



**Promoting inter-generational literacy; the case of Gayaza Family Learning Resource Centre (GFLRC) programme in Central Uganda where mothers read and write with their children**

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**Meeting:**

**108 — Libraries for literacy: linking generations, empowering communities — Literacy and Reading**

**Abstract:**

*This presentation describes activities of GFLRC. GFLRC is a member of Uganda Community Libraries Association ([www.ugcla.org](http://www.ugcla.org)). In 2008 it set out to address the following concerns. Uganda has few libraries and opportunities to read with children. Schools and homes lack material for new readers. Multiplicity of local languages dialects spoken makes it impractical to produce materials in familiar languages. Local languages have rich oral tradition and don't routinely practice reading. Most children don't understand English. They don't speak English at their home. However, teaching is in English. Children cannot comprehend what they read. In Central Uganda 53% and 51% of children could not read a single word in English and Luganda respectively at the end of grade 2; 2008-2009([www.eddataglobal.org](http://www.eddataglobal.org)).*

*Using experience of GFLRC, the presentation will illustrate how libraries can support inter-generational literacy development. Taking learning into remote homes where parents and children feel they have nothing to do with a library and bringing families into the library is a process. GFLRC marched the interests and needs of disadvantaged families with their literacy development activities. Building on home culture, existing family literacy practices and experiences is central to the programme.*

*Low literate mothers got supported to change their way of framing literacy from the shame they felt at not having had the opportunity to become fully literate. Then they took the opportunity to read with their children using bilingual literacy materials they developed together in their*

*homes. Workshops that helped a group of 12 mothers to rethink their actions and discover what makes children read will be reflected in the presentation.*

*The presenter was supported by adult literacy instructors from National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (UK based organization), Project Hope-Uganda and Global Goodness. Global goodness provided 750 USD to buy stationery for use in family literacy workshops. (<http://www.ggoodness> copy/blog/*

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### **Introduction;**

Gayaza Family Learning Resource Centre, community library in central Uganda runs a family literacy project. The family literacy project is sponsored by Global Goodness. Workshops developed by the Family Literacy Project of KwaZulu Natal and adopted by Kitengesa Community Library were modified by Gayaza Family Learning Resource Centre with permission through Uganda Community Libraries Association for use at Gayaza.

These workshops were originally designed to be run with women at the Bethesda Art Centre, Nieu Bethesda in 2006. They were adapted in April 2009 for use with Lwannunda Women's Group of Kitengesa Community Library in Masaka in Uganda. Then in November 2011 they were further adapted for Gayaza Family Literacy Group.

### **Objective of Gayaza Family Literacy Group;**

To help participants change their way of framing literacy from the shame they may feel at not having had the opportunity to become fully literate to the opportunity to give their children everything they need to become school ready.

#### **Specific objectives;**

1. To equip the participants with skills to begin to give their children the practice that helps their brain become more and more able to solve difficult problems, develop literacy and be successful in school the earlier.
2. To create awareness among the participants that ideas begin to take root quickly, but they must be reinforced with practice for up to 18 months before a child will be fully able to use and demonstrate these new things.
3. To support participants to lay a strong foundation for learning early in a child's life.

4. To help participants transfer knowledge to children: First by doing things for the child, then doing them with the child, then encouraging the child to do them alone and for others, so that the child has a chance for personal success in everything and her confidence builds up.

### **What interested families to come to the library;**

#### **Ten women participants discovered their significant role as mothers when they learnt in the first workshop that;**

- The child's brain needs daily practice for a long time to develop literacy skills.
- Literacy precedes school learning and it can not wait for the teacher.
- Mastering literacy skills is reinforced with persistent practice over time.
- Only a parent can maintain the level of practice the child requires in learning literacy skills which the teachers need to build on.
- A teacher needs a strong foundation built by the parent to teach a child to understand.
- Make this practice a source of love, fun and play for the child.

#### **A family literacy day was arranged where mothers and children were asked to prepare and present anything of their own choice.**

- Three speeches were delivered.
- Four community learning centres presented; Kasangati, Gayaza family literacy group, Bulamu children and Kitezi children.
- Children from Bulamu and Kasangati sang a song and presented a play. The song and the play were about an irresponsible father. In the play children were sent back from school because they had not paid for uniform, stationery, lunch or examination fees. Children from Kitezi sang 3 songs and played out a traditional story. The message was for parents to respond promptly to the needs of their children. If the parents do not nurture children when they should they produce wayward children,
- \_Gayaza Women's Family Literacy Group presented a play about a disrupted household. It depicted a polygamous family where the husband is violent, drunkard and has extra marital multiple partners. Some children were mistreated and did not complete school. The play taught the following lessons; Working, patience and care are virtuous. Alcoholism, idleness, quarrelling, child abuse, promiscuity and impatience are vices.

#### **Fred Lukabwe from the ministry of gender and social development was the guest of honour. He said in his speech that;**

- Training children starts when the mother is expecting. Traditionally expecting mothers do not quarrel or lose their temper. If they do they produce timid or quarrelsome children.
- Mothers talk to, touch and look at, their children when breast feeding them. However, these days mothers cover their children to breast feed them. This teaches children to eat in hiding. It leads to mistrust which explains why there is corruption in Uganda.

- Children who are bottle fed by other children grow up without friendship. This is because such child carers feed the child when they are absent mind may be watching films or TV. Such children can grow to be aggressive.
- Mothers can check the sight of their babies. Normal eyes will follow a moving finger when the baby is 7 days old. They can test the joints; a baby should be able to grasp the mother's finger. She can check all joints. At 14 day old, a baby should be tested for hearing. A mother can knock two spoons to see if the baby responds. Once inabilities are identified early they are easy to handle when reported to medical persons.
- Children hear voices and pick words. It is important to use appropriate language when talking and singing to them. Children have ability to learn any language. If you separate twins they will speak the language of those they who talk to them. Radios and TV do influence children.
- Babies should be given appropriate playing materials to their age and sex. Girls may be given baby toys. It is not right to criticise grooming girls for the role of a mother as low status. Good mothers learn the job in their childhood and it is honourable.
- When children start walking, they have small shaky bells tied on their legs. The noise they produce when children walk, makes them want to stamp their feet. This kept them from going far. Even when they were going far the mother would sense. Nowadays, some mothers prefer to tie their babies on a rope. This is why some children grow to become delinquents.
- Babies of 1 year can do some constructive training like passing on light items. Thank them for their effort. Greet and ask them to greet people. Teach them to give. However, these days parents instruct their children not to give but teachers encourage sharing at school. It creates conflict for children.
- At 3 years of age, children can be taught to sit properly. Girls are given beads to wear on their hands. Their hands are not for fighting. The beads also develop the wrist line. What happens these days is that children are given toy guns and knives. This teaches children to be war mongers, which is enhanced by war films they see in video village halls.
- It is important for mothers and fathers to have quality time to listen to and eat together with their children. Parents have opportunity to teach table manners when they eat with their children.
- 4 year olds need to learn keeping time, when to eat, to do work, to take bath, learn and to rest. Everything has time. Traditionally every home keeps a cock to tell them the time, to wake them up in the morning. It is lack of discipline for home to lack a cock which tells them time. This will help a child to follow school timetable when time comes for it.
- Parents need to teach their children what they do, which day is for garden, which day is for washing and is for fetch firewood or water. Children who grow up without work skills and positive attitude to work can not be resourceful in adult life. If you teach a child what you do they realise how hard you work to earn a living and they begin to value property. Teach them that you do not get money by begging, stealing, borrowing but by working.
- Many poor Ugandans ask politicians money before voting them in power. This has led to corruption. Politician end up taking back what they gave out from public resources meant for public heath, transport and UPE. Members of parliament who buy votes can not serve public interest.

- When a child starts school, establish a relationship with their teachers. Know your children's teachers. Respond to teacher's letters, check your child's books, and see if your child has the right books or stolen books from others and correct mistakes as they are made. When you visit children's schools you build their confidence.

**A written Speech from Global Goodness in part read;**

- On this day, we wish to tell you why we are so passionate about the Family Literacy group. As mothers we all have a responsibility to keep our children as healthy as possible. Health encompasses nutrition, love, and education. As mothers, we have the ability to shape the development of our children's brains. We can instill in our children a love of learning that will last a lifetime. This love is nourished through encouragement and praise for studying and through positive feedback even when he or she does not understand something and needs your help.
- As mothers, your children look to you to guide them. By being a lifelong learner yourself, you will teach your children to be a lifelong learner as well. Our children look up to us more than we realize and setting a good example in all areas of our own lives will be of great benefit to them that no one else has the power to give. You are all teaching them just by *attending* Family Literacy class! By doing so, you are showing them that education is important to you and, as mothers, you mean the world to them and so does your opinion. You are all wonderful and you are doing your part in raising wonderful children who will accomplish many things, including raising wonderful children of their own someday.

**Clare and Karen's written speech read in part as follows;**

- You are the most important influence on your children's lives. Families are the catalyst for children's good health, progress at school and fulfillment of ambitions in later life. At home, with their family, our children develop a sense of community, setting values for life and establishing the foundations of learning and aspirations for future achievements.
- Our role as family members, as parents, children, uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins, brother, sisters and friends in supporting and encouraging children in learning, valuing and listening to them, working alongside them and most importantly enjoying time together should never be underestimated. The support and involvement with our children in early development underpins their lives and learning forever.
- The development of a child's brain holds the key to the child's future. We need to touch, talk, read, smile, sing, count and play with our children. This helps a child's brain develop and nourishes the child's potential for a lifetime.

**Lessons learned from exposing participants to family literacy;**

- The guest of honour's speech high lighted family learning into the African tradition. This is the traditional way many under-resourced communities will learn. It is a traditional way of teaching parenting and schooling.

- Women's play is instructive and inclusive both women and men can learn from it. It needs simplifying to give the message to the wider community. The women can be supported to produce another play to show this same family after attending family literacy course. They can produce CD for future sessions.
- Women and children can be supported to produce plays, stories and develop their talents in this area.
- Based on this experience GFLRC will design its own Family literacy course for high impact and effect.

### **How family interests, abilities and needs were matched to library activities;**

Drawing the community map;

- In pairs the women drew their village map on manila sheets.
- The health centre, the police, the court, schools, shops and places of worship were indicated as places where literacy is required.
- The women wrote some names of places on the maps.
- They compared their work and selected the best.

Discussing picture;

- Reference was made to story books to be read with children.
- The mothers choose four stories and retold them.
- They made fun retelling the stories by acting out the parts of the story and describing the pictures.
- One handed in a story she had written. She said, "Please correct the mistake in this story, it was told to me by my grandmother when I was in primary 5."
- They discussed the stories, each selecting a character to act out in play.
- The women used pictures to tell stories to one another and then to their children

The children;

- The children, ranging from primary 5 to toddlers, selected books of their own and started either reading text or pictures.
- They started by grubbing books from the table and from one another, with guidance they settled and could share and exchange books freely.
- They later asked for paper and pencil to draw.
- They were given pencils, papers, crayons and markers. They started actually copying pictures from the books they were reading. They were asked to put their names and date.
- They were given a manila card to make their own identity cards. They produce wonderful cards. Putting one thing they liked most. Girls used the markers to paint their nails different colour when they finished making cards.

Mothers reading together with their children;

- 11 women made a family literacy play .
- Children joined the play and many others watched and enjoyed the fun.
- At home women had read “Sanyu Ly’abato,” with their children.
- After children told their own stories they had heard from friends at school.
- One participant had a young daughter who could not accept any answers to her home work. She only thinks it is her teacher who should correct her. However, the girl works independently even at home.
- Children drew their own pictures and wrote a few words about what they drew.
- The women discussed 1 picture reading. Their focus was to have someone read with them the stories; they grasp them and use the pictures in the book to retell stories to their children even if they did not know how to read. This in a way tied them down to the text rather than exploring the pictures. They were encouraged to take the pictures and read them with their stories, describing them and listen to each other develop their own stories based on the pictures.
- Pictures for reading with children were drawn by the mothers or selected so that the mothers were free to read them without a particular written story in mind.
- Little family reading is done around newspapers, calendar, shopping lists or family meetings. Though this is not to say there was completely no family literacy activity. There was need to find out what could be built on in each family in terms of everyday literacy.
- While the main focus was the children’s homework itself, many parents tended to be instructional other than child centred. They were encouraged to make learning fun and play and let the child take control of learning.
- The group stopped smacking children for getting wrong answers for their home work. They now encourage, discuss and read with their children when they are interested. They said their neighbours still smacked their children when they fail to reach answers they thought were right.
- The group also report that some teachers did smack children for a number of reasons. They were advised to talk to the teachers just to find out how their children are doing and find out what the teacher thought they could do to help their children improve.
- The group were asked to observe what helps their children learn what new things they are learning and come ready to share their observations in the next workshop.

Activities at the library;

At 2.13 pm the first mother arrived at the resource centre and started by sweeping and dusting the chairs. Soon a group of eager children arrived. ‘Can we sweep the extension room?’ they inquired. Getting a go ahead, they cleaned the room and got out the cushion for sitting on. More mothers and children arrived. Mothers sat in the extension and children inside.

Soon all were actively reading books. Children selected the books to read. Soon they were silent and busy reading. This time there was no scramble for books. They could be observed exchanging books quietly and sometimes two could focus on only one book at a time. Two children asked for help to find meaning to new words and pronunciations. The concentration was

quite impressive. One girl putting up a story book said, 'These are the books we like.' She proceeded to ask to read it out to the rest. Others granted and she read. Though they seemed half listening, 6 boys and 1 girl were able to answer the question about the story successfully. Not to mention, the read out activity was just perfect and clear.

During the question session boys would interrupt and ask, 'What does that mean in Luganda?' The girl who read out did a good job of translating. Surprisingly the boys would answer back correctly in Luganda. They learnt one new word 'honey' and they were excited.

The next activity for children was games. In 5 groups, children worked on jag saw puzzles. They liked them very much. Then they exchanged the puzzles. The girls completed all the puzzles including the most completed one but one group failed to complete it. The youngest group of boys completed a puzzle that the girls had failed. The old boys failed to complete two puzzles. The other groups were more cooperative than the boys. They found a lot of satisfaction in doing the games.

The last activity was a memory game for each group which was another excitement as the children began to spot and turn over two similar cards at a time. At the end when asked what they had learnt, they all answered, 'I have learnt how to remember.'

On the other hand the mothers in the extension room were busy translating 'Let's Look.' Into Luganda, This is the third book in the series to be translated. The whole book was again translated. One mother would read the text and explain to others using the pictures in the book. The book easily rendered itself to explanations because the pictures helped to put the words into context. However, the word steep describing the slopes of mountains did not work out easily. The equivalent of the word 'valleys' had to be used in the local language to convey the meaning implied. The session was not much different from the first two books translated. Dora, the community development officer from the local government arrived shortly before the mothers completed the translation exercise. After the exercise, She thanked the mothers and said what they were doing was in essence creating work for local government. It made the work of the local government simple because it is easier to work with organized groups than single individuals.

The mothers briefed Dora about what they do and what they intend to do. In response she told the mothers, 'It is important that you use the knowledge you gain from this training to change your life for better.' Other mothers will only be attracted if the participants make significant changes in their livelihood. Dora asked the mothers, 'Are you sharing the books you translate with other families outside the group, do you intend to sell them and make some little profit, what else do you wish to do with the materials you produce?' the mothers said they intend to use it with their families and also each mother to support their neighbours to use the resource centre.

About economic support, Dora said the local government has three ways to support the women though the help is just to give an additional support. The first programme is that of NAADS {National Agriculture Advisory Development Services} It requires people to work through registered community based organizations. These groups need to apply for the funds. The second



group is CDD{Community Driven Development}. In these groups are required to have high standards of home hygiene, immunized children, better children nutrition and children in family going to school. The grants given are not refundable but competitive. The third way of benefiting from the local government is through the officers agreeing to support any group that is active.

Dora concluded by asking the group to get registered, send reports to the local government about their activities and make application for small grants. He was happy that she had been invited and advised the group to invite other local government personnel to help with their expertise and get exposed to the wider community. She emphasized that the group should transfer the ideas they are learning into activities in they homes to improve the literacy, the health and economics in their homes,

**Observation:**

Libraries are in such a strong position to offer all kinds of interaction with the written word to children with adults. However, there are few libraries and opportunity to read books for the disadvantaged.

**Short biography:**

Napagi Augustine Timothy is a male aged 52, graduated with a bachelor's degree of Makerere University in Political science and Social Administration in 1985. He worked as teacher for 16 years soon after graduation. He did a diploma course in Educational Mangment and Panning from Kyambogo University in 1996/7. From 2004 he has been working as a team leader of Kabubbu Community library and heading the department of community education of Kabubbu Development Project. He is a co write to children local language story book published 2009. He founded Gayaza Family Learning Centre with Immaculate Mutabaire, after training in family literacy training and materials development in 2008. He has trained as an adult literacy and family literacy facilitator. His a board member of Uganda Community Libraries Association.