Adult Education and Development: Lessons from Somaliland

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Abstract

The Incheon Declaration 2015- “Towards 2030: a new vision for education,” recognizes the important role of education as the main driver of development, and therefore commits to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all(p. i).” The declaration further commits to “ensuring that all youth and adults, especially girls and women, achieve relevant and recognized functional literacy and numeracy levels and acquire life skills and that they are provided with adult learning and training opportunities (p. 7).” This commitment is a clear recognition of the role of adult education in development. Sadly, although adult education and lifelong learning are key for achieving social change and reducing poverty levels, the sector receives minimal attention in development matters in many African countries. According to UNESCO the adult education sub-sector of state education systems remains relatively underfunded and marginal despite the improved living conditions in many African countries since the 1990s. Few countries have specific, ratified national adult education policies while in some others adult education is seen as a human right but only practically enforceable subject to availability of resources. This paper outlines evidence of positive changes accrued from literacy and skills training project in one region in Somaliland. In addition to literacy and numeracy, the participants in the project were trained in tailoring or cookery as well as on health, nutrition, hygiene and entrepreneurship. More so, the project offered micro-credit to those wishing to start small businesses. Major developmental changes including employment, healthier families, businesses and better civic participation were realized by the individual participants, their families and the community. From this evidence the paper argues that it is important for countries in Africa to seriously harness the adult education sub-sector for development as one way of translating the Incheon commitment to tangible achievements.

Key words: Lifelong learning, Literacy, Skills training, Development.

Introduction

The fourth goal in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable, quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ (www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment). To anchor this goal the United Nation notes that ‘Education drives development be it at individual, community or national level. Through education, people acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that shape their participation in development activities. The term development can be conceptualized in a variety of ways and can apply to individuals, communities and nation states. At its most basic use, the term ‘development’ connotes positive

change from a less desirable state to a higher one. Development is therefore something that individuals and governments pursue aggressively.

Whereas there is debate on the most comprehensive definition of just what is education and what constitutes development, there is widespread consensus about the relationship between education and development. Education is one key driver of development, especially sustainable development. Education enables people to participate fully in the development of their local and national communities. Education fosters peace, justice and equality which are by themselves the foundations from which development springs. In addition, education is seen as a basic human right: an inalienable right that every human being should enjoy. Thus, the 1997 Hamburg Declaration on Adult Education notes adult education

...is a key to the twenty-first century. It is a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society. It is a powerful concept for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice (p. 2).

Adult Education: Definition, Aims and Forms

The Hamburg Declaration (1997) gives the definition of adult education as ‘...the entire body of ongoing learning process, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society’. Merriam and Brockett (1997) define adult education as ‘activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self perception define them as adults’ (p. 13). On their part, Nafukho, Amutabi and Otunga (2005) emphasise that adult education should be conceptualized as being ‘an integral part of lifelong education and learning’ and add that adult education is critical if Africa is ‘to survive in the twenty-first century and beyond’ (p. 25).

These definitions capture both the target recipients as well as the aims of adult education. The definition of an adult is culture specific. In traditional African societies, Somalia and Kenya among them, an adult was one who had gone through the relevant rites of passage, such as circumcision, and was thus empowered to do certain things, such as marry, and hold given social positions, such as being the head of a family. Whereas age was a determinant as to whether one could participate in the rites of passage to adulthood, it was, by itself, not an adequate criterion for judging one to be an adult or not. Thus, a 40 year old man or woman who had not gone through the customary rites of passage would still be considered ‘a child’ and would never be allowed to do certain things or hold certain positions in the society. Modernity has greatly changed this. The status of adulthood is now dictated by law rather than culture. There are statutes that decree who and who is not an adult and the determining criterion is almost always age. In many countries, an adult is a person who has attained eighteen years (Nafukho, Amutabi & Otunga, 2005). This is the case in Somaliland. In a number of Western countries such as Hungary, adult age is taken to be 16 years.

The aims of adult education are many and also context specific. The 19th session General

Conference of UNESCO gave a comprehensive list of the aims of adult education. These range from fostering peace, promoting an awareness of contemporary problems to ensuring individuals are equipped with knowledge and skills to enable them participate in the creation of material and social goods. Knowles (1980) asserts that adult education programmes must serve the needs of individuals, institutions and societies. He also highlights another central aim of adult education: equipping people with what they need to survive in a changing social and work environment.

Governments, the world over, invest heavily in the formal education of children from the early years. In an ideal situation, a child is expected to go through the primary system of education, transit to the secondary level and finally to the tertiary level. Tertiary education is geared more toward professional or vocational specialization of an individual while the primary and secondary education, to varying degrees, deal with basic and general aspects of knowledge which every educated person should have. Given what has been noted with regard to the contextualised nature of adult education in terms of both the definition and the aims, it is not easy to fit adult education into a hierarchy of levels. Instead, scholars recognize that adult education exists in a variety of forms and this is evidenced by the different terms used to refer to adult education programmes. These terms include evening classes, mature entry programmes, out-of-school education, literacy programmes and agricultural extension. Others include in-service training, distance education and non-formal education (Nafukho, Amutabi and Otunga, 2005). Most of these terms point to variations in how adult education is understood.

Adult Education and Development

According to UNESCO (2016) 'Education is a powerful driver of development and is one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability.' Education contributes to development by transforming individuals. Through education, people become empowered and their capacities for innovation and productivity are enhanced for their participation in the social, economic and social aspects of society. This means that an educated person is not a recipient of development programmes but a critical and dynamic participant in the development of society.

Jinna and Maikano (2014) note that the potential benefits of adult education are multi-dimensional adding that the contribution of adult education to development to society happens at the intersection of the social, economic, political and cultural determinants of progress in any society. The social benefits of adult education range from improved sanitation, health care and nutrition in the wider population to reduced mortality rates. The major economic benefit of adult education is the development of human capital: individuals get skill and knowledge that make them productive and thus dynamic partners in development efforts rather than just passive recipients. This is critical if African countries such as Somaliland are to move from a donor centered development paradigm to one anchored in the innovativeness and hard work of the African people. The potential political benefits are equally significant. Peace and political stability have been elusive on the African continent and this has stifled all other efforts at development. This can partly be explained by the fact that the cultivation of an environment where peace can thrive, the inculcation of values of tolerance and acceptance of diversity as well as the strengthening of democratic ideals can effectively be done within adult education programmes.

Finally, in a world that is increasingly becoming global, local communities can only retain their traditional values and customs through conscious efforts that seek to highlight these values and the threat modernity poses to them. Education remains the key. Moreover, there is always the danger of individuals and whole communities being left behind due to rapid developments in technology. Adult education programmes can help ensure that all in society are updated of scientific and technological developments that affect their lives.

If all these are the potential benefits emanating from investing in adult education, one would expect that African governments give priority to its provision. The next section presents evidence that, sadly, shows this is not the case and highlights the challenges that face adult education programmes.

Adult Literacy in Africa: From Basic Literacy to Lifelong Learning

The term 'literacy' has evolved over the years and continues to have different meanings for different people. We present a short description of the various usages of the term over the years and end with the conceptualization that we adopt for this paper. The English word literacy initially had a basic meaning of a well educated and learned person. The hallmark for such a person was exposure to and knowledge about different types of literature. It is in the 19th Century that the term 'literacy' was used to refer to the cognitive abilities of reading and writing. These abilities however defined literacy skills independent of context or use. For example, if someone in Africa could read the sentence 'We need to shovel the backyard clear of snow' then he or she would be deemed literate even if the concepts of 'snow' and 'shoveling snow' were totally outside their experience. Later on in the 19th Century, numeracy skills were added to the skill set that constituted literacy (UNESCO, 2006).

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a new shift in the definition of literacy. The term was re-conceptualized to move away from the mere possession of a set of cognitive abilities to the use of these abilities in a given context. This re-conceptualization saw the emergence of the concept of 'functional literacy'. In 1978, the UNESCO General Conference adopted a definition of the term 'functional literacy' asserting that 'a person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and also for enabling him to continue using reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development'. This definition emphasizes on the impact of literacy on the social and economic life of the individual and the community. This changed the definition of a 'literate' vs. an 'illiterate' person given that possession of a skill set that benefited no one could not enable one reach the threshold of being considered literate (UNESCO, 2006).

The advent of the Information Age in the 20th Century saw the broadening of the skill set required for literacy. Literacy in the Information Age (2000) advocated for the adoption of a more comprehensive skill set in the definition of literacy given the rapidly changing technological environments. A literate person needed to access knowledge and information packaged in a variety of ways and transmitted via variety of media such as television, posters and the internet. Thus, the terms 'information literacy' and 'media literacy' gained currency.

More recent definitions of 'literacy' view it as a process. As a process, literacy is seen as a learning

process rather than a product of some educational intervention (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006). Literacy is a means through which individual learners make sense of the world around them by relying on personal experience as the central resource for learning. This is the view of literacy we adopt in this paper due its relevance to adult education. Rogers (2003) advocates for this view of literacy as a process arguing that adult education should be learning-conscious; learning which is assessed from the perspective of the learner rather than the more traditional task-conscious learning which is evaluated test based task completion and is suitable for young learners.

When we see literacy as a process of learning rather than a product of learning then we acknowledge that it is a continuous process: a lifelong process. This anchors the concept of adult literacy to the wider concept of lifelong learning. Central to this is the belief that a learner continuously goes through the process of literacy as s/he engages with various sources of information. Through reading, one interprets sources, reflects on information, investigates, interrogates, probes and questions. Through writing and performing calculations, one makes choices and by so doing becomes an actor and thus transforms the social, economic and political space s/he operates in.

Challenges of Adult Learners Education(ALE) in Africa

There are a myriad of challenges that affect the provision of adult education in Africa and it helps to find a way of categorising them to facilitate their discussion. Possible categories include policy frameworks, financial resource allocation, human resource, governance frameworks. From the offset, it is important to remember that these challenges interact and thus the boundaries we will draw between them are rather fluid.

Policy Frameworks

A look at a sample of policy frameworks for the provision of adult education programmes in African countries reveals diverse understanding of what adult education is and what is required to make it work. According to the 2009 Regional Synthesis Report on the state and development of adult learning and education in Sub-Saharan Africa (Aitchison & Alidou, 2009), adult education is conceptualized as literacy, basic education and livelihood related skills and training. For example, Eritrea's National policy on adult education(2005) defines adult education as "literacy and continuing education that embraces literacy, and post literacy, advocacy and civic education, life skills and follow up vocational training programmes" Zambia and Uganda have adopted the broader definition of adult education as adopted by CONFINTEA V. The regional synthesis report however records that general policy focus is towards the literacy-basic educational end of the adult learning continuum. This means that adult education is equated to the basic education as is given to young learners at primary school level. The issue with such a policy framework is that the functional aspect of education that is of most relevance to adult learners could be missing from designed programmes. The graduates from such programmes may very well acquire knowledge of the alphabet, read simple sentences and count numbers and perform basic mathematical operations but acquire little knowledge that relates to their day to day activities. The ability to decode a sentence like 'Mary is going to the bank' is of little value to a peasant farmer living in a rural area. Unless education can enable this farmer walk into a bank and transact some business, then its very value can be questioned.

Still on policy frameworks, few countries in Africa like Benin, Chad, Ethiopia, Namibia and South Africa have specific ratified adult education policy frameworks. Most countries devote time and resources to the development and implementation of policies focused on education for young people. Thus, even though many countries are signatories to international treaties that see education as a basic human right, and may even have the right to education enshrined in their constitutions, the right of adults to access education is not seen as urgent. In most cases, it is a right that is subject to resource availability. Then, there are those countries, such as Kenya, Lesotho and Malawi that have had adult education frameworks in draft form for years without efforts to ratify and operationalise them (Aitchison & Alidou, 2009). This means that the population that needs adult education has remained sidelined and marginalised as the political class has refused to ratify the framework from which adult education programmes can spring. It is important to note that neglect at the policy framework level has a domino effect as it automatically impedes the flow from policy to practice and it obviously impacts on funding.

Governance Framework

Closely related to the policy framework is a governance framework. The development of Adult education is heavily dependent on just who is placed in charge of its implementation. A good governance framework should increase access to ALE programmes, enhance quality and allow for harmonious coexistence of both the governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. To start with, governance has to do with whether adult education is under a ministry just dedicated to it or it is a department under a ministry. In most cases, adult education is a department, one of the many, operating under a ministry. In other countries, the department dealing with adult education is answerable to two or more ministries. This makes decision making as well as policy implementation a tedious and protracted process.

Secondly, a governance framework determines both the “what” and “who” is targeted by adult education programmes. With regard to ‘what’, the governance structure will determine whether designed programmes focus on basic education (mirroring the basic education provided in primary schools) or on non-formal education (focusing more on vocational training though it could feature basic education). With regard to ‘whom’ ALE programmes generally target the out-of-school adults. More specifically, the target group could, among others, be women, youth who dropped out from the mainstream formal education system at primary or secondary school levels, former soldiers / child soldiers, nomads, prisoners, personnel in the public sector, prisoners, and people in rural areas. Striking a balance between the ‘what’ and the ‘whom’ is a big challenge. This is because the different target social groups are in different contexts and have very divergent needs. For example, former soldiers who benefit more from a vocational based training to gain a new skill set useful to them in a non-conflict situation while youth who dropped out of school could benefit from a programme that picks up from where they left so that they still get a chance to pursue academic and or professional goals. Unfortunately, having a governance structure that caters for everyone is an almost impossible task (Aryeetey & Kwakye, 2005).

Thirdly, the governance framework identifies the roles of various stakeholders be they governmental or non-governmental. It ensures for coordination of activities so that there is efficiency in the provision of programmes and clearly defined levels of decision making be it at national or regional levels. This is lacking in most African countries so that the provision of

ALE programmes is erratic and it is difficult to gauge levels of success given that each provider may have their own goals for programmes.

Financial Framework

The availability of financial resources is a determinant of success in implementation of educational programmes. Ideally, financial resources should be adequate, sustainable and their disbursement regular. Data on financial resource allocation to ALE programmes is not readily available. This is more so in countries like Somalia and South Sudan that are emerging from or still experiencing protracted war. Even in countries where figures are available, they show that in most cases, governments do not allocate enough financial resources to adult education, especially as compared to the other areas in the sector. Ghana is a case in point here. In the period between 1999 to 2001, the yearly education sector budget was 35% to 45% of the national budget, however, the yearly allocations to National Functional Programme were between 0.6% - 0.7% (translating to around US\$ 2 million) of the total budget allocated to the education sector. This is a drop in the ocean considering that the Ghanaian 2001 Census statistics showed that 46% of the population was illiterate. This, by whichever measure, is under funding. Aitchison & Alidou,(2009) report that African countries allocate ALE minimal figures in their national budgets. For example allocations as at 2009 were as follows: Gambia, 0.3%, Zambia 0.2%, Kenya 0.3-0.4% and South Africa about 1%. The better exceptions were Botswana and Cape Verde with allocations of 5.6% and 8.71% respectively. Statistics cited by Maina and Orodho (2016) from the Directorate of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE) indicate the Kenya government allocation to adult education between 2006-2011 was as follows 2006/7(0.54%); 2007/08(0.55%); 2008/09(0.82%); 2009/10(1.22%) and 2010/2011(1.08%)

Under funding has a domino effect because it leads to poor pay for teachers in ALE programmes and thus low motivation. Indeed, the human resource for ALE programmes is yet another challenge. Because of the low pay, these programmes are unable to attract young and energetic teachers and in most cases have to rely on retired teachers. Another worrying aspect in the financial framework is the over dependence on donor funding. For instance, 60 % of the Ghanaian NFLP is funded by the World Bank with local communities and NGOs providing 10% of the funding. This means that the government only provides 30% of the funds. As with other social and economic programmes in Africa, one cannot help but wonder about sustainability in the long run. What would happen to the adult education programmes in Ghana if the World Bank withdrew funding?(Aryeetey& Kwakye ,2005) This question applies to many other countries in Africa.

Social and Political Framework

Adult education does not occur in a vacuum. It is situated within a social and political environment with which it is in a dialectical relationship. This is because adult education is shaped by its social and political environment and it also has potential to change this environment. It is this potential to effect change that at times becomes a challenge in the implementation of adult education programmes. Education is generally taken to be a process through which an individual acquires knowledge, skills and attitudes that are deemed valuable and necessary for one to function in his or her society. From time immemorial, all societies have had way of transmitting knowledge, values, attitudes and skills deemed vital for the survival of the community to the young members

of society. Thus education as a process is not alien to the African continent.

However, it is important to distinguish traditional forms of education in Africa and the modern formal education that was introduced on the continent by missionaries and colonialists. Traditional education in Africa was, to a large extent, meant to enable an individual function in society by fitting in a particular role. For instance, girls received education that prepared them to fit in the socially defined role of a woman. It is possible to argue that traditional education was conservative and it aimed at cementing further the existing organization of society. Modern Western education has very different social underpinnings. Education is meant to empower the individual making him or her question everything: from the existing social relations to the current explanations for physical and social phenomenon. An educated person does not just fit into a social role but is expected to contribute to society through an innovative fitting into a role. Herein lies the potential for challenge. By embracing adult education, entire masses of people are taught to think differently: to question existing social roles, power relations and ways of doing things. Not all would agree that this is a good thing; especially those whose interests are served by things remaining as they are. Therefore, the content of adult education programmes becomes a politically significant. One of the benefits of adult education is a citizenry that is more conscious of their civic duty and participates in the democratic processes in an informed way. Such citizens take interest in the management of public affairs and finances and have the capacity to question those in positions of power. In countries where the ruling political class depends on the ignorance of the masses to perpetuate their rule by manipulating democratic processes, adult education programmes are seen as a threat. Thus, the frameworks earlier discussed may not be provided or the content of the programmes could be watered down so much that the benefits, with regard to empowering people are minimal.

A final related social factor has to do with whether the programmes are supported by an existing or widening literacy environment. Literacy skills are enhanced if individuals live in a literary rich environment. Without these, the skills do not get to be practiced and they fade. So if adults learn to read, the question is do they get opportunity to read in their day to day lives? It is important that programmes aim at enhance the literary environment of the adults targeted by a particular programme.

The Somaliland Project

Somaliland fell into civil war since the second half of the 1980s which broke down almost all social institutions including the education system. Since 1991, after declaring its independence, Somaliland has been trying with the assistance of the international community, to reconstruct the education system. However, because Somaliland is not recognized as an independent state by the international community, they don't receive state to state development aid. They only receive development aid through UN agencies and INGOs. It is against this background that the project whose work this paper is based on was put in place. The project was implemented by a Christian non-governmental organization for a period of ten years till 2014. The project had two components, a formal and non-formal component. The non-formal component consisted of anti-FGM campaigns, literacy and skills development and micro-financing. The relevant objectives of the non-formal component of the project were to: Give appropriate literacy training of trainers (ToTs) in adult education; Conduct adult literacy program integrated with awareness on HIV/AIDS; Provide literacy teaching materials among others. This paper is based

on an impact assessment of the non-formal component.

The purpose of the assessments was to: Establish the effect of the anti-FGM campaigns, literacy and skills training component of the project on its environment in terms of economic, technical, socio-cultural, institutional and environmental factors.

Theoretical Framework

The assessment of literacy and skills training was based on the UNESCO framework for assessing literacy. This framework outlines literacy competencies/skills, literacy use and impact of literacy as important indicators of a successful literacy and skills development programme. According to the UNESCO framework, effective use of literacy skills requires acquisition of some skills or competencies. Assessment of such skills and competencies is technical and decontextualized involving aspects such as reading, writing, counting and calculating. Literacy use on its part is the application of the acquired skills to different tasks in different contexts, such as understanding instructions, filling forms, writing down ideas and keeping accounts. Uses of literacy will vary from one context to another. A third aspect of literacy that can be assessed is impact. This refers to the question of how far the acquisition of literacy gives access to opportunities and privileges. Such effects could be seen in areas like communication, social participation, political voice, economic opportunity and access to institutions and networks. It is important to note that the three indicators overlap (UNESCO, 2008). The literacy tests and FGDs and interviews used in the assessment reported in this paper were meant to gather data on the three aspects outlined in the framework.

Furthermore, assessment of the success of the literacy and skills component of the programme in focus was also informed by the ILO(International Labour Organization) skills development impact evaluation guidelines. The guideline is tool that offers key concepts, practical issues and lessons that can be used in the impact evaluation of training activities undertaken by institutions or organizations. The guidelines emphasize that skills development impacts social development, people, enterprises and societies as well acquisition of decent work. According to ILO (2011) education, skills development and lifelong learning are central pillars for the economic, employment growth and social development of people. Skills development forms the basis for competitiveness of economies and enterprises. The skills are also a tool for fighting poverty, promoting equal opportunities and a means of integrating people in terms of labour, social context and citizenship. Skills development paves way for obtaining decent and productive work. Therefore, an impact evaluation of any skills development programme needs to focus on all these different areas.

The guidelines go on to explain how to identify the indicators for evaluating the impact. The indicators could be quantitative or qualitative including factors such as employment rates. The guide also explains that an impact evaluation can take a quantitative, qualitative or combined approach to data collection and analysis. The qualitative approach, which was largely employed in the assessment reported in this paper involves collecting data from the place where the training took place by means of direct observations, interviews, document analysis or a combination of qualitative techniques. According to the ILO guidelines, the qualitative approach is suitable for

assessing the impact of social and anti-poverty projects where training and capacity building are involved. In such programmes, beneficiaries' behavior, expectations and expectations form key factors to be analyzed. The UNESCO framework and the ILO Impact evaluation guidelines thus informed the methodological basis for the project impact assessment.

Methodology

The population studied for the impact assessment included the men and women who had participated in the anti-FGM, literacy and skills development of the programme from various villages in one region of Somaliland and the Project Manager of the non-formal component. Others were key informants from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) both at the national and Regional level and from other organizations working on FGM.

The assessment adopted a qualitative descriptive survey design. Purposive sampling was adopted for each category of respondents from the target population. For the impact assessment four (4) villages were visited. This was due to the challenge of distances and time given for carrying out the survey. A total of 74 women were accessible for the assessment. Many of those in the nomadic villages could not be accessed as they had moved in search of pasture for their animals. Out of these 74, 50 took the literacy test. The 24 could not read and write although they participated in the FGDs and interviews. The data collection tools and procedures included structured interviews for the participants in the anti-FGM campaigns, literacy and skills development and the project manager non-formal component; focus group discussions for the women in the anti-FGM, literacy and skills training and a literacy skills test in the Somaali language.

An Overview of the anti- FGM, Literacy and Skills Training Component

The literacy, skills training and anti-FGM activities began in 2006 as a response to the needs of the women in the region. After a discussion with them, they asked to be taught how to read and write as a way of opening their eyes to economic and social development. The implementation was integrated and inclusive.

The implementation of this component took an integrated approach combining the teaching of literacy, skills training, anti-FGM campaigns and other life skills in a bid to impact positively on the livelihoods of the individuals involved. This integrated approach contributed a great deal to the success of this component of the project.

The first step towards implementation was to select a committee of five women in every village to lead the implementation of the literacy programme. Then the chief and the Sheikh, both of whom were part of the initial discussions with women, added two men representatives in the committee to oversee the activities of women, and to ensure the project manager, who was Christian would not use the forum for evangelization. The overseeing committee was therefore made up of seven members. Two initial classes of 20 each were selected from among the other women in two villages. These initial members were later trained as Tots in literacy. The literacy classes, according to the project manager in charge of the non-formal component, would begin with a discussion of issues affecting women and families in general. So they talked about health and nutrition challenges, conflicts in the families and relationships with their spouses, financial

challenges among other issues. The women would write down their daily experiences and read them together in class and help each other find solutions. This innovative approach, provided opportunities for the practice of their literacy skills as well as the finding of practical solutions to some of their daily challenges.

The programme manager reported that from these discussions it emerged that FGM was a one cause difficult births due to the scars left by the cut. The Somalis practice type three FGM. Thus, and in line with the UN petition to have the cruel practice stopped, the anti-FGM campaigns became part of the activities of the literacy component of the project. In addition, in a bid to address the financial needs and empower women to take care of families, the skills component was also included where women were taught skills such as cookery, tailoring, basketry, and how to start small businesses. Some initial small business start-up loans were also offered to the women by the funding organization. Some of the women used the money to buy sewing machines and begin tailoring shops. Many more have since bought their own sewing machines.

The women were also taught how to grow vegetables and keep chicken in order to provide balanced diets for their families. They were also encouraged to plant trees as part of environmental conservation and greening of their environment. The organization funded the beginning of a tree nursery from which the women would get at least three trees during the rainy season and plant them around their homes. When these matured to some level, then they would go back for more. The small number of trees planted was due to the challenge of watering the trees.

Literacy and Skills Development

According to the project manager, literacy began with the selection of the overseeing committee of seven members and two initial classes of 20 members each in two villages. These first trainees became teachers, with each training another five people on average. These would be taught in the morning and in the afternoon they would teach others how to read and write. Each would bring the books of her trainees to the programme manager for marking during the next literacy class. Soon, due to the chain teaching, the numbers participating in the literacy programme grew to include even men.

It must be noted, that these teachers were teaching others on voluntary basis and in recognition of the benefits of literacy. For example, those who knew how to read and write could ably participate in elections. As a result each taught as many members of their families and clans to ensure that they win in elections. The TOTs were then taught on methodological issues to equip them as better literacy teachers.

Skills Development

A major challenge in Somaliland is poverty. Therefore, any skill that can help improve the population's chances of earning a livelihood is a highly welcome development. Thus, part of the literacy programme involved training women in skills such as tailoring and cookery. The women would choose which skill to pursue, and therefore some did tailoring, others cookery and others were content to utilize their literacy skills to earn a livelihood. The women were encouraged to buy their own sewing machines and begin businesses after the training and many have since

opened tailoring shops with one even opening a tailoring school.

Findings on Literacy and skills training

Data on the impact of literacy was gathered through a literacy test, FGDs, individual interviews.

The literacy test showed that the women could indeed read and write. Majority of the women (50%) got seventy percent and above. Table 1 shows frequency distribution of scores on the literacy test.

Marks scored out of 100	Frequency	Percent
11-30	9	18
31-50	6	12
51-70	9	18
71-90	25	50
Total	50	100

Table 1: Showing Frequency distribution of scores the on literacy test

Individual interviews and FGDs revealed that literacy had had great impact on personal development and financial and professional development. At a personal level the women could read and write and therefore they could read prescriptions and manuals, were more empowered to vote and vote wisely; were more empowered to make strategic life choices e.g. on hygiene and shunning FGM; were able to assist others become literate; had generally increased self-esteem and were able to advance in education. Two of the initial participants in the literacy project indicated that they had gone on to join a local university to pursue studies in public health and English.

At the financial and professional development level women were now able to read and write and therefore they were able to start and run small businesses, count money and better manage domestic budgets as well as access employment opportunities. For example, some of those who had learnt tailoring and gone on to buy their own machines had opened tailoring shops and were now in business. One of them had gone on to further her training in tailoring and had opened a tailoring school (we could not reach her for an interview though). Another, who had learnt cookery had opened a hotel business in a different village and was thriving in business. 24 women who had been in the literacy class had got employment in various places throughout the country. The table 2 lists the women and the places where they work. It must be noted that all these women began literacy in the project. They had no previous formal training.

Table 2 summarizes the findings on how literacy helped the women while Table 3 shows the different areas in which the women got employment

Women response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
reading medical prescriptions	2	33.3	33.3
voting	1	16.7	50.0
receiving and sending money	1	16.7	66.7
counting money	1	16.7	83.3
reading and writing for general purposes	1	16.7	100.0
Total	6	100.0	

Table 2: Showing how literacy has helped

Place of work	Job	Number
Hospital/health centre	Receptionist	1
	Nurse	5
	Midwife	6
	Food distribution	2
	Medicine distribution	2
	TB department	1
	chairperson	1
	Vaccination	2
Mayor's office	Receptionist	1
	Women's department	1
	Cleaner	1
Police station	Police woman	1
Total		24

Table 3: Number of women in employment

The following excerpts are testimonies of the effect of the literacy and skills training component from some of the women.

Excerpt 1: Interview with lady H now working in the capital city

I: Please tell us about what you learnt about cookery, tailoring. how did it help you?

H: I was among the first students. I started in 2006, we were 20 students. Madam Jane taught us the Somali language. I never liked to learn but when Jane came I changed my perspective. We taught others in the community.

I: What did Jane start with, reading or writing?

H: She started to teach us how to read and write. She used the blackboard. She did not know how to write Somali language very perfectly but she was fluent and could read very well.

I: The 20 of you each taught group of five people?

H: yes each one taught 5 people but I taught many student.

I: How has reading and writing in Somali helped you?

H: I am able to teach many people and they are able to read and write.

I: Do you still teach?

H: No because where I am now I don't know people very well but when I was in my village I teach.

I: We have been told that you are now in the university, what did you do after completing the literacy program?

H: I went for English and computer classes in private institutions in the town then I joined university.

i: Did you go to primary or secondary school?

H: No I did not. I just started from Islamic studies then I went to Quranic school only then I learnt how to read and write through Jane. No elementary school.

I: what is the name of the university?

H: G university. I study public health?

I: just like Leila?

H: yes in fact we are classmates.

I: ok now that you are here, when do you attend your classes?

H: I transferred and I attend my class at 6pm.

I: Who pays your fees?

H: I pay for myself through my salary.

I: That is very good. Would you tell other people to come and join the literacy class?

H: Yes

I: Jane also taught you in areas of skill development for example tailoring, cookery and farming (tree planting). Which skills did you get?

H: I developed the skill of tailoring. In fact I also taught my mother and right now she has a shop. I don't sell clothes but people buy the material and I stitch them up and we get paid.

I: Did Jane also teach you cookery?

H: Yes a bit. I used to cook for the guest house and once in a while I would join the class.

Excerpt 2: Interview with women from Village B

I: Tell me about literacy.

W: It is good. Before we did not know the difference between 1 and 2 but now we know. We can write and read.

I: How has that helped you?

W: It has made us literate we know the difference between numbers for example one, two and three. We are from the teacher's community of the village. We come all the way for training this people. We are volunteers, tailoring. We would want more assistance and for the program to continue.

I: Please give us personal testimonies, how has it helped you as individuals.

W: We are able to read our dates and read and write other contents. We have a problem with stationary, books and materials and would be happy if you provided it for our children.

I: Have you been able to start-up businesses?

W: No not yet we have small businesses, not really big businesses. We need money and funds

to start this businesses.

I: What have you benefited from literacy program?

W: We are able to write, and also in our daily lives it has helped us to transact credit and also be able to buy and sell. It has helped us assist the children in their school work.

I: Apart from children what else at home about cooking about food has the program helped in?

W: They have not taken part of the cooking training.

I: What else has Jane taught you?

W: Jane has taught us a lot but among this is tailoring. We have many people who are willing to learn but the teachers are very few. Jane has taught us on FGM, tree planting and literacy and tailoring.

(Names have been changed for anonymity)

Generally it was observed that the women were very excited about the FGM, literacy and skills development project. The Programme manager was able to identify with their circumstances and help them address their concerns at their level. The programme has certainly transformed their lives for the better.

Conclusions

From the findings it was concluded that the literacy programme has generally improved the quality of life socially, personally and economically in the region; It has built capacity in its beneficiaries to continue lifelong learning; those who have become literate teach others. This is a clear indication that adult education can be harnessed for development in various spheres and yet the potential still exists given the high illiteracy levels not only in Somaliland but in many countries in Africa.

From the Somaliland experience it is evident that adults are willing to learn but there is need to consider their unique needs; an inclusive approach works best- work with all relevant stakeholders; government, communities, learners in making decisions on the learning process; an integrated approach that combines literacy and livelihood skills such as tailoring is best; an innovative method of teaching literacy is necessary and encouraging peer teaching among the adult learners in their informal contexts can greatly reduce the illiterate population in Africa. The responsibility thus remains on African governments, policy developers and all relevant stakeholders in adult education and lifelong learning to harness the benefits of this untapped potential for the development of Africa. It is important for countries in Africa to seriously exploit the adult education sub-sector for development as one way of translating the Incheon commitment to tangible achievements.

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