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UNESCO Institute
for Lifelong Learning

**Report on Mission
to Pretoria, South Africa
30 March to 5 April 2011**

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1. Background

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) was invited by Prof. Veronica McKay, CEO of the *Kha Ri Gude South African Mass Literacy Campaign*, one of the programmes of the South African Department of Basic Education, to attend two workshops in the beginning of April as an international observer. These were:

- 1) The third annual moderation workshop of the 2010 *Kha Ri Gude* adult literacy campaign conducted by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), with the Campaign's national monitors and coordinators, to verify the results achieved in 2010, in particular the quality and authenticity of the internal marking of the *Kha Ri Gude* literacy campaign Learner Assessment Portfolios (LAPs) (1-3 April); and
- 2) The training and planning workshop, conducted by the *Kha Ri Gude* Unit, with the campaign's monitors and coordinators to review 2010 experiences, refine monitoring instruments and develop strategic plans for the 2011 campaign (4-5 April).

Kha Ri Gude is an integrated and multilingual mass adult literacy campaign launched in April 2008 after two years of preparation. It is a government initiative and is funded by the national treasury. The original target was to reach 4.7 million learners in a period of five years (2008-12). However, due to the fact that the funding was not in accordance with the proposed budget, the Campaign period has been extended to the 2013/14 financial year. The *Kha Ri Gude* Programme is offered in the 11 national languages, in South African Sign Language and in Braille (across the 11 languages). The duration of the tuition period is six months (June to November) each year. In 2008 some 357,195 adult learners, in 2009 some 613,643 learners and in 2010 another 609,199 learners were enrolled, of whom 8% were classified as learners with special needs. The Campaign achieved a completion rate of more than 90% (2010), which is extraordinary in literacy campaigns of this size. The *Kha Ri Gude* Programme thus has many important lessons to share.

It was expected that UIL would provide input and add an international perspective to the verification process led by SAQA. At the same time, the South African experience with *Kha Ri Gude* would enrich UIL's literacy work in other UNESCO Member States, particularly in countries with the largest literacy challenges, and who are participants in UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE). The (former) Director of UIL, Dr. Adama Ouane, delegated the representation of UIL on this mission to UIL's Literacy Cluster coordinator, Dr. Ulrike Hanemann, because of her experience in large-scale literacy programmes and in the 35-country LIFE programme.

2. Objectives

The main objective of UIL's visit to Pretoria was to obtain an overall impression of the different elements of the *Kha Ri Gude* South African Mass Literacy Campaign, with a special focus on

- a) the management system
- b) the learner assessment and moderation/verification system
- c) the training, monitoring and planning system
- d) coordinators' experiences of the programme in general, with a specific emphasis on rural, urban, prison and disabled learners.

3. Activities

The visit was mainly conducted through field and site visits, focus group discussions, individual interviews and participation in scheduled workshop activities.

From 31 March to 4 April, UIL carried out the following activities:

- A briefing meeting with the CEO of the Campaign, Prof Veronica McKay, and observation of the textbook production team at work to finalise the copy-editing of 210 school workbooks for learners in grades 1-6 in 11 languages (31 March). Although the development of these books has no direct bearing on the *Kha Ri Gude* campaign, it was important to see how 11 languages could be versioned so as to support multilingual approaches to literacy.
- A field visit to the Business Innovations Group, in charge of overall Campaign administration and financial management, to learn about the human resource management, financial and logistical aspects of the campaign. Another field visit to the Bongani Rainmaker Logistics and a site visit of management offices, warehouses, and centre for data capture (1 April).
- Participation in the third annual moderation workshop of the 2010 *Kha Ri Gude* adult literacy campaign conducted by SAQA (1-3 April).
- Meeting with the SAQA consultant team to discuss UNESCO's approaches and programmes to assess learners' literacy skills (1 April).
- Participation in the award ceremony (evening of 3 April).
- Participation in the first day of the annual training, review, monitoring and planning workshop of the 2011 *Kha Ri Gude* Programme (4 April).
- Meetings and interviews with coordinators of the *Kha Ri Gude* Campaign from Eastern Cape Town, Limpopo (groups from different districts), North West Province, Free State Province, and the coordinators of the programme for blind learners (who are themselves blind) (1-4 April).
- Debriefing meeting with Prof Veronica McKay (4 April).

a) The Campaign's management services

The Department of Education has contracted with a private provider, the *Business Innovations Group*, which is responsible for procurement and human resource management (including registering and paying monthly salaries to up to 40,000 volunteers). It also carries out the financial accounting, reporting and, most importantly, updating all the learner and educator databases in a professional management information system. At peak times it hires up to 60 people to capture the data from reports coming into the system. It oversees the logistics company which is responsible for the picking and packing of all learning materials and for their distribution to some 37,000 learning sites. In addition, the logistics company collects monthly reports from all provinces (from the coordinators) and the completed Learner Assessment Portfolios from approximately 40,000 classes.

The logistics company has been contracted by the managing agents to ensure the collection and storage of all materials, reports and Learner Assessment Portfolios. The logistics company has 80 permanent employees but in the period before the start of classes every year, it hires 1,000 packers, drivers and off-loaders to make sure that the correct material arrives at the correct time at the correct sites in the correct languages and in the correct quantities. A large warehouse is used to store all reports, Learner Assessment Portfolios and other documents (after they are scanned): these records are required to be kept for a number of years by the national treasury.

b) The 3rd annual moderation workshop of the 2010 *Kha Ri Gude* campaign

This was attended by around 220 participants (monitors and coordinators of the campaign) and led by three consultants (senior verifiers) hired by SAQA. After brief training on using the verification tool (guidelines), participants were organised according to province and language group (11 languages plus Braille in 11 languages) to ascertain the integrity of the marking of a sample of *Kha Ri Gude* Learner Assessment Portfolio (LAPs). A sample of 52,436 LAPs, representing 9.2% of the total 566,190 returned at the end of 2010, was selected for verification. The sample was representative of the languages and provinces represented in the campaign but also ensured that each of the 3,394 supervisors had a class selected for verification. This formed part of *Kha Ri Gude's* own monitoring of the quality of each supervisors work.

Instead of a final exam, assessment within the *Kha Ri Gude* campaign is based on internal evidence in the form of an LAP, which has ten language and ten numeracy activities designed to provide continuous internal assessment during the programme. The activities are designed to show competence, progress and curriculum coverage at various times during the six-month learning period. The completed LAPs are first marked by the educator, checked and signed off by supervisors and then by coordinators and returned to the campaign headquarters, where the marks are captured for analysis. The item analysis and the results by language, district, age-cohort, and so on, provide the campaign with important information to improve its interventions.

SAQA uses a rigorous approach for moderating and verifying the LAP sample in order to ensure quality and authenticity in internal marking and moderation. By so doing, SAQA undertakes to verify the marking undertaken by the *Kha Ri Gude* educators. This is a very comprehensive and complex process

which contributes to a final report and to the recording of the achievements of the successful learners on the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD).

c) The training, monitoring and planning workshop

Immediately following the SAQA workshop, and with the same participants (35 monitors and 196 coordinators), another workshop was organised by the *Kha Ri Gude* management to develop jointly a campaign manual on the basis of good practice and to plan programme activities for 2011. The manual was developed through a participatory process which involved a review of aspects that had either worked well during 2010 or needed improvement. Participants worked in teams (by language and province) to develop Action Plans for 2011.

d) Coordinators' experiences

In the course of participating in both workshops there were many opportunities for individual interviews (encouraged and arranged for by Prof McKay and her team along UIL's research interests) with coordinators from different Provinces and with a range of experience, including the teams of blind and deaf coordinators. An informal meeting was held with the three SAQA consultants who showed an interest in learning about UNESCO's position on assessing learning achievements in adult literacy programmes and quality standards as well as about UNESCO's Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP).

4. Key findings/results

The overall impression resulting from the field visit, workshops and interviews during the five days in Pretoria is that *Kha Ri Gude* has managed to develop into a highly successful programme which has matured over the years and which in many respects is probably unparalleled at regional and international levels. Despite its impressive numbers and range, the Campaign is run smoothly and has been able to produce visible results. Some of the **factors** that have contributed to the **success** of the *Kha Ri Gude* Campaign can be summarised as follows:

- The Campaign is building on professional capacity in adult literacy and education which has been developed country-wide over almost two decades (e.g. UNISA's distance courses to train adult educators for the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Programme). Most of the monitors and coordinators, who are the backbone of the campaign structure in the Provinces, have a university degree/diploma in ABET and many years of field experience. *Kha Ri Gude* is harvesting the fruits of a long-term investment in developing human resources in adult education.
- The unusually high retention and completion rates are due to a) classes which are located close to where learners live and at times which are convenient for learners to attend (particularly relevant in rural areas and for female learners because of security concerns); b) good relationships of educators "who care" about their learners; c) attractive learning materials that are "chunked" and paced to enable curriculum coverage; d) the programme being offered simultaneously in the 11 official languages and Braille; d) a non-threatening portfolio approach

to assessing learning achievements; and e) a widespread motivation to obtain a recognised certificate which opens opportunities for further learning within the non-formal ABET system.

- The campaign runs smoothly thanks to a highly professional management, including logistics and a very efficient data collection and management information system. This of course has a cost which seems to pay off, because good performance in the frequent audits, to which *Kha Ri Gude* has been subject for transparency and accountability in the use of public funds, has also ensured government willingness to continue investing in the literacy campaign (around €30m last year).
- As *Kha Ri Gude* has created more than 40,000 short-term jobs, mainly in rural areas with high unemployment rates, it has been awarded an additional R45 million for 2011 from the Expanded Public Works Programme run by the Department of Labour. In other words, the Campaign has stimulated other (government) sectors to invest in literacy, an approach which UNESCO strongly promotes.
- Every aspect of data collection (registers, monthly reports, LAPs) is linked to the data required to enable payments to be authorised. In other words: No data, no money. This has contributed to high levels of achievement and accountability in terms of payment against results.
- *The Kha Ri Gude* campaign was designed as a (more or less) new integrated system, which is not attached to any existing and (often) dysfunctional systems. This has provided a certain degree of independence to do things differently and make use of state-of-the art knowledge and technology.

The following **findings** derive from observations of the four specific aspects on which the visit had focused (integrating coordinators' experiences as a transversal dimension into the first three aspects):

a) Management system

The management of logistics, finances, records and data for *Kha Ri Gude* was found to operate at highly professional levels and can be described as exemplary. A well-orchestrated system is in place to support the mass campaign, which is able to guarantee the delivery of huge volumes of materials, the capture and storage of all data, and the different contractual, financial and human resource management aspects. The data management system was particularly impressive, developed on a Lotus Notes platform. It provides timely information on registrations (volunteers and learners), attendance, stipends, learner assessments, remuneration, procurement, document library, import/ export and administration. It enables reporting for purposes such as management, planning, monitoring, accountability, and public relations work, and constitutes an indispensable investment to run a campaign of this size successfully.

b) Learner assessment and moderation system

According to the SAQA consultants' final report, the majority of the marking (90%) was judged excellent or acceptable by moderators and verifiers. They therefore recommended that the results submitted by

Kha Ri Gude for 2010 be recorded on the NLRD. The portfolio learner assessment approach used by *Kha Ri Gude* involves a standardised assessment tool (all learners perform the same tasks and are marked against the same criteria). It can be used in flexible and personalised ways (each learner at his or her own pace), which are closely aligned with the curriculum of the literacy primer (learners can only demonstrate those knowledge and skills that have been worked on in classes). It is supported by an internal moderation and verification system. In interviews, coordinators assessed the LAPs positively without exception because they are user-friendly, attractive in presentation, and help develop a culture of (self-) evaluation among learners. For learners in prison contexts, the portfolio is helpful (“portable”) in case an inmate is transferred to another prison during the six-month period of the Programme. The moderation system is not only a sophisticated verification of the integrity of LAP marking but also an important component of the quality assurance process. The involvement of the Campaign’s moderators and coordinators ensures that it is a learning experience and capacity development exercise for everybody.

c) Training, monitoring and planning system

The decentralised approach to planning, implementing and monitoring the campaign at Province level has proven to work well because it has strengthened ownership, reduced cumbersome bureaucratic decision-making chains, and allowed for contextualised responses. Observance of local “protocols”, leadership and traditions was seen by coordinators as a key factor in obtaining support from local authorities and communities for the implementation of *Kha Ri Gude*. Communities have taken ownership of the Campaign. Three years of experience with the Campaign has also helped to better tackle problems and build trust among all stakeholders at local level.

The participatory system of training, monitoring and strategic planning allows for exchange and mutual learning as well as for continuous improvement of the Campaign structure and practices. For example, in their analysis of the Campaign structure, participants in the review and planning workshop identified supervisors’ roles and responsibilities as the “weak link” requiring improvement. The collective development of a manual to training and retrain recruits is another example of a process that builds on accumulated good practice and is geared towards strengthening all participants’ capacities. The same participatory approach in the collective design of monitoring tools has also strengthened the monitoring process and coordinators’ understanding of the necessity to comply.

It is important to note that some coordinators charged with delivery in prisons stated that the campaign could not accommodate all illiterate inmates, due to financial constraints and security regulations. However, in some prisons, the campaign had ensured that inmates themselves were trained to become educators for *Kha Ri Gude* in prisons. Many of them continued this role after their release.

Interviewees reported that they undertake great efforts to refer *Kha Ri Gude* completers to the ABET system to continue their studies. In some cases the capacity of ABET to absorb all *Kha Ri Gude* completers was limited due to constraints and limitations within the ABET system. Presently some provinces have ensured that *Kha Ri Gude* educators are taken over into the provincial ABET system with

their learners. This provides an opportunity for learners to enter further learning and to stay with a teacher whom they know and trust. Where whole classes are absorbed into the ABET system, there has been some success. However, there are certain problems which have restricted the flow of learners to ABET. For example, where the ABET system requires learners to join classes – usually in schools, at night and in venues some distance from where they live – there is a notable resistance by learners.

5. Conclusions

- Many of the concerns addressed and approaches promoted by UNESCO – such as multilingual literacy, outreach to and inclusion of vulnerable and particularly challenged groups such as rural populations, prisoners and disabled earners, decent employment schemes and contracts for education and management personnel, innovative approaches and methods to teaching-learning and assessment; professional information management systems; among others – are already a reality in *Kha Ri Gude*. The Campaign can therefore be considered a model literacy programme in many respects and should receive continued political and financial support from the South African Government.
- The annual moderation process of Learner Assessment Portfolios, as part of the *Kha Ri Gude* quality assurance system, has evolved into a well-oiled machinery providing credibility to the results achieved and offering a learning experience to all stakeholders. It is now has the maturity to reflect on further activities which may add quality to *Kha Ri Gude* and help sustain achievements.
- It is difficult to expect that all learners achieve the same levels of literacy and numeracy skills during a 240-hour programme. For vulnerable groups such as older learners, and deaf and blind learners there are special provisions to continue their classes for nine (instead of six) months. And learners who are unable to complete the course within six months are also given the option to re-attend the Programme in the following year. Given that there is a diversity of entry levels and learning abilities, special support measures may be a good approach to help some learners reach the level established through the *Kha Ri Gude* LAPs.
- The design of *Kha Ri Gude* as a new and independent system, which has been to some extent a factor conducive to its success, involves a level of risk. *Kha Ri Gude* currently operates as a stand-alone system which is organically not (yet) part of the overall non-formal education (ABET) and future lifelong learning system. Its gains and possible benefits for the overall NFE (ABET) system are at risk of being lost once the Campaign is over. It is necessary therefore for *Kha Ri Gude* to further exploit the linkages and inroads it has made in some of the Provinces. The full transfer of learners from *Kha Ri Gude* to ABET will also require ABET to be transformed in such a way that it continues to provide the required learner support materials and retains the nurturing and user-friendly approach which has become the hallmark of *Kha Ri Gude*.
- *Kha Ri Gude* has built strategic partnerships which involve sharing government resources and better outreach to specially challenged learners such as blind learners. *Kha Ri Gude* has employed, for example, a member of the South African Council for the Blind as a coordinator, who can feed back to the Council work what he has learned.

- There seems to be a huge number of inmates in prison who still wait for their opportunity to enrol in *Kha Ri Gude* literacy courses.

6) Follow-up recommendations

- To continue with the annual verification process of the Learner Assessment Portfolios results through a moderation process under the guidance of SAQA (or any other authority with which the Ministry of Basic Education might establish a future agreement).
- To complement this with other quality assurance activities such as in-depth research for which the Department of Education will need to allocate additional funds and may consider partnership agreements with specialised academic and research institutions at national and international levels. This should include tracer studies in order to determine *Kha Ri Gude* completers' learning pathways through the ABET or other alternative systems.
- To build on the *Kha Ri Gude* experience with the learner portfolio assessment approach (and also inspired by international surveys such as ALL, IALS and LAMP) to develop a competency framework of literacy and numeracy levels which supports the development of user-friendly, culturally-relevant diagnostic/placement and assessment/measurement tools to be used by different literacy programmes.
- To maintain a non-threatening assessment environment such as the one created by *Kha Ri Gude* which has flexibility to accommodate the huge diversity of adult learners' starting levels, learning paces, interests, needs and life circumstances.
- To design an exit strategy in support of a smooth transfer from *Kha Ri Gude* assets (knowledge and systems) into a longer-term adult education and lifelong learning system.
- To explore innovative approaches (such as extra help from more advanced learners or personal tuition through community volunteers) to provide special support to learners who need more than the 240 contact learning hours to reach the required levels of achievement established through the *Kha Ri Gude* LAPs.
- To consider establishing more Agreements of Cooperation with Correctional Services in order to mobilise additional funds (by using their budgets) for *Kha Ri Gude* courses in prisons.
- To encourage and support learners to establish their own learners' organisations and to build their own country-wide network.
- To share, document and disseminate *Kha Ri Gude* experiences at regional and international levels so that its practices can be emulated by other countries.
- To make its systems and materials (freely) available to all UNESCO Member States who may require these resources.
- To facilitate study visits and technical missions for other countries needing to address the problem of illiteracy.