

ENHANCING CAREGIVER AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN'S READING DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

CASE STUDY I - LITERATE VILLAGE

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LITERATE VILLAGE



2017 – present



Submitters:
Save the Children,
World Education



Partners: Save the Children Egypt, Government of Egypt (Ministry of Education and Technical Education, Ministry of Social Solidarity, and Adult Education Authority), various partner non-governmental organizations and community development associations

INTERVENTION SPACES



Home learning environment



Community activities and events

INTERVENTIONS



Home learning activities



Book distributions



Literacy skill-building activities for caregivers



Bookmaking



Non-formal education



Reading clubs



Community libraries



Information sessions and communication/awareness campaigns

EVIDENCE HIGHLIGHTS



Mothers' increased interest and engagement in their children's education, as well as a greater desire to pursue their own learning to be able to support their children.



Stronger, healthier parent-child and husband-wife relationships.



Increased awareness and enjoyment of reading within the family.



Enhancement of listening, vocabulary, dialogue, critical thinking, and communication skills among family members.



Improved learning outcomes for both children and mothers, including effect sizes on Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) outcomes ranging from 0.31 to 0.63 standard deviation for children and an average of a 20 percent increase in Rapid Assessment of Reading Skills (RARS) assessment scores for mothers.

ACRONYMS

AEA	Adult Education Authority
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices
MOETE	Ministry of Education and Technical Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RARS	Rapid Assessment of Reading Skills

DEFINITIONS

LITERACY—Literacy is a continuum of learning and proficiency in reading, writing, and using numbers throughout life and is part of a larger set of skills, which include digital skills, media literacy, education for sustainable development, and global citizenship as well as job-specific skills (UNESCO, 2023).

INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING AND FAMILY LITERACY MODEL—A model for early literacy created by Save the Children that develops literacy skills for both mothers and their children to spread a culture of reading within households and the community.

PROMISING PRACTICE—A promising practice is a method or approach that has the potential to become a best practice. A best practice has been shown, by research and experience, to produce optimal results and is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption (USAID, 2018).

READING—Reading is the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Readers can construct meaning from texts in a variety of forms. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life, and for enjoyment (PIRLS, 2021).

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING—Social-emotional learning is a set of cognitive, social, and emotional competencies that children, youth, and adults learn through explicit, active, focused, and sequenced instruction, which allows them to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (USAID, 2021).

BACKGROUND

Literate Village is an eight-year education project in Egypt implemented from 2017-2025, funded by USAID. Its goal is to improve reading outcomes for children through community-based interventions. The project utilizes an Intergenerational Learning and Family Literacy Model to develop literacy skills for both mothers and their children to spread a culture of reading within households and the community. Literate Village specifically targets rural communities with high numbers of out-of-school girls, where around 42 percent of women have low literacy levels, and only around 25 percent of school-age children can read with comprehension (Save the Children, 2020). To address these needs, the Literate Village program provides a holistic, intergenerational approach to maximize impact at all levels of society through interventions at the following levels:

Child:

- **Support to community schools:** Improve the pedagogy of reading and writing in community schools and enhance the learning environment through renovations and the provision of teacher training, furniture, book banks, and teacher kits.
- **Reading clubs:** For 90 minutes once a week during the school year, reading clubs promote reading and further develop reading skills outside of school.
- **Summer camps:** Summer camps to support low-performing students to develop academic, literacy, and social-emotional skills in order to reduce students dropping out of school.

Caregivers:

- **Adult literacy program:** A nine-month course that supports mothers to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills and engage in intergenerational learning with their children at home.
- **Post-literacy program:** An optional six-month course for mothers who complete the Adult Literacy Program. The program reinforces basic literacy and numeracy skills and incorporates information on life skills such as positive parenting techniques, nutrition, etc. The program also assists women to access existing opportunities for income generation and vocational training.
- **Parenting awareness sessions:** Separate mother- and father-focused training sessions that focus on positive parenting skills and activities for parents to do with children at home.

Families:

- **Home learning activities:** Train community school teachers to design reading assignments involving parental engagement and contribution.
- **Family literacy books:** Develop family literacy books that are introduced in adult literacy classes and used to establish family literacy practices in the home.

Community:

- **Community Education Teams:** Establish local Community Education Teams and equip them to lead and sustain the project's activities.
- **Community-based reading activities:** Facilitate interactive reading-based games and activities in which mothers and children engage together in literacy learning.
- **Community and school book banks:** Provide one book bank for each community school and one book bank in a community space outside of school to encourage students to practice reading with a variety of books. The project ensures that the books are appropriate for the local context and the needs of the learners. The project also provides training on the management of book banks to schools and to the local Community Education Teams that oversee the community book bank.
- **Awareness campaigns:** Utilize the project's local Community Education Teams to organize campaigns that raise awareness of the importance of education and reading to reduce dropout, enroll children in school who have never attended, and encourage mothers to attend the Adult Literacy program.



Photo credit: Save the Children

Systemic/National:

- **System strengthening:** Build the capacity of governmental stakeholders as well as local community development associations (local NGOs) and create equipped cadres of master trainers from relevant governmental bodies to continue the project's interventions beyond its duration and throughout Egypt. The learning circle model under Literate Village creates a mechanism for Ministry supervisors and community school teachers to share feedback and technical assistance through coaching and peer learning.

PLANNING

The donor requested the Intergenerational Learning community-based approach for the Literate Village project to respond to the large numbers of out-of-school girls in rural areas across Egypt. The project specifically targets children attending community schools that sit outside of the mainstream education system and their mothers, based on the belief that engaging mothers will improve literacy rates for girls.

As an initial step the project engaged key stakeholders within the government and other implementing partners. During this process the project hosted a one-day forum with implementing partners in the community school sector in Egypt to identify best practices and lessons learned in community and adult education. The Literate Village team used the results of the forum to design interventions and develop the project work plan in collaboration with the MOETE.

The Literate Village team then established strategic relationships with the central level of the MOETE and the Adult Education Authority (AEA) by creating a coordination committee. This committee aimed to support the implementation of the program at the governorate level. The team also met with local AEA leaders to assess the availability of AEA trainers to train adult literacy facilitators and reading club/reading camp facilitators.

Save the Children and its partners used several baseline assessments including a household survey and the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) to further enhance the design of each intervention at the start of the program. Throughout implementation, the Literate Village team uses monitoring and evaluation data to add and design additional interventions. For example, based on feedback collected from mothers participating in the literacy program, the team added awareness sessions for fathers.

IMPLEMENTATION

One crucial aspect of project implementation is the systematic and structured approach to working with the community. Literate Village establishes local Community Education Teams within each community to help set up and facilitate all community activities working alongside community development associations. This approach makes the project more locally led, sustainable, and operationally feasible.

Another aspect of the project that improves the ease of implementation and increases impact is that all of the interventions are integrated and build off each other. The Intergenerational Learning and Family Literacy Model thoughtfully weaves together literacy opportunities for children and their caregivers across project components including reading camps, book banks, adult literacy courses, etc. This approach allows participating families various opportunities to practice skills they learn throughout the program, fostering new ways of thinking and interacting.

The curriculum for the adult literacy courses was based on pre-existing materials developed by other NGOs and adopted by the government. For the community school Arabic curriculum, the Literate Village team partnered with the MOETE to update and adapt the curriculum to include a phonics approach, life skills, and learning for both mothers and their children.

Additionally, due to the model's success, the MOETE has scaled the model nationally. It has issued formal letters to all 27 governorates nationwide to replicate the learning circle model, thereby expanding the approach far beyond the scope of the program.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

TOOLS	STUDIES CONDUCTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Survey • Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP) Survey for participating mothers • Adult literacy assessment for participating mothers - Rapid Assessment of Reading Skills (RARS) • EGRA for student learning • Focus group discussions • Interviews • Success stories with mothers, children, facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EGRA Endline Report - 2020 • Household Survey Endline Report - 2021 • Intergenerational Learning and Family Literacy Approach and Its Influence on Families: A Case Study Paper - 2021 • The Literate Village Reading Club Model: A Survey & Review - n.d.

The team designed the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan for the Literate Village project to take a phased approach building data and evidence around the Intergenerational Learning and Family Literacy model through both monitoring and evaluation activities. Project monitoring included the use of the EGRA each year to measure student learning, adult literacy assessments including the RARS for participating mothers, and a household survey. The project has also collected qualitative data using focus group discussions and a KAP survey throughout implementation. The team consolidates all data collected through the project into a database for adaptive management uses and reporting.

The project used qualitative data collected throughout the project in several studies to outline the impact of specific interventions and to identify recommendations for improvement. These included: 1) a study of the Intergenerational Learning and Family Literacy approach using in-depth interviews with families; 2) a study of adult literacy interventions using focus group discussions (FGDs); and 3) a study of reading camps using FGDs and interviews. In Years 1-3, Save the Children also conducted a quasi-experimental impact evaluation of the effect of Literate Village on student literacy outcomes, as measured by the EGRA.

EVIDENCE

A longitudinal household survey conducted in 2018, 2019, and 2020 found that mothers' participation in the initial adult literacy course followed by an optional post-literacy course, parental awareness workshops, and community school meetings led to increased literacy outcomes for mothers. These outcomes were assessed using adult literacy assessment (Rapid Assessment of Reading Skills (RARS) - Arabic). Additionally, mothers demonstrated improved attitudes about their role in their children's education (Save the Children, 2021b).

The results of the KAP survey conducted with mothers provides further evidence to support the positive impact of Literate Village on mother's knowledge, attitudes, and practices around education (Save the Children, 2021c). On average, women who participated in the program scored 1.435 composite score

points (8 percentage points) higher on the composite KAP assessment than women who did not. There was an increase from baseline to endline in targeted regions in comparison to the control group in the average number of women who answered positively that they:

- Know how to read or write;
- Usually read to children at home; and
- Teach their children to read and write.

This finding is supported by the pre-post literacy test reports generated and suggests that this increase is likely due to participation in Literate Village interventions.

An EGRA quasi-experimental evaluation found significant improvements in children’s reading skills as compared to the control group; however, these results may also be attributed to a variety of other activities that children participated in as part of the program (Save the Children, 2020). Although the study did not evaluate the causal linkage between improvements in mothers’ skills and the impact on children’s literacy outcomes, the study presents promising practices for improving factors that can positively affect children’s reading abilities that can outlive the program.

Success Story - Mashhoura

Mashhoura is a 44-year-old mother and a member of the Community Education Team in Beheira, Egypt. Before Literate Village, Mashhoura had a low literacy level, and her family was economically insecure. Since attending, Mashhoura is now a leader in her community, an entrepreneur, and most importantly, a parent who feels that she can confidently support her children’s education.

“My daughter is happy because I am now reading stories with her.”

The Literate Village project catalyzed Mashhoura’s passion for education:

“Education was a dream. After attending adult literacy, I decided to continue learning and I joined post-literacy, then the women's leadership sessions, and I will pursue my school to the next level after getting the certificate. It is a dream that came true.”
(Save the Children, n.d.b, pp. 14-15)



Photo credit: Save the Children

- Mashhoura

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The lessons learned outlined below were identified from the results and feedback from research studies, program reports, and interviews with staff.

1. **The Intergenerational and Adult literacy model can make a positive impact on mothers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices around education.**
2. **Providing long-term integrated support to various family members, including male caregivers,** through different types of interventions that build upon each other is an effective way to engage them over an extended period and ensure practices are reinforced.
3. **Adult literacy programs that focus specifically on mothers or female caregivers are effective and appropriate for specific contexts.** There are specific elements within the Egypt context that make this approach effective including local gender dynamics, limited resources in rural communities, and the pre-existence of a government adult literacy program.
4. **Educating parents and community members about the importance of education is key to the success of the program.** It is important to spend time building the vision and buy-in among community members and participating families and to be transparent about the project.
5. **Working through community associations and community education teams is a powerful strategy for enhancing local ownership, leadership, and sustainability of the program.**



Photo credits: Save the Children

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