staff interviewed reported that although material is designed for group discussion, educators often end up lecturing because people will not discuss HIV/AIDS. They suggested that adult learners appeared to be afraid that if they showed any interest in information about the disease, their class mates might suspect them of being infected, and ostracise them. This indicates that the stigma attached to the disease is very strong and can be an enormous obstacle in communicating information about the disease. They felt that these general attitudes would prevent some people from attending classes or group discussions which were publicised as HIV/AIDS education.

Relationships with government

An external challenge to the project perceived by more than one member of Project Literacy staff was the sense that Project Literacy and its work was not appreciated by government. If this perception is valid, it is a pity that government departments fail to take advantage of developed resources that could be used in wider government initiatives. The challenge to the project here is to persuade government agents that there is value in working with Project Literacy in initiatives where this material and training course could be used.

Lessons learned

Research and follow-up

More research is needed on the impact of *Positive People* including its level of difficulty and language medium. Establishing the extent and nature of the impact of this kind of material, would be useful to all materials developers. A tracer study of the way in which educators responded to the one-day workshops would have been very useful in terms of understanding the limits and benefits of such an intervention.

Language and level

It would have been very useful, albeit costly, to have the learner book and training materials available in at least Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa and Northern Sotho. In addition,

both the learner book and training manual could have been written more simply. This would have made the resource accessible to a far wider target audience. The training manual could also have been more substantial.

Content

There are many aspects of HIV/AIDS which were not covered in the original learner book or educator workshop but which are very necessary. Areas which need to be covered are for example home-based care, voluntary testing, anti-retroviral treatment, funerals and bereavement.

Distribution

Project Literacy had chosen to produce the learner book as high quality material, but suffered when they tried to sell it at a price which covered costs. However, giving away copies of the book did mean that they approached one of their goals of supplying the book to communities of people who would not have been able to afford to buy it. A better strategy may have been to obtain specific funding to avoid having to try to sell the book.

Dealing with attitudes to HIV/AIDS

According to Project Literacy staff, they underestimated how strong attitudes towards HIV/AIDS are. Despite the central theme of the materials which were about living positively, the project revealed that negative attitudes towards HIV/AIDS are prevalent and a significant factor in coping with the disease. The project would have more chance of overcoming some of these attitudes if it had stuck to its original model. This would have ensured that the training would have been more closely linked to literacy classes rather than simply training educators in the use of the material. Integrating the HIV/AIDS education more directly into ABET classes would ensure continuity as well without directly focussing on only HIV/AIDS. Incorporating the material and content of this course into existing Literacy and Communication classes or other appropriate ABET learning areas would make it more likely that people would attend learning groups using the material. They would not have to contend with the fear that their interest in attending the group would be interpreted as a sign that they were infected with the disease.

Budgeting

Some staff members felt that the project was under-budgeted, specifically because of the decision to deliver training in eight provinces instead of the original four. Some of the learning sites in some of the additional provinces were very distant from urban centres, and people learning at them were extremely poor. A project designed to reach this target group would need to take the poverty and far flung nature of learning sites into consideration at the time of drawing up the budget.

Conclusion

Reports of Project Literacy staff who were involved with the training workshops of this project show that there is a need for ongoing HIV/AIDS education, which unfortunately will continue as the disease runs its course and takes its toll on South African people. This project was a worthwhile contribution to this need, and would probably have been stronger had its initial goals and focus been retained. Some of its most valuable outcomes are in the information it brings to light about attitudes to HIV/AIDS, which obstruct efforts to inform people of the disease, and the ways in which illiteracy and poverty make efforts to inform people difficult and expensive.

Interviews and documentation

Interviewees

Project Literacy

Leonie du Plessis (Curriculum department),
Yvonne Klagsbrun (Fundraising and communications)
Muraga Maluadzi (Co-ordinator HIV/AIDS training)
Andrew Miller (Director).
Regina Mokgokong (Client relations)
Michael Westcott (Curriculum department)

Lesedi Project

Olga Mahlangu (Project Manager)

Site Visit

Lesedi Project

Documentation

Proposal

Project Literacy. 2000. *Increasing access to quality primary health care in relation to HIV/AIDS preventative education, counseling and care. Development of a cost effective deliverable educator training course that utilises existing infrastructure and resources.* December.

Reports and correspondence

Project Literacy. 2002. *First report to Rockefeller Brothers Fund.* 2 May.
Project Literacy. 2003. *Final report to Rockefeller Brothers Fund.* 2 April.

Learner materials

Project Literacy. 2002. *Positive People* (Revised edition). Cape Town: Kagiso Education.

Literacy and micro-economic development

Project Title:	Get the basics - Rural Women's Literacy and Micro-Economic Development Project
RBF Grant No:	#00 - 249
Grantee:	English Resource Unit and Igugulethu Centre
Total Budget:	US\$ 117 000 (R865 800)*
Planned duration:	2 years (December 2000 - December 2002)

* Rand value not specified. Used average exchange rates of R6.90 (2000) and R7.90 (2001).

Context

The English Resource Unit (ERU) was, at the time of receiving the grant, an established NGO in the Adult Basic Education and Training field with a specific focus on English Second Language (ESL). Its key activities were ESL facilitator training and development of course materials and supplementary readers. In 1997 it received an award for outstanding community work and in 1999 won a UNESCO international award for literacy and reading. ERU closed in December 2001. The funds for this project were transferred, without consultation with the funders, to a newly formed organisation, Igugulethu Centre in January 2002. It appears that Igugulethu Centre was set up for the specific purpose of continuing the Literacy and Micro-Economic Development Project. All of the staff members of the Igugulethu Centre, including its new director, were ex-ERU staff members.

The proposal

The original project proposal was not available for interrogation by the writing team.

The summary of the proposal prepared by the RBF for the RBF Board meeting held at the end of 2000 (presumably using information from the proposal) stated that '*Get the Basics* will develop and pilot test a program that integrates literacy training with micro-enterprise development and business skills training for rural women who have limited formal education.' The argument given for this initiative was that unemployment in the formal economy was 40% and that women had turned to areas such as traditional arts and crafts to generate an income. The ERU was going to test the 'relevance and efficacy of new training materials and approaches that combine basic education in communication, numeracy, and life skills with training and technical skills to improve the production of traditional arts and crafts and with training in enterprise management and micro-credit finance.' In addition to improving literacy, the programme aimed to help the women establish a savings and loan system that could support expansion of their businesses and help finance their children's education.

The narrative report to the RBF submitted by Igugulethu Centre in October 2003 referred to the original aims of the project as follows:

- ❑ to develop an integrated model for rural women's development that included basic education and business skills training
- ❑ training to improve artisan skills in traditional pottery and crafts within the context of market demands and interests
- ❑ to improve income levels beyond survivalist/subsistence levels to sustainable Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs).

The RBF summary of the proposal contained very few details of how the project was to be implemented except that ERU would offer bi-weekly programs on site over a 12 month period for three groups of 50 women (one of these groups was funded by UNESCO).

Indicators of success were not specified in the documents, but it was stated that ERU would commission an external evaluation by the University of Natal in order to assess lessons learned and the potential for replication.

Implementation

It was difficult for the writing team to obtain comprehensive information about this project due to its irregular history and the problems which it faced. A final report was not written by ERU and the external evaluation was not commissioned.

In addition to the few documents available, the sources of the information contained in this report are:

- ❑ an interview with the ex-ERU staff member who had initially managed the project but who left it in April 2001. (This person has maintained contact with project participants, because she drives past their roadside stall often as she has a family business and home in the same area, and has an interest in their ongoing welfare)
- ❑ an interview with a group of four women who were participants in the project for a period of time who were identified by the original project manager¹
- ❑ an interview with the ex-Chairman of the Board of ERU
- ❑ an interview with the director of Igugulethu² who took over management of the project from the original manager
- ❑ interviews with five more women in Gingindlovu who were identified by the director of Igugulethu³.

The summary that follows reflects the conflicts and confusion that developed in the course of implementation of this project.

¹ We asked the original manager of the project to set up a meeting with beneficiaries. She visited the area 3 weeks before our visit and set up a meeting (following the proper procedures, consulting the local chief etc.). However, on the day of the long-awaited interview, only 4 women turned up. These women expressed dissatisfaction with the director of Igugulethu.

² Contact was made with the director of Igugulethu Centre only after numerous telephone calls to the numbers given on the report sent to funders, and a visit to the offices (at the address provided in the documentation to funders) had proved fruitless. On the day of this visit, the offices were closed and none of the neighbouring tenants could provide any information. The director was finally contacted and interviewed and she accompanied a member of the research team to meet with a second group of beneficiaries in Gingindlovu.

³ At our request, the director of Igugulethu accompanied a member of the research team to meet other women in February 2005. No prior arrangements were made. On the appointed day we went first to a community clinic building, where a beadwork group was supposed to meet twice a week. Only two were present, but had a long discussion with us, and one accompanied us to find another member of this group at her home. We found her on her way out, had a brief conversation with her, and then drove to another site to see other members of the group who cared for the wattle and daub church that had been used as a learning venue, and found two women there. The second project manager appeared to be on good terms with all of the women met that day. It seemed from these meetings that the conflict was primarily between the original project manager and the director of Igugulethu, but that the participants had been affected by it.

The project started in early 2001 in Gingindlovu, in KwaZulu-Natal, a rural area approximately 150 kms from Durban. The idea of the project seems to have been sparked when the attention of the original project manager, a staff member of ERU, was attracted by the work of one of the women potters, when she saw her work for sale at the roadside near Gingindlovu. She arranged for this potter to attend a crafters' conference in Namibia in 2000, which was attended by crafters from all over Africa. This potter reported in an interview that she came back with new understandings about pots but that she still made them in the same way as she always had. After this trip, the ERU staff member kept in contact with the group, and the project took shape. Three groups of ten women were formed, so that approximately thirty rural participants were involved in the project.

The project was structured in such a way that literacy classes and 'Arts and crafts'/The Artisan programme⁴ were held on separate days of the week. The Artisan programme took place for a full day once a week, and according to the director of Igugulethu, literacy classes were held from 11 am – 2 pm 3 times per week.

Literacy classes

In 2001 an 'ABE school'⁵ was opened, staffed by facilitators who had previously been trained by ERU. They were selected by the original project manager because they were good trainees. Some of the learners registered for Zulu Mother Tongue Literacy (MTL) and learned to read and write for the first time, and others picked up where they had left off at school, doing English Second Language (ESL) ABET level 1 or 2. It appears that the literacy teaching was fairly formal as examinations were written through the Independent Examinations Board (IEB). According to the Igugulethu Centre report to the funders, and the second group of women interviewed, classes were run in Zulu (ABET level 1) and English Second Language (ABET levels 1 – 3). Graduation ceremonies for the certificates for learners who had passed IEB exams in Zulu literacy and English were held in early 2002 (24 graduands) and early 2003 (23 graduands). It is not clear how many new learners were involved in the second year.

The Artisan Programme

The Artisan Programme was run on the basis of learners learning traditional crafts from each other – those with less skill were taught how to sort grasses and a kind of apprenticeship system developed. The crafts that the participants were engaged in consisted of pottery, weaving and beadwork. For the weaving group, ERU bought weaving frames (an improved version of a traditional plank frame used to make stitches straight and regular), and the women produced crafts for a local outlet from indigenous grasses.

⁴ This is how the Igugulethu Centre report (2003) referred to the skills component of the training

⁵ This was how it was referred to by the participant interviewees

HIV/AIDS workshops

Three one-week workshops on HIV/AIDS were run by a social worker from McCord's Hospital. It is not clear whether participation was limited to the project participants or whether it was open to the wider community. As a result of requests for private counselling and home-based care training, it was arranged that a social worker from the Department of Health would work with women from the project for one day a week. It is not clear to what extent this happened.

Business skills training

Initially workshops covering business skills were held in conjunction with M L Sultan Technikon at ERU. The course took the form of contact sessions on one day a week for one month. None of the women in the first group of interviewees had participated in the workshops. Two of the women in the second group interviewed had participated and were very positive about what they had learnt. One claimed to remember enough of what they had learnt at the time to apply it even now, if only, she said, the group had more money to put the ideas into practice. Although they praised the business skills course, they expressed great disappointment that they didn't get certificates at the end of it.

Income generation and the progress of the project

The original project manager reported that when she left ERU the project was progressing well and goods were being sold at local outlets and in Durban. She and the first group interviewed indicated that after she left the project continued for a few months, but deteriorated from this point onwards. The Igugulethu director and the second group interviewed later, however, indicated that craftwork was fetched from them once a week throughout 2002, and they received money for this work once a month.

Micro-credit system

According to Igugulethu Centre's report to funders, in July 2002 a bank account was opened with Ithala Bank for a group of 27 women, rules were set up for loans and repayments were taking place. The second group of women interviewed indicated that two groups of women (about 20 people) got loans of R800 per person, and a third group did not. Some members of this group feel aggrieved that while they paid back their loans, others did not. As noted under 'Challenges' there was confusion and misunderstanding about whether these were loans or 'gifts'.

Organisational changes and the demise of the project

ERU closed in December 2001 due to financial difficulties. The funds for this project were transferred to a newly created NGO (Igugulethu) which was run by ex-ERU staff.

The first group of women interviewed expressed anger at the mention of the director of Igugulethu and blamed her for the fact that many of the promised outcomes of this

project did not materialise. They also said that she had made them a laughing stock in their communities because they had trusted her. The women seen on the second visit told the director directly how disappointed they were that the project had not worked as they had hoped it would (i.e. it had not enabled them to generate a regular income).

Further confusion and misunderstandings surround the input of the UNESCO representative (part funders of the project). The first group of interviewees were under the impression that he had arrived to inspect repairs to the building where ABE classes were held paid for by his organisation, but no repairs had been carried out at the hall where they learnt⁶. The first group reported that he advised them to form a committee and open a bank account, and that their facilitator lent them money to open this account. However, when the director of Igugulethu came to see them and wanted to take their names they suspected her of intending to make out that they had authorised her to operate the bank account and the bank account was never opened.

The women seen on the second visit were also disgruntled about the UNESCO representative's visit. They had expected to receive cash to spend as they wished, since he had told them repeatedly that the money was 'theirs'. The second group interviewed reported that when the money never materialised, people started suspecting each other. However, they reported that now this has blown over and there is no more fighting within the group. The director of Igugulethu explained that what the UNESCO representative had meant was that money (R48 000) would be made available to the project. She reported that R45 000 had eventually been received and said that it been used for paying teachers, paying IEB fees, buying books and so on.

The first group of women interviewed reported that they are back to selling their crafts from home and at the roadside, which is where we interviewed them. Their stall is well stocked with a range of pots and mats, but during our conversation with them, which lasted about an hour and a half, no customers came to buy. Some of the women interviewed on the second visit at the clinic building were supposed to have been working to fill orders for beadwork that had been made through the director of Igugulethu, but had had no contact with her for months, and had produced very little work. On the day she visited with the researcher, however, the director took the beadwork they had done, on the understanding that she would bring them money for it at a later date.

Successes

In view of the fact that this was such a complex project, it is difficult to state successes simply. The information from the participants interviewed is often in direct contradiction to the information contained in the Igugulethu Centre report to funders.

⁶ In response to this, the director of Igugulethu said that they had had to stop using the hall as a learning venue, and that some of the learners had offered the use of a wattle and daub building they had built and used as a church. As recompense for the use of this building, and because it was 'in bad shape' some of the funds from the RBF (but not UNESCO) were used to effect repairs to this building. When seen in February 2005 by one of the researchers, the building, though very modest, showed evidence of repairs and maintenance.

There was also some disagreement between the two groups of women interviewed. Short of a forensic investigation, all the information in the report to funders needs to be viewed with caution.

Facilitator training

Four matriculants who were undergoing ERU facilitator training were selected as facilitators for this project. They were given 4 block weeks of training, consolidated with practicals, demonstrations, mentoring and monitoring. They were taught how to develop programmes covering the necessary unit standards and ERU materials were aligned to the context of the learners. Monthly workshops covering areas which were problematic for facilitators were held at ERU.

Literacy classes

Literacy classes were held and a number of learners passed IEB examinations. The original project manager who was responsible for the monitoring, supervision and evaluation at the beginning of the project, reported that the learners were progressing very well at that stage. The interviewees reported that those that were totally illiterate were very glad to learn to sign their names. Women seen on both visits were very proud of the certificates they had received from the Independent Examinations Board on passing ABET Level 1 mother tongue and ABET Level 1 English as a Second Language examinations.

The graduation ceremonies were significant community events according to both the Igugulethu Centre report and the women interviewed.

Skills development

Traditional skills were developed through the Artisan Programme, though it is not clear to what extent. The women seen on the second visit were of the opinion that these skills were equal in importance to literacy skills gained.

Income generation

It is difficult to decide whether to place this crucial aspect of the project under 'Successes' or 'Challenges' as this is one of the seriously contested issues. According to the Igugulethu Centre report to funders, the income generation aspect of the project was highly successful and a foreign export agent was contracted to market beadwork made by the women in the community in Portugal, Italy and France. (The participants interviewed on the second visit had a hazy knowledge of this.) The report sent to funders also says that members who did not have the skills to make crafts, did vegetable farming and sold vegetables to other members of the community. No evidence of vegetable growing was seen on either visit, but women spoke about growing their own vegetables. According to the Igugulethu Centre report, there are 27 members of a micro-credit finance scheme with a bank account. The final report to funders states that each member has a minimum income of R750 a month from the project. This contradicts what the women interviewed indicated (on both visits) – which is that they had no regular income.

According to the participants interviewed on the first visit, the early stages of the project (when the original project manager was involved) were successful when the women produced crafts for a local outlet from indigenous grasses. The money generated was highly motivating for the women concerned and part of their profits went towards opening a bank account. When Igugulethu Centre took over, however, they report that they were suspicious of the motives of the director and simply reverted to their old methods of doing things. Women seen on the second visit seemed to have more faith in her, gave her some beadwork to sell for them, and accepted her chiding them for slow production.

Business skills training workshops

Initially workshops covering business skills were held in conjunction with M L Sultan Technikon. Two of the women interviewed had participated in these workshops and were very positive about what they had learnt, though they had wanted certificates to show their completion of the course.

Challenges

Governance of the project

During the period of this project, the ERU experienced funding and governance difficulties which resulted in the closure of the ERU at the end of 2001⁷ (towards the end of the first year of the project discussed here). Difficulties which ERU was experiencing were not communicated to the RBF and the funds for the second year of the project were released. These funds were transferred to Igugulethu Centre apparently on the sole authority of the director of the ERU and the only remaining ERU board member (the Chairman) in January 2002. Igugulethu Centre was formally constituted as a non-profit organisation in September 2002.

It is worth noting here that there was no consultation and communication with the funder during this process. It was presented as a *fait accompli* (this is discussed more fully under 'Lessons learned' below). This meant that the funding agreement between ERU and the RBF had been breached and effectively it meant that there was no longer a legally binding funding agreement in place. The first knowledge which the RBF had of Igugulethu Centre was through a report to the RBF dated October 2003 (9 months after the final report on the project was due). This was despite repeated attempts by the RBF to contact the ERU director. It was left to the RBF to deal retrospectively with this unauthorised transfer of funds and the associated irregularities.

⁷ It is not clear exactly when the ERU officially ceased to exist as a legal entity but it ceased operating towards the end of 2001. It transpires that at the time of writing the report to the RBF, the organisation was about to close (the report is dated the 21st December 2001 and the official closure of ERU was 31st December 2001, but staff were laid off from 31st October 2001).

The Igugulethu Centre report (2003) refers to the change as 'the transformation of English Resource Unit (ERU) to Igugulethu Centre' and gives as motives for establishing the organisation:

- ❑ the provision of better services and cleaning up the bad image that ERU had with private sector companies
- ❑ the avoidance of ERU's liabilities that were endangering donor funding
- ❑ the completion of the Gingindlovu Pilot Project and handing over of a full report to the RBF.

There are a number of unanswered questions about how it was practically possible, given the strict banking regulations and the laws applicable to non-profit organisations, to deposit the second tranche and transfer it into a new organisation.

ERU financial problems – staff salaries and moonlighting

Towards the end of 2001 staff salaries were not being paid by ERU due to financial difficulties. As a result some of the staff started asking ERU clients to pay them directly. This caused problems for the industry-based clients because they could not claim the tax benefits for training staff as the ERU staff concerned were not registered in their own right as service providers with the necessary statutory bodies etc.

Micro-credit and income generation aspects of the project

This aspect of the project appears to have been the most problematic. Some of the project participants received money as a 'business loan', and some did not. In addition, some women were required to pay the money back, some women reported that their craft work had been collected and not paid for as part payment of their loans, and other women understood that they were given the money, have not paid it back, and have not been asked to pay it back. Understandably this caused conflict and feelings of resentment in the group and at some stage the group split.

What is abundantly clear is that there was no clear understanding among the women crafters of the implications of the micro-finance aspects of this project, and, in view of the different experiences of the women in this regard, no management of this aspect of the project.

ABET facilitator turnover

There was a high turnover of facilitators in the project. According to the first group of women interviewed, one facilitator was fired by the director of Igugulethu, even though she was a good facilitator. They claim that she was succeeded by another facilitator who was taken away by the director of Igugulethu to teach another group, and that she in turn was replaced by another woman, who died. In contrast, the director of Igugulethu reports that no-one was fired or moved away, and that the first facilitator, a man who had a university degree, left because he got a job as a full time school teacher, and that although one educator died, another two were still employed when the project all but came to an end.

No matter which version of the story regarding the coming and going of facilitators one believes, the rapid turnover of facilitators and the consequent lack of continuity did not do the ABET component of this initiative any good at all.

Monitoring and evaluation

Proper monitoring and evaluation of the project was not done. None of the brief reports available give any evidence of systematic information gathering or evaluation by which it would be possible to judge whether and to what extent the project met its objectives.

Meeting the project objectives

Given the best interpretation of the benefits of the project, far fewer participants were reached than was originally intended, and the goal of improving the income levels of even those that were reached, beyond survivalist/subsistence levels to sustainable Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) was not attained, nor even approached.

The status of the project

One group of women seems to continue to work informally and intermittently with/for the director of Igugulethu Centre⁸. There is no ABET component, but enough understanding still exists for the crafters to hand over craft to her for sale in her curio shop at a Durban flea-market, and for orders which she says she has.

Lessons learned

Organisations must have an actively involved Board

Part of the reason for the closure of the ERU was the fact that only two of the ERU Board members were actively involved in the running of the organisation. One of the implications of this was that several Board meetings had to be cancelled because of a lack of quorum. It also resulted in important and far-reaching decisions being made by only two people: the ERU director and the Chairperson of the ERU Board.

Board members should not sign as surety for organisations

The Chairperson of the ERU Board claims that he was held personally liable for part of the ERU debt. As far as he is concerned, one of the lessons of this project is that Board members should not sign as surety for organisations.

Funders should not release further funding until they are in possession of proper, comprehensive narrative and financial reports

The second tranche of this grant was released on the basis of a narrative report of only two paragraphs and a seven line spreadsheet financial 'report' (which together do not

⁸ It is not clear whether this organisation still has a legal identity and/or whether it is active.

even fill one page). This second tranche of funds was then transferred to a new organisation in January 2002 without consultation with the funders.

Funders of different aspects of the same project need to communicate with each other

According to some interviewees, a building in Gingindlovu in which classes were held was damaged and a report was sent to UNESCO (who funded one of the project groups) regarding the damage. The interviewees reported that some time after this, a representative from UNESCO arrived to see the repairs to the school that he thought had been done and paid for by UNESCO, but none had been done and they had not been aware of any plans for repair. It appears that the RBF and UNESCO were not in communication with each other about this project and relied on the project grantee for information.

Transparency and clear communication about money

There was considerable confusion about the micro-finance aspect of the project. The women involved in this project did not know why some groups of women were required to pay back the 'loans' they had received and others were not. This led to conflict within the group and contributed to the beginning of the end of this initiative. Given that the main purpose of the project was micro-economic development involving micro-credit finance, it is imperative that participants in projects of this nature are fully informed and aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to production and repayment of loans.

The need for a sustained and committed relationship between the service provider and the beneficiaries

The woman who initiated the project (an experienced educator with local knowledge) left the project in April 2001. According to the first group of women interviewed, when the director of the new NGO took over, the problems started. These women do not trust her and express anger at the mention of her name. They blame her for the fact that many things did not materialise as they should have and they suspect her of being dishonest. When the original project manager asked the Igugulethu director if she could come back and play a role in the project, her request was refused. On the other hand, the Igugulethu director blames the original project manager for not letting go of the project when she left ERU, for being jealous of her relationship with the rural participants and for turning some of them against her.

Conclusion

When interviewed, members of the original group of beneficiaries said that they would have been better off if they had never had contact with ERU/Igugulethu at all, since they feel that they have lost money through their involvement with the project. Women interviewed on the second visit were slightly more positive, and counted the skills and literacy they acquired as real gains, although they were bitterly disappointed that their original expectations were not met.

Interviews and documentation

Interviewees

Eric Apelgren (ex-Chairman of the ERU Board)

First site visit: Gingindlovu Project

Nomsa Mbuyazi (Original manager of the project)

Ntandoyenkosi Khumalo (craft worker)

Melta Nzumalo (craft worker)

Khonsephi Khanyile (craft worker)

Second site visit: Gingindlovu Project

Pamela Oloo (Director of Igugulethu Centre)

Fikelephi Shei (craft worker)

S'mangile Xulu (craft worker)

Site visits

Gingindlovu Project

Documentation

Reports and correspondence

English Resource Unit. 2001a. *Minutes of ERU staff meeting*. 30 October.

English Resource Unit. 2001b. *Letter to ERU staff from Chairman of ERU Board*. 23 November. *Closure of ERU and termination of services*

English Resource Unit. 2001c. *Expenditure report*. Fax from ERU to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (21 December).

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Rockefeller Brothers Fund. 2003a. *RBF grant to the ERU*. E-mail from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to Chairperson of ERU Board. 3 October.

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The New Literacy Studies meets development in practice

Project Title:	The development of a social uses of literacy model for the promotion of literacy, numeracy and information technology amongst unschooled adults within development projects
RBF Grant No:	#97 - 18
Grantee:	The Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies, University of Cape Town
Total Budget:	U\$47 000 (R240 754.58)*
Planned Duration:	Two years (1998 - 1999)

* In her final report, Kell (2004) states that roughly one third of the second tranche was returned to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Introduction

This project, referred to as the LitDev project, proved to be complex to summarise for a number of reasons: the project manager had left South Africa and could not be interviewed directly (she did however respond in detail by e-mail to the first draft of this report); the Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies (the original grantee) had been incorporated into a larger School of Education and lost its organisational identity; despite attempts to contact project beneficiaries they did not respond and were not interviewed; a site was not visited due to the lack of response from the beneficiaries. The result of these complexities was that the summary of this project relied unusually heavily on written reports although two former members of the former Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies who were peripherally connected with the project were interviewed briefly.

Context

This project is unique among the projects examined in this study in that it sought to test the practical application of a particular theory of literacy to development activities, that is, to the embedding of informal literacy provision within the context of an organisational or development project. It was based on the key theoretical principles of the New Literacy Studies (summarised on page 7). The University of Cape Town had previously conducted research on literacy practices in South Africa published as *The social uses of literacy: theory and practice in contemporary South Africa* (Prinsloo and Breier 1996).

The project proposal stated that the project was overtly based on a social practices approach with a focus on the real-life uses of literacy as opposed to classroom-based approaches. It stressed the importance of apprenticeship and mediation in the exchange and development of literacy skills, particularly amongst adults.

The proposal

The initial project proposal argued a set of propositions about informally acquired literacy skills. Firstly, though unschooled people acquire useful literacy skills informally in highly context-specific situations, this may not empower them in the broader society (in which formal schooled literacy is more important for status and social stratification). Secondly, because these informal multiple literacy skills are very different from the literacy acquired through formal provision and, because the gap between them is so great, unschooled people may not readily gain access to the more formal literacy provided through ABET, or receive recognition for their prior learning. Thirdly, the developing South African ABET system in the context of the National Qualifications Framework is increasingly formal, schooling orientated, examination focussed and operates on a deficit model which may actually disadvantage those already marginalised.

The project proposal recommended informal promotion of literacy through apprenticeship learning within social networks, the use of informal literacy mediators

and supported self-instruction within families, churches and workplaces. This would be tested in two self-build housing schemes in the Western Cape.

The objectives were as follows:

1. to promote the informal acquisition of literacy, numeracy and information technology skills amongst unschooled participants of 'self-build' housing schemes
2. to develop a model of reproducing this informal promotion within a wider range of development projects
3. to assess whether the acquisition of such informally acquired skills would facilitate increased access to formal education for unschooled adults.

Three groups would benefit from the project:

- ❑ about 50 people (mainly female) in the housing schemes, whose literacy needs would not be met by conventional ABET programmes, would improve their literacy rates (their literacy rates would be tested, using measurable indicators, at the beginning and at the end of the project)
- ❑ the broader social networks these women belonged to would also benefit and this benefit would be assessed using ethnographic methods. There would be increased social participation by members (for example, in their children's schooling) and increased participation in literacy practices in local organisations
- ❑ ABET policy makers designing systems to give access to and to attract and keep ABET learners in formal provision would be able to develop policy on how National Qualification Framework outcomes could be used in context specific sites.

Very specific indicators were given for adjudicating the project's success, namely:

1. measurable increases in literacy, numeracy and information technology skills amongst the core target group
2. documented and reproducible strategies for promoting the informal acquisition of literacy, numeracy and information technology skills within development projects
3. a report containing policy recommendations on the application of ABET Level 1 outcomes in a context-specific site (a self-build housing scheme) leading to specific policy recommendations on access to the formal ABET system for unschooled adults.

More general benefits to the participants would be:

- ❑ an increased ability to engage with text
- ❑ an increased awareness of the interconnectedness of communicative practices – printed texts, oral forms, visual, gestural and graphic forms (in Xhosa, English and Afrikaans, as appropriate)
- ❑ an increased awareness of how language and literacy are embedded in structure and power relations
- ❑ strategies for democratising the use of text within development initiatives like the building of housing.

The benefits to the NGOs/development associations involved would be:

- ❑ clarity (gained through a rigorous research process) on how literacy and language practices (including communicative visualisation processes) either help or constrain people's participation in these processes
- ❑ an involvement in the development of an approach to literacy in South Africa.

The design

The design of the project plan was heavily dependent upon certain assumptions and effective running of certain processes.

Firstly, it assumed, on the basis of the earlier Social Uses of Literacy (SOUL) research conducted by UCT, that the target group was already acquiring some literacy skills through enculturation in the building process, and that organisational leaders, development workers, and community-based activists were already playing the role of mentors for apprenticeship purposes and acting as literacy mediators.

Secondly, it assumed that after the context specific literacy demands were ascertained by ethnographic observation, a way of self-consciously promoting literacy within the building process itself would be developed. This process would include:

- ❑ reflection by participants on their informal acquisition of literacy skills
- ❑ phased increase of textual demands
- ❑ dissemination of key contextually related texts
- ❑ reading of these texts
- ❑ learner generation of texts
- ❑ reflection on how mentors and mediators can transfer their skills
- ❑ training of mentors and mediators in translation and interpretation theory, and issues in the development of 'Plain English' texts
- ❑ testing of REFLECT methodology¹
- ❑ introduction of informal socialisation into the practices of schooling for the purposes of access to formal learning if appropriate.

Thirdly, it assumed that the learners would be given access to computers and trained to enter data (related to the housing scheme) on computer. Recommendations would be written on how computers could be used to promote literacy and numeracy amongst unschooled adults.

Finally, a reproducible model would be developed and published in a book or booklets for policy-makers (though a separate budget would be required for publication).

¹ REFLECT is a literacy/rural development method developed by the United Kingdom non-governmental organisation ActionAid which uses a modified Freirian approach merged with Participatory Rural Appraisal methods.

Though seen as a small-scale project, the proposal stated that the impact of the project could be of national importance and one of the indicators of its success would be the replicability of the model to other sites and contexts (for example, factories and income generation projects). There would be the writing of recommendations on how to rewrite ABET level outcomes so that they were more relevant and responsive to learners' everyday needs whilst still allowing access to the formal system and the writing of recommendations on how outcomes can be used to measure progress in sites other than classrooms.

Implementation

The planned two year project started six months late at the beginning of 1998, operated through a series of difficulties in 1999 and 2000 and ended inconclusively with a withdrawal from the field site in early 2001. Unspent funds were returned to the funder in October 2002 and a final report was delivered in 2004.

The project's first difficulties were in working at the two initially chosen housing development sites which proved to be impossible. Eventually two alternative sites were identified where the literacy activities involved paperwork connected to housing subsidy applications, finance matters and various spatial and visual considerations related to physical planning.

The interim report covering the first year of the project described the work done at the two alternative sites. In the final report of 2004 only work done at the first site over the whole period was described.

The first field site

The first site was a 240 member and largely women-run savings club cum self-build housing project at Vukuzenzele (VKZ) which was part of a national organisation, Homeless People's Federation (HPF). HPF was serviced by an NGO called People's Dialogue (PD) which supported self-build organisations. Both HPF and PD were committed to deeply democratic, people-driven development in which the poor directed their own development activities and engagement with other actors and agencies. The project manager of LitDev committed herself and the project to working within this organisational culture and logic.

The LitDev Project initially worked with the Vukuzenzele (VKZ) Management Committee of nine women, observing and recording their literacy practices in relation to the organisational process and to their savings club, as well as observing general meetings and planning workshops. A plan to train builders collapsed when the trainees thought the honorarium too small. Other attempts to involve the general membership failed.

Some 60 interviews were conducted with the membership of VKZ to establish their literacy levels and needs but it was difficult to actually determine how well, if at all, people could read and write. It was noted that there seemed to be a reluctance amongst people to acknowledge any difficulties they were having with reading and writing. None

of the 60 members appeared to have difficulties with writing their names and addresses. Most said that they had about 6 to 8 years of schooling. However, they appeared unable to understand and deal with the organisational matters relating to the house-building process and complained that information was being kept hidden from them.

The project manager also noted that some members of the VKZ Management Committee in fact had extensive skills in literacy practices though some lacked proficiency in English and some members asked her for training in office skills. This committee played a vital role in deciding which people received the first houses built. Ostensibly this was decided on the basis of who had been most active in helping to build the actual houses and this activity was recorded on expenditure record sheets by members of the Committee. The issue of record-keeping and lack of access to information about how money was spent proved to be a central issue in the running of this project and is dealt with under 'Challenges' below.

In August 1998 the project manager proposed the compilation of a 'people's history' type of booklet in relation to a celebratory feast. The production of the booklet was aimed inter alia to assess reading and writing skills through observing people's participation in the production and reception of the booklet. A fieldworker was employed to collect material for the booklet, through focus groups and interviews. The process was complicated by the VKZ Management Committee wanting to determine whose voice should be heard and whose not heard.

Then, after the booklet, *Imizamo Yomama*, was produced in November 1998, the fieldworker evaluated the use of the booklet through interviews with the Management Committee and ordinary members working on the site. Issues such as who read the booklet, how reading took place and what kinds of discussion it led to were looked at.

As a result of the difficulties in VKZ various changes were made to the LitDev Project. Rather than identifying learner groups it was decided that they would try and identify key points in the house-building process where lack of literacy or numeracy skills was blocking progress or participation. Training workshops were also planned for the Management Committee. A reason for this intervention was ongoing problems with the Management Committee. Unfortunately the Management Committee acted to entrench its own status, using gatekeeping powers and control over resources and it denied the LitDev Project access to the general membership.

This stalemate led the project manager to suggest in the final report that there may have been a contradiction in the LitDev proposal itself and that it could be the social relations that needed deciphering rather than the printed texts themselves.

In an attempt to circumvent the Management Committee, the LitDev Project began to offer certain practical services to the general membership of VKZ such as transcribing, translating and circulating documents (such as minutes and proceedings of meetings). This work seems to have been gratefully received by the membership. Later, when the general membership regained some power in the housing project the LitDev Project tried to promote processes like minute-taking and record-keeping.

Another initiative of the LitDev Project involved four women who were asked to write stories (or have their stories written down for them) about their house-building. Photographs were also taken and pasted in. The fieldworker then left the Project and the project manager worked with a small group of women in a similar exercise. Subsequently some training and support was given on how to keep the expenditure record sheets with a group of people about to start the next round of building 31 houses.

Unfortunately new crises of financial and administrative mismanagement arose and the project manager stopped working at this site.

The second field site

The LitDev Project was tentatively started in a second site: the state-run Masiphumelele Working for Water project. The project manager had originally been asked to provide literacy and numeracy components of the training given through the Working for Water programme but offered the project outlined below instead. A literacy instructor was employed to use the strategies suggested in the proposal. The project manager planned to assist in meeting various training needs, such as plant identification, and at the same time, increase workers' literacy and numeracy skills through using the one working hour per week allocated for training. The plan was that participants would keep journals and develop literacy skills through plant names, the importance of the indigenous environment and the broad aims of the Working for Water project. Mentors would be appointed from amongst the workers.

In the final report it was made clear that due to significant problems both with the first site and within UCT it had not been possible to establish this second site.

Successes

Although many of the main objectives of the LitDev Project were not met in terms of the main objectives and indicators set out in the proposal, valuable lessons were learnt about problems in the implementation of a project which attempted to be very democratic. These are outlined in 'Lessons learned' below. They are also documented in published articles. Some of the secondary objectives were successfully achieved and there were a number of incidental outcomes which were positive.

In terms of specific successes, expenditure record sheets were eventually kept by a number of general members of VKZ and the LitDev Project was able to identify what this key process involved. During the latter phase of the project, general members visited the LitDev fieldworkers and the two bookkeepers to discuss their expenditure and gain help with their expenditure record sheets. This was not simply a technical issue but related to changing and challenging the gatekeeping power dynamics of the organisation.

Booklets were produced which contributed to the development of reading and writing practices in the community. For example, some of the women in the housing project read the booklets to their children and families.

General members of VKZ were given some practical assistance through, for example, translation of documents, which potentially helped them to participate more in the housing process.

A small library was set up in a house with donated books. An unexpected and challenging outcome of this was that books were borrowed by people unrelated to the VKZ project and mothers began to express the need for LitDev to employ a member of the community to improve the literacy skills of their children.

Challenges

The LitDev Project was beset by problems, many of which could not have been anticipated at the proposal stage. These related to serious organisational and implementation problems at the host site; significant organisational changes within the grantee organisation; certain problems with the design of the project; implementation problems and changes in the personal circumstances of the project manager.

Organisational problems at the host site

There were 3 organisations aside from LitDev involved at the host site: the organisation itself (VKZ), the housing support NGO, People's Dialogue (PD) and the Homeless People's Federation (HPF). There were significant tensions between these 3 organisations, some of which resulted from differing conceptions of how work at the host site should operate and some related to more serious issues related to transparency, allegations of corruption and leadership problems.

Problems with record-keeping and gatekeeping at VKZ

Record-keeping, transparency and accountability regarding how money was spent and allocated proved to be central issues in the project as a whole. Gatekeeping by the Management Committee at VKZ played a significant role in difficulties which the general membership and the LitDev Project encountered. Literacy mediation by the Management Committee, while initially benign, was later used to consolidate power at the expense of the general membership. The gatekeeping raised two possibilities neither of which was palatable – that fraud was being committed and that the general membership was being kept in the dark. These problems raised serious ethical dilemmas for the project manager of LitDev particularly as LitDev was not centrally involved in the house-building project and had no real authority within the project.

Problems with the house-building process

The house-building process itself was fraught with difficulties ranging from lack of expertise to money being stolen by builders.

Organisational problems within the grantee organisation

An advisory group was not set up early on in the project and new structures of accountability were not set up after the Department of Adult Education and Extra-

Mural Studies had been absorbed into the School of Education. This meant that responsibility for the project rested almost exclusively with the project manager.

Problems with the project model

The model chosen required intensive involvement by the project manager and fieldworkers. The promise in the original proposal to adjudicate the project's success by using conventional, formal ABET system indicators of learners' literacy gains (including ABET level 1 outcomes) and to make policy recommendations relating to articulation with the formal ABET system was at odds with the theoretical model on which the project was based. Implementing this would have required a very different and bigger project and this raises questions about impositions placed on project developers to show due obedience to the dominant discourses in the field.

Computers

Although computer use had been part of the original proposal this did not happen.

Documentation

The final report to funders was written well after the project had come to an end. There were a number of reasons for this, most notably the fact that the project had operated under very difficult circumstances without meeting many of its primary objectives. Given the problems she had encountered within the host organisation, it was very difficult for the project manager to decide what to include for public consumption. Additional reasons were those related to the grantee organisation and the personal circumstances of the project manager. Although there was significant ethnographic observation of literacy practices during the life of the project, there was no detailed report of this.

Lessons learned

Though the project did not meet many of its intended outcomes, it delivered a number of important lessons ranging from theoretical to practical. Some of these lessons emerged from negative and some from positive experiences.

Level and nature of intervention by the LitDev Project

The fact that the housing project involved three projects aside from LitDev made it difficult for LitDev to locate itself. On the one hand, the tendency was to work directly with the general membership of VKZ as closely as possible – on the other hand, the LitDev project had gained access through the organisations of which VKZ was a part, namely HPF and PD. The LitDev project would possibly have had more chance of success if it had been more closely integrated with these projects which would have given LitDev more authority and influence.

However, by aligning themselves with the membership, the LitDev project staff were

able to gain deep insights into the experiences, often disempowering, of the general membership. A more formal needs analysis would not have been able to capture the complexity of the dynamics.

On a very practical level related to the above issues it was acknowledged that:

- the LitDev advisory group should have been set up earlier in the project
- when the Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies was disbanded and absorbed into the larger and less focussed School of Education at UCT, new structures of accountability should have been set up
- the final report should have been written earlier despite the difficulties involved in writing it.

Staffing of the project

The LitDev staff consisted of the project manager and fieldworkers. However two young unemployed people from the community volunteered their services and were resentful when the first fieldworker left and was replaced with another fieldworker from outside of the community. It was decided that it would be better to replace this second fieldworker with the two volunteers who were subsequently paid for the work that they were doing. The lesson appears to be that sensitivity is needed when outside fieldworkers (particularly paid fieldworkers) are working alongside volunteers from within the community.

Project design

The project proposal had been based on an individual deficit rather than an organisational model. Given the complexities of the housing project in general and the power relations which emerged, it would possibly have been better to frame (or subsequently reframe) the project in a more diffuse and organisationally-based way.

The manner in which LitDev worked, i.e. using an ethnographic approach to study what was happening in the organisation before deciding on a strategy meant that the members were not clear about what was happening for a considerable period. This may have been helped by more overt support from the two other organisations involved but may also have required more clarity about the strategy from LitDev itself.

Comparative material from another site

Given the complexity of the LitDev project it was difficult to identify which factors contributed to its difficulties: the organisational instability of the host site or the LitDev strategies themselves, for example. Attempting the same strategy at a second site would have enabled more basis for making judgements.

Learning at the level of theory

According to the final report to funders, results from the story writing process and record keeping process suggest that the organisational model, as opposed to the

individual deficit model has the potential: to make a difference to the organisation, to enable the acquisition of new literacy skills and to enable the practice of these skills in context. Thus, according to the final report to funders (Kell 2004), the theory that informal literacy learning embedded in a meaningful context can be facilitated, holds.

However, the theory of communities of practice was found wanting because although the idea originated from ethnographic observation of naturally occurring processes it is now being applied as a technology for learning. Yet naturally occurring processes appear to the participants precisely as natural and incidental. Once they are made explicit they lose something of their incidental tacit nature. The theory also does not adequately provide for a theorisation of boundaries or of power.

A way of understanding this better was through the idea that texts have trajectories, hence real life texts cannot be studied or learned independently of broader flows of meaning and action. Learners need to know what, for example a bank form turns into when they take it to a bank. Literacy teachers need to be realistic about what they can achieve, especially in relation to the problem of the static nature of texts when they are severed from context.

The theory developed by Green, Freebody, Luke and Lankshear amongst others, that literacy can be seen as having three dimensions: the operational (code-breaker), the cultural (text user and text participant) and the critical (text analyst) was seen as valid based on experiences within the LitDev Project. The implications of this are that the development of any one dimension will not automatically ensure the development of others. Simply put, all three need conscious development.

Related to the above dimensions is the awareness that there are different but complimentary roles to be performed between staff who are predominantly literacy workers and staff who are predominantly development workers. Literacy workers need to work with real texts as they appear in context, i.e. be development-oriented while development workers need to become aware of the way in which communicative practices can facilitate or constrain development. For example, translation of key documents is essential in breaking down power dynamics/relations within an organisation as is awareness about where printed documents enable or block participation.

Conclusion

The LitDev project attempted to apply the New Literacy Studies model of literacy to development activities. It was not able to deliver on many of its objectives (themselves burdened by a need to show literacy gains in terms of the dominant formal model of literacy/adult basic education and training) in a setting that was fraught with extremely negative organisational dynamics. These dynamics would have caused even the most conventional of projects to founder. The lessons learned from the project are challenging precisely because they highlight the complex interaction between the various roles which literacy and literacy interventions play.

Interviews and documentation

Interviewees

Cathy Kell (ex-Project Leader) (detailed E-mail response to first draft of proposal)
 Mastin Prinsloo (Lecturer, School of Education, University of Cape Town)
 Tony Morphet (ex-Head of Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies,
 University of Cape Town)

Documentation

Proposal

Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies. 1997a. *The development of a Social uses of Literacy model for the promotion of literacy, numeracy and information technology amongst unschooled adults within development projects*. March.

Reports and correspondence

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Rockefeller Brothers Fund. 1997. *Questions of clarification*. Fax from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies, 1 April.

Selected articles and papers

Kell, C. 2002. *Moment to moment: texts, movement and participation*. Paper presented at the Conference on literacy and livelihoods in urban environments - contexts and challenges, New Delhi, December.

Kell, C. 2003a. *Accounting for not counting: literacy and ethnography in South Africa*. Paper presented at the National Research and Development Centre (NRDC) Conference: 'What counts as evidence for what purposes in research in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL?', Nottingham, United Kingdom, March.

Kell, C. 2003b. The ins and outs of context. *Fineprint*, Vol. 26, (3).

Prinsloo, M. and Breier, M. (Eds). 1996. *The social uses of literacy: theory and practice in contemporary South Africa*. Johannesburg, SACHED Books.

Adult Basic Education and Training Policy Dialogue – KwaZulu-Natal project

Project Title:	Adult Basic Education and Training Policy Dialogue - KwaZulu-Natal
RBF Grant No.:	#01 - 232
Grantee:	Tembaletu Community Education Centre
Partner Organisations:	Natal ABE Support Agency Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal School of Community Development and Adult Learning, University of Natal
Total Budget:	U\$91 000 (R495 963)
Planned duration:	2 years (2002 and 2003)

Context

The Adult Basic Education and Training Policy Dialogue – KwaZulu-Natal was a joint project of the Tembaletu Community Education Centre (TCEC), the Natal ABE Support Agency (NASA), the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg and the School of Community Development and Adult Learning (CODAL), University of Natal, Durban. Tembaletu was the lead partner in the project.

Tembaletu is an NGO based in Pietermaritzburg which has a focus on Adult Basic Education in a community development context. Activities include adult educator training and support, the development of learner materials and the delivery of community-based programmes in rural and urban areas. NASA¹ was a Durban-based NGO focussed on technical support in ABET through educator training and support, materials development, capacity building for CBOs and NGOs, monitoring and evaluation of ABET projects, research and policy development. The two Adult Education components of the former University of Natal have, since January 2005, merged to form the Centre for Adult Education in the School of Adult and Higher Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The work of the Centre for Adult Education involves formal and non-formal teaching of adult educators, evaluation, research, policy development and materials development.

The proposal

The intervention was designed to fill the vacuum left by the collapsed Forum for the Advancement of Adult Education (FAAE), the Adult Educators and Trainers Association of South Africa (AETASA), and the provincial Forum for Adult Basic Education and Training (FABET) in KwaZulu Natal. This vacuum had particularly affected grassroots practitioners who depended on these forums for information on new policy developments (and there had been significant policy and implementation developments in recent years – notably the Skills Development Act of 1998, the ABET Act of 2000 and the National Skills Development Strategy of 2001).

To meet this gap, some of the key objectives of the project were to:

- ❑ provide networking opportunities for adult literacy and basic education NGOs
- ❑ provide a platform for policy dialogue among adult literacy and basic education practitioners
- ❑ put practitioners in touch with the policy, training and curriculum development discourse, which is otherwise foreign to them
- ❑ disseminate information in the adult literacy and basic education sector and
- ❑ promote good practice among practitioners at all levels.

¹ NASA was forced to close in September 2004 due to lack of core donor funding despite its key role in ABET in KwaZulu-Natal.

These objectives were to be achieved through a series of well-planned workshops informed by research in four regional centres in KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg, Durban, Newcastle and Port Shepstone), and the dissemination of workshop proceedings and other topical information to other practitioners in the field.

The plan of action to implement the project included four phases: baseline research, planning, implementation and evaluation.

Baseline research

This included developing an up to date database of organisations and individuals to be contacted and surveying the policy dialogue workshop topics that potential participants considered most needed.

Planning

Planning of the workshops would include specialised input on the topic provided either by the members of project consortium or external contributors with expertise in that area. It was also hoped that higher degree students of the two University Centres would share the findings of their research in adult education with other practitioners.

Implementation

At least two workshops would be run in each regional centre over the two years (that is at least eight workshops in all) ending with a 'big provincial conference' in the second year. It was expected that there would be between 50 and 100 participants per region (i.e. between 200 and 400 in total). Workshop proceedings or manuals would be produced, edited by a reputable professional and published and distributed to participants and other practitioners.

Evaluation

Evaluation would largely be formative, involving the analysing attendance patterns and the workshop reports against the results of the baseline research, the level of participation in the first and second workshops, the nature and level of the comments made and questions asked during the workshops, as well as feedback forms completed at the end each workshop. However a final evaluation report would be submitted within three months of the end of the project. It was recognised that, since the overall aim of this policy dialogue was to raise policy awareness among practitioners and encourage them to play an active role in policy developments, that evaluating the success of this the short period over which this project would be implemented did not allow for any major impact to be measured.

Implementation

The four phases of the project were achieved with varying degrees of success.

The baseline research was intended to take place within a short time frame but ended up taking significantly longer due to complications arising from a poor return rate on questionnaires as well as discrepancies in returns (organisations were consistently unable to accurately reflect the number of learners at different levels).

Planning was done with the four partner projects but there were a number of complications arising from this model of collaborative planning. (See 'Lessons learned'.)

The implementation phase of the project began later than intended but in the end more workshops were run in more regional centres than had originally been planned. In 2002, 6 workshops were run in 6 regional centres and in 2003, 11 workshops were run in 7 regional centres. Thus a total of 17 workshops were run in 10 regional centres instead of the planned 8 workshops in 4 regional centres.

The table below shows the regions and topics covered in each region.

Topic	2002	2003
Literacy and sustainable development	Pinetown	Pietermaritzburg Port Shepstone
Engaging with the National Skills Development Strategy	Port Shepstone	Pinetown Newcastle Richards Bay
Asifunde! New literacy materials (Best practice)	Durban	Port Shepstone
Understanding the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC)	Pietermaritzburg	Newcastle Ladysmith Richards Bay
Promoting reading amongst adult learners/Best Practice	Ladysmith	Port Shepstone
Assessment in ABET	Richards Bay	
ABET Review		Durban

The evaluation was conducted as planned and a report written which has contributed substantially to the writing of this report.

Successes

The original objectives of the project were comprehensive and ambitious – networking of adult literacy and basic education NGOs workers, policy dialogue and the induction of ordinary practitioners into the language of this dialogue, information dissemination and the promotion of good practice.

More workshops were run than was originally planned throughout the province. A total of 477 participants attended the workshops and certainly the cause of networking (at a regional level) was well served. Participants who attended came from a wide range of sectors and regions. The grant enabled enhanced co-operation and collaboration among the project partners and assisted in the parallel process during these years of the setting up of a new Adult Learning Network – KwaZulu-Natal. The two databases – of organisations and workshop attendees – have been produced and copies sent to the project partners. They will both be valuable for future research and communication (though the database on organisations will need to be updated on a regular basis).

The evaluation forms completed at each workshop indicate that a large majority of the participants found the workshops well presented, interesting and useful. Participants received up to date information on a number of significant development in adult basic education (particularly on the General Certificate in Education and Training) and the opportunities (and also some of the bureaucratic regulations associated with) the SETAs, the National Skills Fund and learnerships. Some of the workshop designs and materials have been turned into print and electronically available manuals.

Other successes noted were:

- ❑ positive signs of commitment and networking
- ❑ the number of people who attended was impressive
- ❑ most participants found the workshops useful and informative or a place for networking
- ❑ better qualified people benefited most significantly. For example, one qualified ABET instructor from the Department of Health had attended several workshops, knew what the topics of the workshops were, could specify in some detail what she had gained and was using this information in workshops she was now running.

Challenges

The particular challenges of this project were that it was run by a consortium of partner organisations and that it attempted to reach a wide geographical and sectoral spread in KwaZulu-Natal. This led to a number of complications particularly in relation to organisation and administration which in turn had a knock-on effect on the educational effectiveness and impact of the project. The challenges are grouped according to organisational and educational challenges.

Educational challenges

Interviews with a sample of workshop attendees several months after the last workshops tended to complement the views of the presenters that some of the more competent attendees had clearly benefited but that others, perhaps a majority, had inadequate understanding of what the workshops were about and simply lacked the prior knowledge and or English skills to gain much from them. This variability among the attendees had somewhat thwarted the original workshop designs and hence the extent to which the workshops resulted in genuine 'policy dialogue' is somewhat doubtful.

Interviews with presenters revealed a common perception that the mass of attendees were in need of basic information and instruction on what was dealt with by the workshops. They simply lacked the grounding to fruitfully engage in discussion on the policies, issues or practices being examined. To some extent the workshops would have helped induct participants into the appropriate discourses, but again, the fact that most people only attended one workshop of the series, left little opportunity for practice in articulating their new knowledge or understanding. Ironically enough, 'policy dialogue' was more in evidence at a number of general meetings/mini conferences held by the

Adult Learning Network during this period, partly because more skilled practitioners and organisation leaders were present.

The promotion of good practice was also of questionable efficacy. Good practice is usually the result of two things: good role modelling and frequent practice (of the good practice) until it becomes habitual. Short (six hour) workshops have limited capacity to do either, that is, model good practice (because of the need for an expert practitioner to deliver a substantial amount of information in a brief period) and provide regular, evaluated practice of new skills (there simply is not enough time and the number of participants is too great). This is not to say that the more practice orientated workshops (such as the ones on *Asifunde!* – new materials for literacy, Good practice in ABET teaching, Assessment in ABET, and Improving reading) did not encourage and model good practice – it is simply that they would have limited scope for doing so. For such good practice to be achieved a more intensive course approach would be required.

Though the above comments may be seen as a somewhat negative appraisal of the achievement of the project objectives it needs to be recognised that a limited achievement was made, that a sector (that serves the poorest of the poor and is desperately in need of support, particularly because of the lack of it from the state's ABET system) was served and strengthened, even if only slightly.

General consensus was that the workshops did not really function as events for 'policy dialogue' (largely because the levels of education and English fluency of the participants were both varied and rather low). What was needed, and to some extent provided, was very basic information or instruction. However, this did not mean that the workshops lacked impact or did not meet needs – as one presenter summed it up, 'receiving a cup of cold water in a desert has great impact'.

Detailed educational challenges were as follows:

Attendance

Only 16% of participants attended more than one workshop and only 2% attended four. The vast majority (84%) only attended one workshop. This was partly due to the fact that most regional centres only had 2 workshops in total and attendance at the whole series of workshops would require considerable travel and expense.

Suitable format

Some topics providing detailed policy information were difficult to deliver in a standard workshop format.

Language of instruction

There was a communication problem because many of the predominantly Zulu speaking participants were not fluent in English.

Educational level

The general educational level of participants was relatively low and, even when they were ABET practitioners, they tended to be the lower level employees or volunteers rather than co-ordinators. In some cases even barely literate ABET learners attended.

Selection

Many of the participants were not sure what the workshops or the specific topics were about. Only a small percentage of attendees were the people at whom the workshops were aimed. These participants had realistic expectations of the workshops and could potentially have engaged seriously in policy dialogue.

Expectations

Many participants expected something more related to what they could teach ('tips for teaching'). Many of the participants had a limited understanding as to what the workshops were about and when contacted some months later could not remember what the topic of the workshop attended was. Few of those interviewed had expected to be engaged in 'policy dialogue' at the workshop. It could also have been 'preaching to the converted' for those participants who did know what to expect.

Impact

There was no clear way of assessing the impact of the workshops and to what extent the participants had understood or engaged with the issues.

Organisational challenges

The project was run as a consortium with the lead partner, Tembaletu, in charge of organisation and administration. According to the project manager, also the then director of Tembaletu, one of the most difficult parts of the project from his perspective was to get 'busy people' from 4 organisations together (including himself) and to get them to stick to deadlines. As these people were involved in the conceptualisation as well as running of the workshops, this posed significant challenges for the project. This situation is not easily overcome as the spread of leadership in ABET is thin and very few individuals are able to dedicate themselves exclusively to one particular project.

A further problem identified by another partner organisation was that roles and responsibilities were not sufficiently clearly defined which led to a number of complications which may have been avoided. Another problem was that due to pressures on individuals and organisations, there was a tendency to divide up the work, rather than engage in a potentially fruitful but lengthy process of collaboration on each workshop.

The marketing of the workshop relied on a 'shotgun' effect. Specific individuals or levels of staff were not targeted which was partially responsible for the very heterogeneous nature of the participants. A related problem was that there was no attempt to ensure that individuals attended a series of workshops. This would in any case only have been possible if there had been the same number, sequence and series of workshops at each regional centre.

At the level of logistics a number of problems emerged:

Non-arrivals

People indicated that they would attend workshops but did not arrive.

Logistical support

Tembaletu experienced a number of problems due to a lack of logistical support at the sites where workshops were run.

Catering

Catering in particular was very difficult especially because numbers could not be accurately predicted. As is common in workshops, there was also a tendency for people to eat the food and run and place inappropriate emphasis on catering arrangements rather than workshop content.

Late Arrivals

There was a difficulty with late arrivals at the workshops. This led, in some cases, to shorter time being available for already somewhat compressed workshops, as well as having a disruptive effect on those which had started more or less on time.

Administrative difficulties

There were many administrative difficulties relating to travel arrangements, instructions on getting to the sites, and on a lack of provision for the funding of additional workshop materials.

Venues

Some venues were inappropriate either because of situation and ease of access or size.

Lessons learned

Language of instruction

Language of instruction was a major issue for many of the participants who arrived at the workshops. If participants are not carefully selected, workshops should either be presented in Zulu or all the materials should at least also be available in Zulu or summarised in Zulu (or relevant language).

Recruitment

Careful and targeted recruitment of participants was important. Participants should have been more specifically selected and their commitment to a series of workshops obtained. The leadership of various NGOs, CBOs, Private sector and State ABET programmes would possibly have been the best target group under the circumstances, and they should have been identified well in advance and their participation ensured.

Notification about workshops should have included detailed workshop descriptions (although this does not guarantee that the correct participants will arrive).

Workshop fees

Free workshops do not always achieve their intentions. It may have been better to charge a small fee per participant with bursary options for organisations that had financial problems.

Workshop aims and organisation

The aims of workshops need to be modest and clear. The overall aims of the Policy dialogue were very ambitious given the constraints under which most ABET organisations operate. It may be better to target fewer people with a more in-depth programme than to use the shallower and broader shotgun effect which has many positive but unpredictable effects.

The workshops given in each region were random. It would have been better to run fewer workshops and repeat the same series in a few regions than to run a broad and random range in many regions. For example, Pietermaritzburg participants only had the opportunity to attend two workshops, whereas Port Shepstone participants had the opportunity to attend four. There was no region where the whole series of workshops was run.

Conclusion

This intervention which was aimed at the generation of wide-ranging policy discussions effectively became an information dissemination project. A wide number of participants were reached through workshops in different regions of the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Participants were generally positive in their evaluations of these workshops but it is difficult to establish the long-term impact as there was no follow-up process and there were very few participants who attended the full range of workshops.

Interviews and documentation

Interviewees

Chris Ramdas (ex-Director of the Natal Adult Basic Education Support Agency)
Khulekani Mathe (ex-Director of Tembaletu Community Education Centre) (by E-mail)

Documentation

Proposal

Tembaletu Community Education Centre. 2001a. *Project proposal submitted to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund – ABET Policy Dialogue KwaZulu-Natal.*

Reports and correspondence

Tembaletu Community Education Centre. 2001b. *Response to the questions on the Tembaletu proposal.* E-mail from the Tembaletu Community Education Centre to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 17 September.

Tembaletu Community Education Centre. 2002. *Mid-term report to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.* October.

Tembaletu Community Education Centre. 2003. *Final report to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.* December.

Selected articles and papers

Aitchison, J. 2004. *Evaluation of the Adult Basic Education and Training Policy Dialogue – KwaZulu-Natal project*. Unpublished evaluation for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Pietermaritzburg, Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Conclusions and recommendations

The brief of this project was to identify the lessons learned about how best to link literacy with development work. The projects considered in this report were all projects funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. However, not all the projects funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in South Africa during this period were part of the brief. Some projects funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund were not selected as part of this project, yet those omitted could argue that what they do is also development work. 'Development' is a broad concept and there are many ways to 'do' it. Understandably, funders want as much value as they can get for their money. Hence the trend towards funding projects that link literacy with other (seemingly more immediate and relevant) development interventions.

The projects under consideration attempted to link literacy and development in different ways both in terms of content and models of implementation. Key content areas were: family literacy, early childhood education, HIV/AIDS and income generation/livelihoods. Models varied: offering literacy classes parallel with but distinct from other content areas; offering literacy classes which integrated development content directly; supplementing training of literacy teachers to include 'development' content and integrating literacy with the core purpose of the development project.

The process of reviewing the selected RBF-funded projects through an analysis of available documentation and interviews with project implementers and project beneficiaries raised a number of stimulating, perplexing, challenging and sometimes depressing issues and questions. Some relate to project conceptualisation and design, some to changing funder priorities, some to organisational capacity and general organisational development issues, some to the constraints of the South African context, some to the constraints of what is humanly and individually possible and finally, some to the realities of greed and corruption.

The project brief for the review team was deceptively simple: document lessons learned so that future projects can benefit from the mistakes of the past. It was clear from the outset that this was not intended to be an evaluation of the projects funded by the the RBF. However, this apparently simple task became steadily more complex for the authors. In some cases it was clear that intentions and motives were good but that there were serious flaws in design or romanticised or unrealistic expectations. In others it was clear that motives were much more pragmatic or cynical. In some cases it was difficult to maintain the discipline of relatively dispassionate reporting. In any event, the writers are aware that there is a fine line between evaluation and reporting on lessons learned.

What follows are summaries of some of the key themes which emerged, with some recommendations.

Funding priorities and sustainability

Due to changing funding, organisations with an established track record and years of experience in a particular field adapt their work to fit what funders are prepared to fund.

It is understandable that in order to keep the doors of funding open, many NGOs 'reinvent' themselves in line with funders changing areas of interest. Unfortunately this often results in organisations deviating from their original aims and objectives or reorganising their priorities, instead of focussing on the problem that they set out to solve. This reinvention would probably not be necessary if funders were prepared to pay for the infrastructural costs of projects. It should be the norm that funders cover 'people' costs so that these people can do the 'work' (which funders are prepared to fund). In most projects the largest percentage of the budget is for salaries and/or infrastructural costs. However, in the current climate, with the predominant language of sustainability, it is increasingly difficult for NGOs to ask for and receive funding for core infrastructural costs.

Funders insist that organisations explore ways to ensure their sustainability – yet follow-up support is not paid for by funders and therefore seldom gets done. A key issue is that literacy and development projects, by definition targeted at poor communities, are not intrinsically self-sustaining.

'Partnerships', often insisted on by funders, are often partnerships only in the funding documents. In reality the money and the work are simply divided up between the partners and there is very little communication between partner organisations, let alone transfer of knowledge or skills.

In the same vein, boundaries between projects within organisations are often clearer to the funders than to the recipient organisation. When interviewing projects for this publication, organisations were sometimes vague about exactly which aspect of their various projects had been funded by the RBF.

Documentation, monitoring, evaluation and research

The vast majority of projects of this nature lack well-documented lessons/reflections. A number of projects in this review did not monitor and document their projects effectively despite asking for and receiving funding directly for this. In order to evaluate the success or impact of an intervention, baseline information and ongoing monitoring and evaluation is essential. This was a flaw in most of the project proposals and reports. Project implementers and funders need to ensure that pertinent information is obtained and that time and money is set aside for this to happen. This is especially true for projects that are 'pilots'. If 'pilots' are to inform future interventions they have to have time and money built in for comprehensive documentation and research.

Replicability

Related to the above points regarding changing funding priorities and effective monitoring and documentaion is the fact that replicability of pilot projects remains somewhat illusory. Although many of the projects in this review were conceptualised as pilot projects, none was replicated. It is not clear overall to what extent this is due to lack of funds or to design and implementation flaws.

Accountability

There was a notable lack of consistency in what was considered to be acceptable from projects in terms of narrative and financial reporting. In a number of cases there was insufficient rigour and accountability in terms of adherence to project proposals and agreements and the preparation of financial reports which relate to the proposal budget. Thorough and accurate narrative and financial reporting is essential, particularly when NGOs are struggling to assert the critical role which they play in the development process.

The target group

One of the most common areas of divergence between proposal and implementation was in the identification and selection of beneficiaries. All the projects considered in this report were supposed to target people in need of ABET, i.e. people with little or no formal schooling and/or low levels of basic literacy. Yet in the implementation, the formal educational level of learners was, in many cases, much higher than was indicated in the proposal. This may illustrate that it is very difficult to attempt to cover very basic literacy as well as other skills at the same time.

The effects of the formalisation of the South African ABE system

The fact that South Africa has adopted a highly formalised and certificated system of ABET has led to a number of anomalies and contradictions when it comes to linking literacy and development. Notable amongst these is the demand that skills development requires relatively high levels of certificated competence in English as a Second Language and Numeracy as 'fundamental' learning areas within a General Education and Training Certificate (GETC). Thus, for example, Early Childhood Development (ECD) workers are forced to reconcile their ECD studies with more basic literacy and numeracy demands. The skills component of development is therefore often incompatible with the formal literacy and numeracy components required for formal accreditation.

Language of instruction and of materials

Related to formalisation and basic literacy levels is the question of language of materials and of instruction. In many of the projects under review it was apparent that medium of instruction both in terms of training and materials was a serious issue. In many cases it would have benefited the project if training and materials were available in the home language/mother tongue of the trainees and their potential learners. In addition to being bedeviled by the demands of the National Qualifications Framework, the pragmatics of running training and publishing materials in a dominant language such as English continues to impede the optimal benefits of interventions.

Facilitators

Most of the projects under review targeted ABE facilitators and expected them to expand their normal literacy teaching to include wider development activities. Facilitators were often expected to absorb vast amounts of information and operate at a professional level without significant levels of support in most of the projects. It may simply be better to create more realistic expectations of what relatively untrained facilitators can be expected to do and provide much more support for them to do it.

Concluding comments and recommendations

It has been said many times before that there is no quick fix to the problems created by illiteracy and its effects on, for example, the education of children, the development of skills and on development in general. It takes a very long time for adult literacy learners to reach the stage of sustainable literacy. This is compounded by the fact that South Africa does not have a strong culture of reading. Attitude and behaviour change in this regard take much longer to effect and entrench than the lifespan of the funding for the individual projects discussed in this report.

Whatever the focus of a particular project, it is clear from this review that development is not easy and that there is no easy solution to linking literacy and development. While it may be true that funders and learners want to see more tangible links between literacy and its benefits, the implementation of such projects is not simple. Learning to read and write and calculate takes a long time. Learning to run a small business or housing project effectively takes a long time. Learning to read stories and stimulate early childhood development takes a long time. Learning to intervene in the HIV/AIDS pandemic takes courage, determination and compassion. All involve the development of skills and attitude change that is subtle, incremental, organic and sometimes imperceptible. Learning to teach these skills and attitudes takes even longer.

What is clear is that despite urgent imperatives, what is needed overall is a long-term view of development and an acknowledgement that the role of literacy in development remains elusive and complex.

In summary, the 'Lessons learned' Project showed that the following are essential:

- ❑ simple, realistic goals
- ❑ clear monitoring and evaluation procedures
- ❑ thorough and demanding reporting and accounting procedures
- ❑ simple, clear materials in as many indigenous languages as possible
- ❑ longer and more realistic time frames
- ❑ a healthy dose of scepticism, patience and humour.

Appendices

Appendix A: Letter to Projects

February 2004

Dear

Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) Literacy and Development Publication Project

By now you would have received a letter from Nancy Muirhead of the RBF giving you information about the above project and requesting that you co-operate with the team tasked with putting together the publication. The team comprises John Aitchison and Sandra Land from the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg and Sonya Keyser and Elda Lyster from the School of Community Development and Adult Learning, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. Any queries regarding the project should be directed to Sonya Keyser who is Project Manager. Her telephone number is 031 – 2602568 (e-mail address below).

Nancy has forwarded us the following documentation on the relevant projects (i.e. RBF-funded projects which link literacy and development work)¹:

- ❑ original funding proposals,
- ❑ project reports to the RBF
- ❑ and the RBF requested evaluation reports.

We will contact you shortly to set up one interview with the project manager, one with his/her supervisor and one with representatives of the beneficiaries of the project. Meanwhile, it would be helpful if you could let us have the following information so that we can prepare for the interviews:

- ❑ other evaluation reports
- ❑ papers/articles written on the project
- ❑ copies of presentations given on the project
- ❑ lists of staff members/field workers per project
- ❑ lists of beneficiaries and their geographical location
- ❑ examples of/lists of products of the project.

Please send the documents to:

Sonya Keyser, School of Community Development and Adult Learning, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, 4041 or e-mail (preferable) keyser@nu.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Literacy and Development Publication Project Team

¹ A list of the projects is attached.

Appendix B: Interview questions

Introduction

This is not an evaluation. It is a study commissioned by the RBF which seeks to document the successes and challenges of projects that link literacy instruction and development activities.

General:

1. In your view, what was the purpose of the project?
2. What was your role?
3. Questions of clarification from the documents....(insert)
4. There are many different approaches to work which links literacy instruction with development activities. What was your approach?

Successes:

1. What aspects of the project worked well?
Management
Implementation
Resourcing
Other
2. What was the overall impact of the project?

Challenges:

1. What were the difficult parts of the projects?/What obstacles/challenges did you encounter?
Management
Implementation
Resourcing
Other

Lessons:

1. What would you do differently if you were to do it again? With the advantage of hindsight, what would have been the best way of doing it? (Probe connection between literacy and development)
2. What advice would you give another organization that was about to embark on a project linking literacy instruction with development activities?
3. Please comment on the cost-effectiveness of the project. Was it budgeted for correctly?

