Enhancing community development through the literacy dimension

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Thursday 18th October 2018
Informal Literacy Discussion

Literacy as social practice

Literacy as status indicator (internal and external)

'*I can write my name, so now I can speak in community meetings'*

The Challenge – layers of disadvantage

Community development projects
- target most vulnerable
- least access to education

Competing forces
- literacy (and numeracy) practices increasingly required for project implementation and reporting
- good practice to involve most marginalised at all stages

Observations

Civil society organisations identify limited literacy and numeracy practices as a 'challenge'

- appointing project staff
- working with communities

Tendency to 'discriminate' against those who have limited literacy practices

- not appointing them as project staff
- assuming community groups with limited literacy practices can only be involved in verbal activities

Aspiration - two-way impact

Community development projects enhanced by 'literacy-friendly' approaches

Literacy practices developing through including of literacy practices as an active element
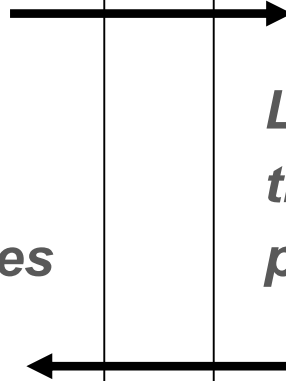
Five Point Literacy Plan

1. Know the language patterns, uses and preferences

2. Know the literacy levels and practices

3. Avoid discrimination against those with limited literacy /numeracy practices

4. Adapt materials to suit the literacy / numeracy practices

5. Use 'literacy-friendly' approaches which support the development of literacy and numeracy practices

Agricultural extension – Cameroon (2009-2011)

- Community activists – selection criteria
  - simplified training approach and materials
- Agricultural literacy support
  - agricultural alphabet, key words, plant labels with pictures

Outcomes
CSO
- selected community mobilisers from communities
- reported increased literacy practices among staff, volunteers and mobilisers
- reported greater knowledge of bee keeping through simplified training

Land rights in Rwanda (2013-2016)

- To enable women to secure their land rights

- Gateway for women in Rwanda

- NGO lead - strong legal rights

- Training of community women as paralegals
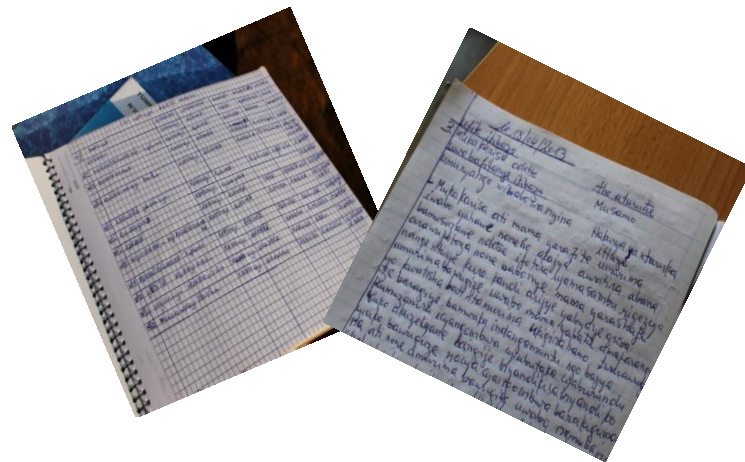
Land rights and literacy

- Human Rights First Rwanda Association (HRFRA) staff had excellent legal knowledge

- Mis-conceptions about women with limited literacy skills

- Baseline of literacy practices

- Simplified land rights laws

- Adaptation of approaches to workshops

- Devised log books for **paralegals** and support in completing them

- Key words for **community women** to complete forms and recognise land documentation

Land rights in Rwanda

Paralegal log books

- 'Only' literacy material

- Average two hours a day

- Improved the literacy levels of all paralegals

- Literacy - a real purpose
  i.e. supported numerous land rights cases

Land rights in Rwanda - organisational changes

HRFRA recognised

- the role of literacy in land rights registration
- the role of language, Kinyarwanda, English and French in community communications
- their own complex literacy practices
- literacy practices which different stakeholders NEED to ACCESS
- the value of text simplification

HRFRA acquired techniques to DEVELOP literacy practices

Vocational training – Rwanda (2015)

Functional literacy – linked to catering and hairdressing

Community mapping – linked to social issues

Outcomes

- Increased achievement/engagement of trainees in vocational training
- *'I think that this is going to help not only the women who do not read and write well in my sessions but in fact it will help everyone. It is a better way to teach everyone.'*
- Social care curriculum more relevant

Agricultural extension (2015)

'I had no idea that there was so much information on a fertiliser sack and that I can actually read it – I can find out so much and not be cheated in the market with old fertiliser'

'as an ASPIRE staff member I can see that instead of not using words because the women do not write, I can see that many of them can and I can help them to feel more confident and to try it out.'

'The map was amazing, we can see where our children go to school and what other farmers are growing, and with the pictures of the crops I can read it and see the names as well. I thought I couldn't read but I can'

'with this kind of way I can learn much, next time I want to learn about diluting insecticides, this is important to us all.'

Maternal and child rights – Pakistan

Literacy embedded into project including

- Community health committees

- Literacy health facilitators

- Literacy health materials

- Community midwives selected and trained

- 6 month programme of community health literacy for health committee and community

Maternal and child rights – Pakistan

Health literacy classes resulted in

- increased literacy and numeracy practices

AND crucially

- improved impact on maternal
  and child health outcomes

Female genital cutting (FGC) in Kenya (2018)

NGOs/CBOs working with communities to end FGC
Using 3 languages: Maa, Kuria and Swahili

Activity:

In workshops for community researchers, writing the words they use in relation to FGC, discussing them and matching them with those from other communities

Impact:

Community researchers developed more effective skills to engage community members in dialogue on FGC.

Female genital cutting (FGC) in Kenya

Changed the nature of the dialogue

Slowed down the dialogue - increased ownership and depth of understanding.

'Using my language and seeing the words we use written down makes me realise we do not actually talk about what we do. We avoid it and talk in very general terms.' *Kuria woman*

'I am surprised to find that FGC is going on in other communities, like in Kuria, as it does in ours. I do not feel that we are inferior anymore, but that we can change like they are.'
Masai, male community researcher

Female Genital Cutting - Sierra Leone (2018)

- CSOs assumed non-literate communities could only listen or be involved in role play
- Introduced to simple visual tools for consultative stakeholder analysis

Outcomes

- Deeper analysis of community issues
- Commitment to greater engagement with communities

Five Point Literacy Plan

1. Know the language patterns, uses and preferences

2. Know the literacy levels and practices

3. Know the literacy dimension to the project

4. Avoid discrimination against those with limited literacy /numeracy practices

5. Adapt materials to suit the literacy / numeracy practices

6. Use 'literacy-friendly' approaches which support the development of literacy and numeracy practices

Outcomes

1. More appropriate selection of project staff able to relate to and represent their communities more effectively

2. Increased participation and engagement by community members, including those who are most marginalised

3. Higher achievement of outcomes (????)

4. Increases in literacy and numeracy practices among stakeholders

Ah but…….

Requires a shift in thinking about

- the capacity and capability of those with fewer literacy practices

- the collective responsibility of developing appropriate literacy practices by all involved in community development projects
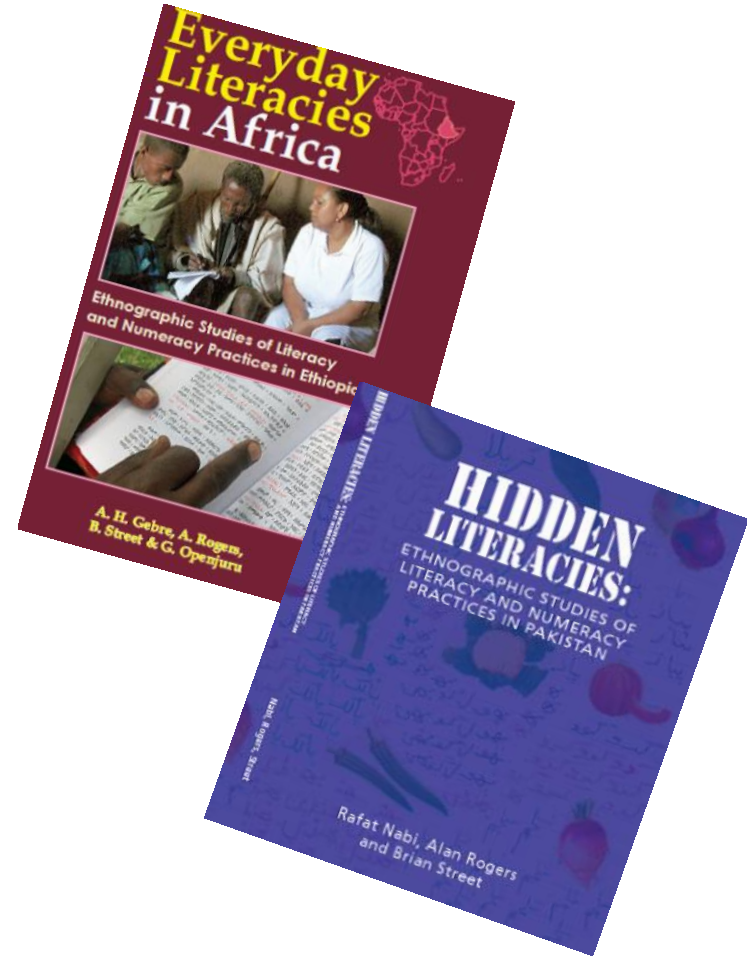
- further evaluation and impact assessment

Resourcefulness……

of women (and men)

- ○ in accessing services

- ○ in acquiring new skills and practices

- ○ in negotiating learning opportunities

Both books available on the BALID website
www.BALID.org

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Thank you