

Kha Ri Gude (Let Us Learn) Adult Literacy Programme (KGALP)

COUNTRY PROFILE

Population

47,432,000 (2007 estimate)

Poverty

(Population living on less than USD 1 per day)

10.7% (1990–2004)

Official Languages

Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu

Total Expenditure on Education as % of GNP

5.5

Access to Primary Education –

Total Net Intake Rate (NIR)

51% (2005)

Total Youth Literacy Rate (15–24 years)

94% (1995–2004)

Adult Literacy Rate (15 years and over, 1995–2004)

Total: 82%; Male: 84%; Female: 81%

Sources

- UNESCO: EFA Global Monitoring Report
- UNICEF: Info by Country
- World Bank: World Development Indicators database

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme Title

Kha Ri Gude (Let Us Learn) Adult Literacy Programme (KGALP)

Implementing Organization

Government of South Africa (Department of Basic Education)

Language of Instruction

Mother-tongue and English as a second language

Funding

Government of South Africa

Annual Programme Costs

Overall budget: 6 billion Rands / about USD 780 million

Date of Inception

2008

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Since its democratization in 1994, South Africa has instituted several educational programmes such as the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme and the South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI, 2000) in an effort to promote universal access to education and most importantly, to eradicate illiteracy among adults, many of whom were deprived of educational opportunities during the apartheid era. The programmes were also intended to empower previously socially disadvantaged groups in order to enable them to be self-reliant and to participate more effectively in national development processes.

However, despite concerted efforts by successive post-apartheid governments to expand learning opportunities for adults, the rate of adult illiteracy in the country remains significantly high. A recent study by the Ministerial Committee on Literacy (June 2006) established that about 9.6 million adults or 24% of the entire adult population aged over 15 years were functionally illiterate. Of these, 4.7 million could not read or write (i.e. had never attended school) while 4.9 million were barely literate having dropped out of formal school before completing primary education. The study also revealed that the rate of adult illiteracy was significantly higher in non-white communities and among women, a pattern which partly reflected the negative

effect of apartheid-era segregationist policies with regards to the provision of social services including education as well as socio-cultural practices which tend to promote the education of male over female children. The continued prevalence of adult illiteracy and its negative effect on development and social transformation prompted the government of South Africa to institute the Kha Ri Gude (Let Us Learn) Adult Literacy Programme (KGALP) in February 2008.

KHA RI GUDE (LET US LEARN) ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMME (KGALP)

The KGALP is an integrated and multilingual mass adult literacy campaign which is being implemented across the entire country by the State through the Department of Basic Education (DoBE). The government of South Africa has committed six billion rands (about US\$780 million) to fund the programme over the next five years (2008–2012). Although the KGALP is an inclusive educational campaign which targets every adult person with little or no formal education, specific efforts are made to target vulnerable and often marginalised social groups such as women, young people and people living with disabilities (see pictures below). For instance, of the 620,000 learners that were enrolled into the programme in 2009, about 80% were women, 8% had disabilities and 25% were youth. Overall, 50% of programme participants were aged between 25 and 55 years and 20% were above the age of 60. In addition, a disproportionate majority of learners were from impoverished urban informal settlements and rural areas and almost all of them are unemployed or self-employed.

In order to effectively address the particular and diverse learning needs of different groups of learners, the KGALP employs an integrated and multilingual approach to literacy skills training. Accordingly, the programme curriculum integrates basic literacy skills training of learners in their mother tongue with life skills training. The life skills component of the programme places greater emphasis on subjects or themes that are central to the learners' socioeconomic context or everyday existential experiences such as:

- health (e.g. HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention; nutrition and sanitation)

- civic education (e.g. human rights, conflict resolution and management; peacebuilding and gender and racial relations)
- environmental management and conservation
- income generation or livelihood development.

In addition, the programme also provides instruction in English as a second language in order to enable them to conduct ordinary tasks such as filling in official forms.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The KGALP endeavours to:

- enable 4.7 million functionally illiterate and semi-literate adults (aged above 15 years), including people living with disabilities, to become literate and numerate in one of the 11 official languages by 2012. This is intended to reduce the national rate of illiteracy by 50% by 2015 in line with the government's Education for All (EFA) commitment made in Dakar in 2000 as well as to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on poverty reduction, women's empowerment, HIV and AIDS eradication, environmental protection and sustainable democratisation and peacebuilding.
- fulfil the constitutional right of all citizens to gain access to basic education in their own language (i.e. promote universal access to education)
- empower socially disadvantaged people to become self-reliant and to uplift their living standards (poverty reduction/alleviation)
- enable socially disadvantaged people to participate more effectively in national socioeconomic development processes
- foster social transformation through enhanced civic or public awareness.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION: APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGIES

In order to facilitate the effective implementation of the programme, the Department of Basic Education (DoBE) has recruited and trained about 75,000 community-based volunteer coordinators, supervisors and educators or literacy training facilitators, including 100 blind and 150 deaf educators who provide specialised instruction to their illiterate compatriots with disabilities. The DoBE has also developed and produced various teaching-learning materials in all 11 official

languages. The learning materials have been professionally adapted for use by deaf and blind learners. In addition, the DoBE has also established about 35,000 community-based learning centres or sites across the country. Learning centres range from basic structures or venues such as a participant's homestead/back-yard or bus shelters, to more established institutions such as a local church, community centre or prison. Some classes are even conducted under trees, indicating the State's commitment to reach out to all potential learners including those living in adverse situations lacking basic infrastructure.

Over the years, the campaign has involved a diverse and inclusive group of learners. About 20% of the learners enrolled are aged 60 and above. The programme has helped this group of learners in countless ways, such as helping them to participate actively in their grandchildren's education and in their communities, to overcome depression and gain confidence, and to increase their financial security. In addition, special attention has been paid to learners with special needs and disabilities, for instance by developing literacy material in Braille. During the campaign, approximately 15% of learners had disabilities.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF FACILITATORS

The implementation of the programme, including the recruitment of new learners, is heavily dependent on a cadre of community-based volunteer educators or facilitators, supervisors and coordinators. In order to reach approximately 600,000 learners, the campaign recruited and trained some 40,000 volunteers to work as programme educators and facilitators. Over the years, the volunteers were predominantly women (85%), two thirds (66 %) were under the age of 35; 85% of them were unemployed and all were recruited from the same communities as the learners they serve. As a rule, only matriculants with a minimum of Grade 12 qualification and qualified professionals are recruited and trained to serve as programme facilitators. Currently, there are about 75,000 volunteers working as programme educators or facilitators. Of these, about 66% are under 35; 80% are women; 85% of them were unemployed and all were recruited from the same communities as the learners they serve. As a rule, only matriculants with a minimum of Grade 12 quali-

fication and qualified professionals are recruited and trained to serve as programme facilitators. Currently, 51% of the volunteers (coordinators, supervisors and educators) have one or more tertiary qualification. Programme facilitators are provided with basic training in various aspects of adult education including:

- adult-appropriate teaching-learning methods
- class room management
- how to use teaching modules to conduct lessons, as well as to moderate the learning process
- how to conduct the assessment activities in the Learner Assessment Portfolios (LAPS).

In addition, programme facilitators also receive ongoing training, mentoring and support from skilled supervisors and coordinators, all of whom have post-graduate qualifications and substantial experience in community development work. They are also provided with a desk calendar which includes lesson plans and teaching modules for the 35 mother tongue literacy lessons, 35 numeracy lessons, and 10 English for Everyone lessons.

Each trained educator/facilitator is responsible for between 15 and 18 learners. Volunteers are paid a monthly stipend (about R 1,200) that is contingent on them meeting a number of pre-defined criteria such as submitting LAPs. This 'outcomes-based payment' is necessary for reasons of accountability, motivation and to ensure that the learners are not compromised. It is also essential in ensuring the integrity of the campaign's payment system. Apart from providing teaching services, programme educators also play a critical role in the recruitment or enrolment of new learners and various advocacy campaigns which are intended to make the programme a vibrant part of community life.

RECRUITMENT OF LEARNERS

Various strategies are used to encourage potential learners to enrol into the programme. These include:

- public announcements and advertisements in community newspapers and over the radio, production and distribution of posters and pamphlets
- word of mouth through meetings with women and youth groups, taxi organisations, trades unions, traditional leaders, and door-to-door visits

- public announcements in church, at funerals, and in schools
- community advocacy by programme graduates.

TEACHING-LEARNING APPROACHES AND METHODS

Teaching reading and writing is a complex undertaking, especially when the learner is an adult, and the educator is an untrained volunteer. The situation is particularly complex when the teaching-learning process involves learners with special needs such as blind and deaf learners. Hence, in order to ensure effective literacy skills acquisition by learners, the KGALP provides participants with free and adequate learning materials, basic stationery and obligates them to attend classes three times a week (on average, each class is three hours long) over a period of six months.

In addition, the programme has adapted the learning materials to cater for the particular needs of blind and deaf learners. Accordingly, blind learners are provided with various learning devices and aids including Braillette boards and Perkins Brailers for use in class, talking calculators, pins for learning the Braille alphabet, egg boxes and ping pong balls for initial Braille lessons. They are also taught how to read and write in Braille by specialist and volunteer educators with disabilities. Similarly, deaf learners also receive specialised instruction through sign language from trained deaf facilitators. The strategy of engaging educators with disabilities is not only beneficial to the educators but it also ensures that learners with special needs receive effective instruction and assistance from people who understand their existential needs and challenges. Teaching-learning materials are designed to help facilitators to develop the reading and writing skills of their learners through a highly instructive teaching-learning process as well as guided practice by the learners (see pictures below). The materials are also intended to enable facilitators to pay special attention to the particular needs of individual learners.

In addition, the learning materials also follow an integrated approach to literacy acquisition drawing on the benefits of the language experience and whole word approaches while taking seriously the recent findings of neuro-cognitive research. In line with this research, the KGALP materials teach the mechanics of reading,

paying explicit attention to enhancing learners' perceptual and visual literacy skills, and systematically introducing phoneme/graphemes (from high frequency to low frequency) according to linguistic typologies developed for each language. In this way, the KGALP materials are able to direct and map learners' progression in phonic knowledge and skills.

Because the campaign relies on untrained volunteers who work in less than conducive circumstances, it is essential to ensure that materials are highly structured with in-built sequenced activities to teach:

- phoneme/grapheme isolation necessary for learners to recognise individual sounds in words, and to learn letter/sound correspondence
- phoneme identification where learners are required to identify common sounds in different words
- phoneme categorisation so that learners can identify the odd sounding word in a sequence of three or four words
- phoneme blending which enables learners to read or listen to a sequence of separate sounds and then to combine them to form a word or to blend phonemes from left to right to decode a word
- phoneme segmentation where learners break words into their constituent phonemes – a skill especially important in agglutinative languages.

It is recognised that the ability to decode individual words is not sufficient, hence the materials simultaneously attend to fluency which promotes comprehension by freeing cognitive resources for interpretation. The materials include a range of word cards and a phonic 'domino' game to assist automaticity. The intention is that learners develop a reading speed of at least 45 words per minute so that they do not forget the start of the sentence by the time they reach the end. In line with the rudiments of language experience, and whole word approaches, the learning outcomes are immersed in eight organising themes so that the content is relevant to learners' motivation, in contexts where skills at this level will support independent living and broaden the choices and opportunities available to adults. Each lesson starts with a picture to stimulate discussion, to encourage learners to think about related social issues and to make applications to their lives and contexts. Key sentences and key words



are derived from these contexts. The themes include, for example:

- my family, my home
- living together in communities
- health, HIV, hygiene and nutrition
- the world of work
- caring for our environment, and
- our country and the world around us.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

The KGALP has instituted an extensive monitoring and evaluation system which is carried out by supervisors who each monitor 10 educators/facilitators, and coordinators who each monitor 20 supervisors. This ongoing internal monitoring and evaluation process includes:

- monthly class visits by supervisors to monitor and evaluate/assess the teaching-learning process and the learners' progress
- spot checks carried out by a team of external monitors and 'line' coordinators.

This ongoing action-oriented monitoring and evaluation system enables supervisors to advise facilitators on how to improve their teaching strategies in order to enable learners to effectively acquire literacy skills. Furthermore, the system also enables programme supervisors and coordinators to solve many of problems onsite and therefore to maintain programme standards.

In addition, all Kha Ri Gude learners are tested continuously through a portfolio containing 10 literacy assessment activities in their mother tongue, and 10

numeracy activities. The activities are competency based and are time-linked to the various stages of their learning. The learners are also required to complete their (LAPS) which are then marked by the volunteer and then moderated by supervisors and controlled by coordinators. The LAPS are then collected and returned to the campaign head office where the site-based marking is verified by SAQA (presently more than 80% of the LAPS are returned, indicating that the programme has a high learner-retention rate). On the basis of this inter-connected assessment process, successful learners are issued with certificates (at ABET level 1) by DoBE's examination directorate and, for the less competent ones, an award of one of the five UNESCO LAMP levels will be applied in recognition of their varying degrees of alphabetisation. At the end of the assessment process, the learners' biographical details and marks per activity are captured onto an assessment database to allow for statistical analysis which in turn informs on the measures and strategies needed to improve programme delivery.

PROGRAMME IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

IMPACT

Despite being in its infancy, the KGALP has quickly evolved into South Africa's biggest adult literacy campaign to date as partly manifested by the number of graduates which rose from 380,000 in 2008 to 620,000 in 2009. In light of this, the rate of learner enrolment into programme is therefore expected to increase in the coming years, allowing the campaign to achieve its principal goal of reducing the national rate of adult illiteracy by 50% by 2012.

Apart from this, the programme has also had some concrete benefits for both the learners, their families and communities and by extension, the entire nation. These include:

- By the end of 2009, the programme had assisted about one million learners (380,000 in 2008 and 620,000 in 2009) to acquire basic literacy skills including basic spoken English. This has enabled hitherto illiterate youth and adults to be more independent in conducting daily business including undertaking shopping errands and travelling. In addition, the programme also creates critical avenues for lifelong learning not least because successful KGALP graduates are eligible to enrol into other governmental educational programmes.
- Employment creation and poverty alleviation: although the KGALP is essentially an educational intervention aimed at eliminating adult illiteracy, it has nonetheless contributed towards poverty alleviation by creating employment opportunities for 75,000 matriculants who are engaged as facilitators and 700 people who are employed in the production and distribution of programme learning materials and other ancillary programme activities. Furthermore, programme graduates have also been empowered to engage in more profitable income generating activities or to improve the profitability of their existing projects. Essentially therefore, the programme enables both employees – most of whom had been unemployed – and learners to be self-reliant and to contribute towards their families' well-being and living standards.
- Empowerment of people living with disabilities: the programme has created learning and employment opportunities for people with disabilities who are often marginalised and ostracised by their families and communities. Therefore, the programme has enabled people with disabilities to lead an independent lifestyle.
- Sense of social responsibility: the provision of employment to youth especially those from disadvantaged communities has not only fostered a sense of self-worth among the youth but has also instilled them with a sense of social or civic responsibility (the value of serving) that potentially prevents some youth from engaging in antisocial behaviour including violent crime.
- Social/community cohesion and organisation: the programme is currently playing a critical role in fostering community cohesion and peaceful co-existence not only through the creation of employment opportunities for local people but also through the creation of learners' groups which brings together people with a common goal and vision for themselves and their communities. Hence, as the Chief Executive of the programme, Veronica McKay, rightly observed, 'besides the actual learning experience, a lot of programme participants come for the social aspect. They meet new friends, and learning groups help to overcome loneliness'.
- Preservation and advancement of languages: by promoting mother-tongue adult literacy, the programme has created opportunities for the research into, advancement and preservation of all South Africa's main languages. The respect and equality accorded to all languages could also play a critical role in fostering national cohesion.
- Promoted progressive democratisation through the dissemination of civic education materials which improve civic awareness.

PROGRESS

Since its inception in 2008, the programme has achieved considerable success. For example, 90% of the 4,207,946 adult learners who enrolled on the programme between 2008 and 2015 completed their course.

CHALLENGES

Despite the successes recorded to date, the implementation of the programme has also been encumbered by various financial and technical challenges including:

- Although the principal aim of the programme is to target all illiterate adults, the programme is yet to reach out to working adults. To date, the campaign has been aimed at the employers and big business to enforce the fact that a literate and educated workforce will add value to any business. It is of the greatest importance that corporate companies and big business become involved in the education of all South Africans.
- There have been complaints from volunteer facilitators over delayed or non-payment of their stipends. Senior programme officials have attributed this phenomenon to either the failure of facilita-

tors to provide correct personal and bank details or their delays in submitting the LAPS which are used to trigger payment of stipends. Furthermore, banks also close accounts with a zero balance which they consider to be 'dormant' and as a result, many of the volunteers are unable to receive payments which banks leave pending in suspense accounts for long periods before notifying the head office.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Provision of adequate training opportunities and payment of stipends to facilitators is central to the potential success of adult literacy campaigns.
- Provision of specialised instruction to people living with disabilities is critical for their inclusion into literacy projects as well as the success of their learning experiences.
- Community mobilisation is central to successful adult literacy programming.

SUSTAINABILITY

The long-term sustainability of the programme is not in doubt, not least because demand from potential learners to enrol into the programme continues to be high as evidenced by a waiting list of about 1.2 million adults. Additionally, the programme has also secured State funding for the next five years and most teaching-learning materials, which consume a substantial amount of the available funds, have been developed.

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