

The Impact of Finnish Refugee Council's Adult Literacy Project on the Lives of the People of Pujehun Township

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Abstract

Looking at the rapid improvement in technology, many people around the world adults inclusive want to be literate which will give them an opportunity to be part of the global village and its sophisticated improved technology. Adult Literacy programs have been observed to assist those who cannot read and write to do so and to have impact on them. This work is concerned with the impact of Finnish Refugee Council' Adult Literacy Project on the participants in Bo.

A quantitative method of data collection was used in this work. A random sampling technique was used to determine the target group. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The Student Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the findings. The results are presented in charts and discussed.

The findings revealed that the FRC Adult Literacy project is having a positive impact on the lives of the participants and that besides literacy participants are also taught other skills during the sessions.

The recommendations made include the fact that the Adult Literacy programme should be extended especially to the remote parts of the country.

Key Words: Adult, Basic literacy, Functional literacy

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is a positive factor in human capacity building, and it is a core engine for human development. Therefore, it is important for any government of any country to put emphasis on education and of making it a top priority more especially “Education for All” for its citizens. This is because its impact has to benefit the communities and individuals and will help increase the literacy rate in the country. In order to be successful in this strive, literacy campaigns should be introduced which will require a great deal of support from government and the establishment of literacy programmers and to create a literate environment so that people do not lapse back into literacy.

Sierra Leone, being the first country in sub-Sahara Africa to attain secondary and university education, it is surprising to learn that the country has a literacy rate of 35.10 percent.

For this reason governments including Sierra Leone and bilateral agencies (local and international non-government organizations – NGOs) have illiteracy In April 2000, participants from 164 countries met in Dakar Senegal to re-affirm the vision of the world’s declaration on Education for All. They observed that although there has been significant progress in many countries, it was still unbelievable that by 2000, more than 880 million adults were illiterate.

The world’s conference of Education for All convened by Executive Heads of UNESCO, UNDP and World Bank in Thailand 1990, noted with concern that the right to education has remained an empty promise for millions of adults.

Nearly one thousand millions of adults, two-thirds of them women, were unable to read and write. The Finnish Refugee Council (FRC) here in Sierra Leone in partnership with other local NGOs such as: Community Action for Rural Development (CARD), Islamic Action Group (ISLAG), Sierra Leone Adult Education Agency (SLADEA), Network Movement for Justices and Development (NMJA) and Rehabilitation and Development Agency (RADA) work in collaboration to improve the literacy rate among adults in the country and presently operates in Bo District.

FRC is an international NGO from Finland which started its operation in Sierra Leone in 2003 to help refugees from Liberia and the communities around which they lived with a particular emphasis/purpose for adult literacy. During this timeframe, it had implemented a functional adult literacy and develop program alongside a youth vocational training and

employment program including six of the country’s fourteen districts – Bo, Moyamba, Pujehun, Bonthe in the South, Kenema in the East, and Koinadugu in the North. FRC’s work on human right-based and participatory approach.

Therefore, the rationale behind this work is to investigate the “Impact of FRC’s Adult Literacy Project on the lives of the people of Pujehun districts”.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A sample size of 150 respondents from the population of adult literacy participants at the center in Pujehun was selected.

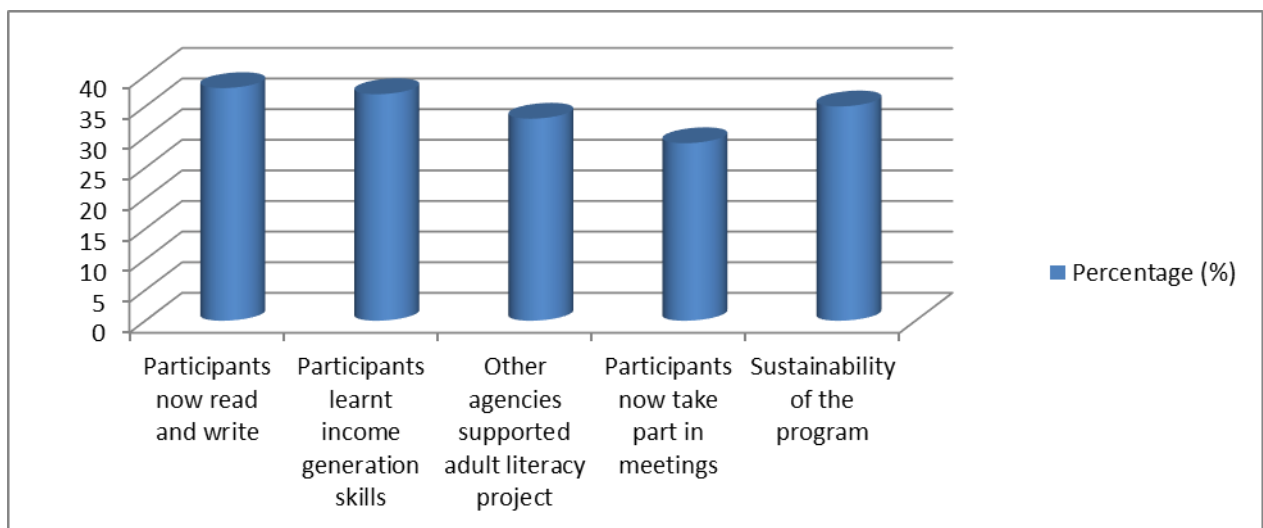
Questionnaires designed were mainly guided by the research questions set for the adult literacy participants from the sample area. The number of questions was twelve and scores were assigned to each question.

The questionnaires were read to the adult learners upon request to help them understand the questions while they tick answers of their choice. Each question had the following options. Agree, strongly agree, No idea, Disagree and Strongly disagree. When a respondent agreed with a question, they scored 4, when strongly agreed, they scored 5, when they had no idea on the question, they scored 3, when they agreed, they scored 2 and when they strongly disagreed they scored 1. The total scores were tallied to analyze the data.

RESULTS

FIGURE:

1



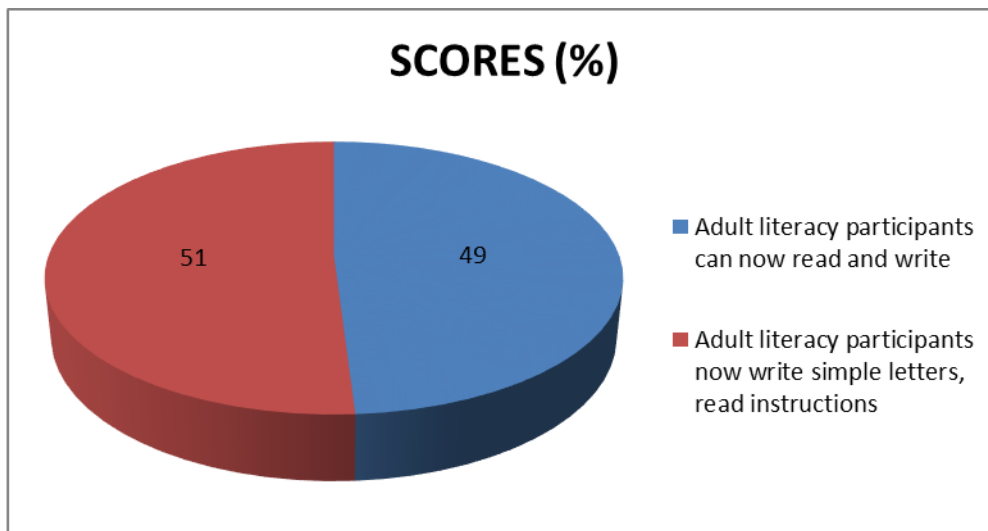
The graph above represents twelve (12) questions in the questionnaire administered to the one-hundred and fifty (150) respondents. The related issues are: participants’ reading and

writing ability, income generation skills, the support from other agencies for adult literacy project, the participants' involvement in community activities such as meetings and the sustainability of the project.

Bar one presents findings on the participants' reading and writing; scored 38%. Bar two indicates the income generation skills learnt; scored 37%. The finding also examined the support the project got from other agencies and has the score of 33%. Again, the finding presents a score of 29% on the learners' involvement during the sessions, and finally, 35% represents how best the project will be sustained.

QUESTIONS	SCORES (%)
Adult literacy participants can now read and write	49
Adult literacy participants now write simple letters, read instructions and labels and calculate simple arithmetic	51

FIGURE: 2



One of the issues investigated is the literacy level of the participants after the sessions. This is represented by two related issues, that is, 51% accounts for the finding on reading and writing, the participants' ability to write simple letters, read instructions and labels, and can solve simple arithmetic scored 49%. This is represented on the right side of the chart.

SKILLS LEARNT

FIGURE: 3

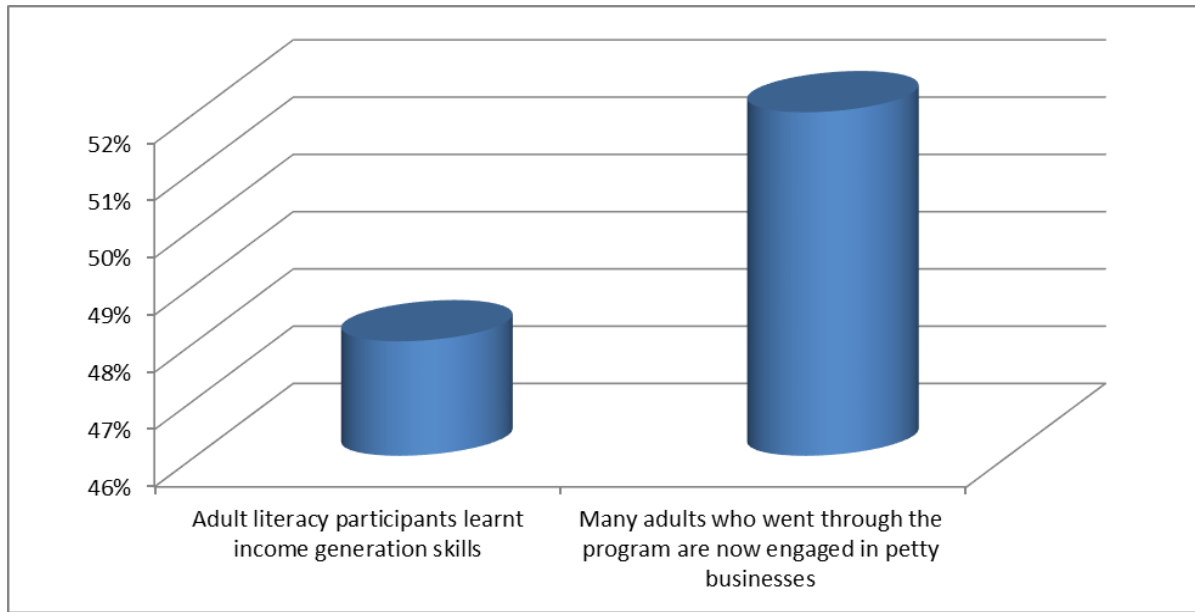
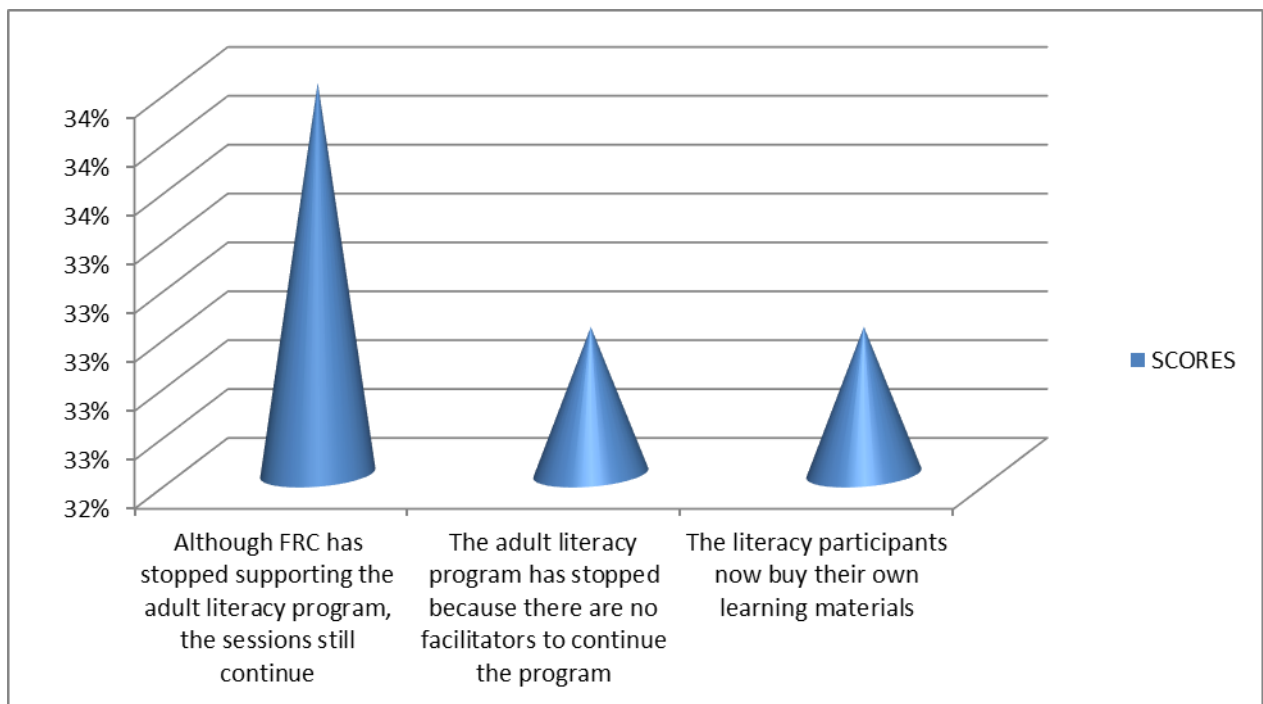


Figure three above is a bar chart indicating findings on two related issues. The first issue has the score of 52%. This results show that adult participants learnt income generation skills during the sessions. The second issue is about the grandaunts' engagement in petty businesses and has the score of 48%.

OTHER AGENCIES' SUPPORT

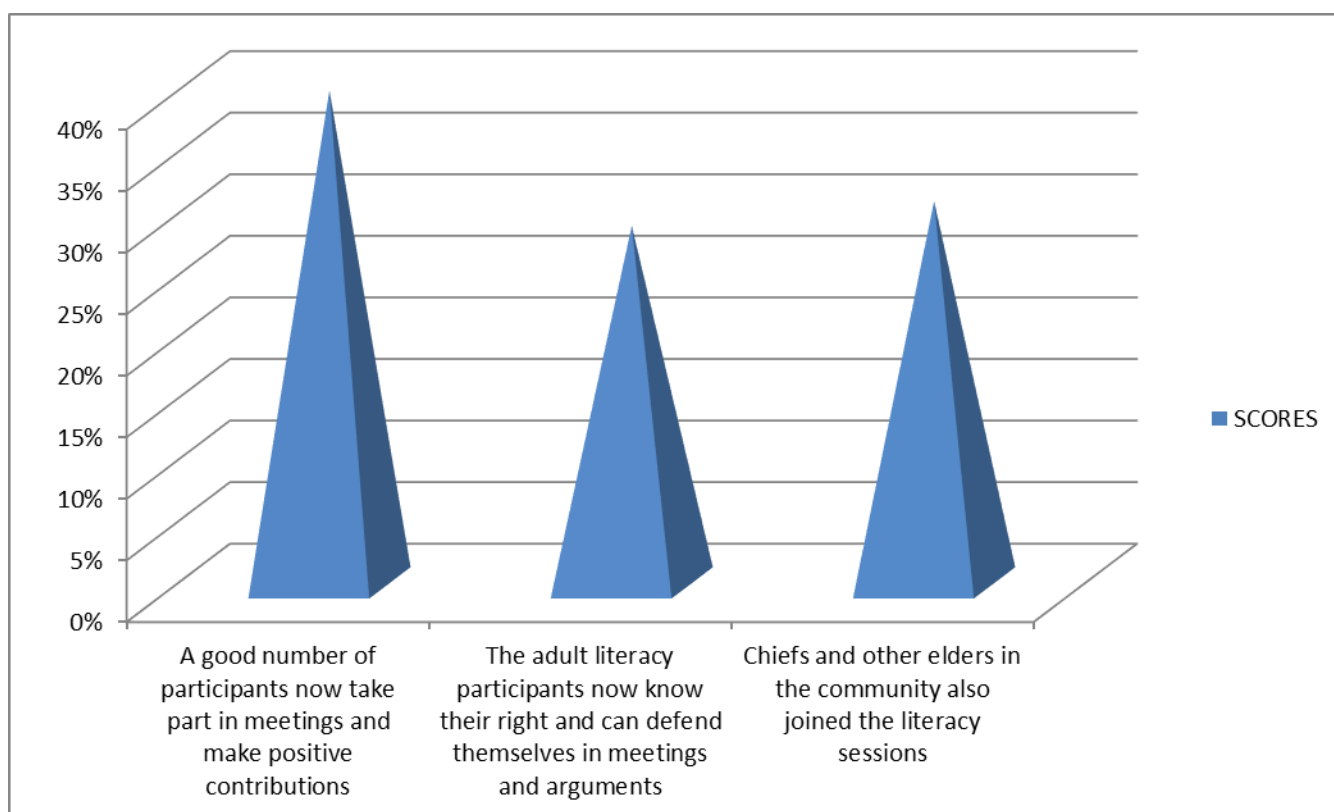
FIGURE: 4



The first bar in figure four indicates findings on the status of the literacy sessions after the FRC has stopped supporting the project and a scored 34%. The second bar presents findings indicating that the literacy sessions stopped after FRC's withdrawal because there were no facilitators to continue the sessions. Score of 33% was recorded. Again 33% on the last bar shows that adult participants bought their learning materials.

ADULTS' PARTICIPATION

FIGURE: 5



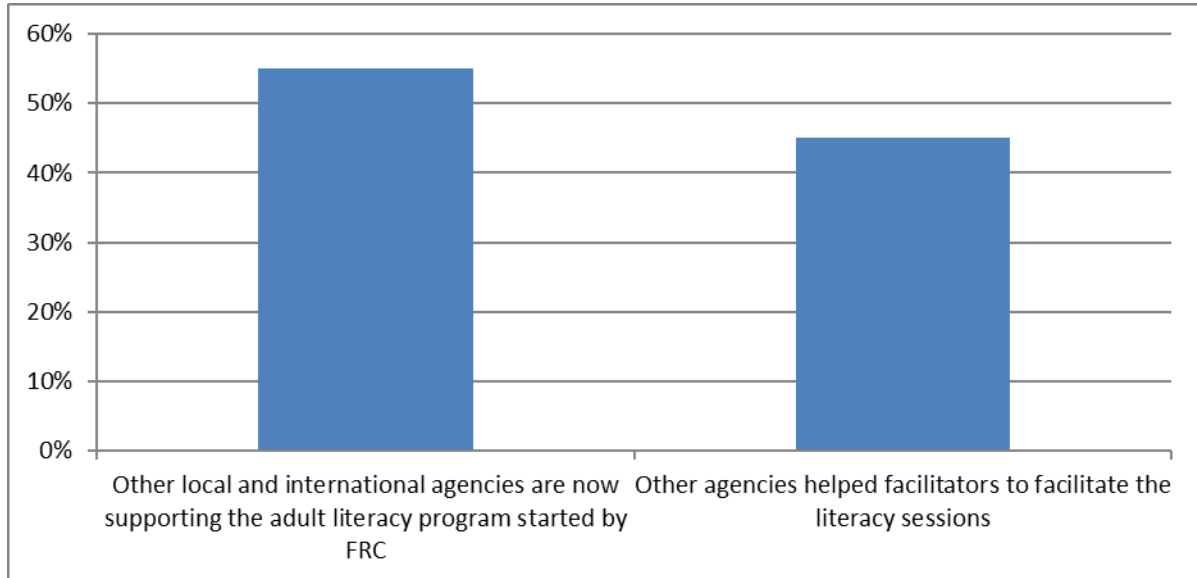
The chart above is a pyramid that deals with the issue of adults' participation into other community activities when they graduated. It is represented by three related issues. These are:

A good number of the participants took part in meetings and made positive contributions. This finding accounts for a score of 40%. The next points dealt with the adult participants knowing their rights, defending themselves in meetings and in arguments. This scored a percentage of 29% and the final issue also scored 31% which is, chiefs and other elders joining the literacy sessions.

LITERACY SPONSORSHIP

FIGURE:

6



The sustainability of adult literacy depends on the sponsorship the program gets. The pie chart above shows the sponsorship the program had. According to the chart, the respondents agreed that indeed other local and international agencies also supported the program. The support from these agencies scored 55%. Both portions of the chart present findings on sponsorship, the part which indicates the support the project had from other agencies in helping the facilitators to facilitate the literacy sessions in Pujehun Township. 45% was scored. This is mainly the respondents' answer. This indicates that other agencies do support adult literacy program.

Respondents were asked to make suggestions towards the improvement of Adult Literacy project. Their responses include the following.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the impact of Finnish Refugee Council's Adult Literacy Project on the participants in Pujehun Township. With the aid of questionnaires, the data were collected from one hundred and fifty respondents and presented on charts reflecting the objectives of the study.

The following are the research findings on the impact of FRC's Adult Literacy Project from the participants in Pujehun Township:

On the issue of the participants' ability to read and write, the results revealed that participants' ability did improve. This means that FRC has created a positive impact on

literacy and the participants gained in this direction. This is recorded with a 51%. Also, the participants during the program learn other skills besides reading and writing, these include income generation skills and some participants are now engaged in petty businesses. This will help them even in the future in doing their businesses.

With regards of sustainability, the finding revealed that support from other local and international agencies was minimal and therefore needs to be improved. Their lack of continuous support for the project from the chart above scored 34% while the participants bought their own learning materials had 33% and at one time there were no facilitators to continue the Literacy sessions.

Another issue was how well the participants got themselves involved in other community activities after graduation. A score of 40% was recorded for their participation in meetings; also the participants cannot just dance to any tune of others because they are now more conscious of their rights.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study on the Impact of Finnish Refugee Council's Adult literacy Project on the participants in Pujehun Township are as follow:

On the issue of the participants' ability to read and write, the results revealed that participants' ability did improve. This means that FRC has created a positive impact on the literacy level of the participants. This is recorded with a 50%. Also, the participants learnt other skills besides reading and writing during the program, these include income generation skills. It is worth noting that some are already engaged in petty businesses. This will help them even in the future in doing their businesses.

With regards sustainability, the findings revealed that support from other local and international agencies was minimal and therefore needs to be improved. Their lack of continuous support for the project from the chart above scored 33.5% while the participants bought their own learning materials had 34.0% and at one time there were no facilitators to continue the Literacy sessions.

Another issue was how well the participants got themselves involved in other community activities after graduation. A score of 33.5% was recorded for their participation in meetings; also the participants cannot just dance to any tune of others because they are now more conscious of their rights.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the research, the following conclusions were made.

1. That the FRC' adult literacy project is having a positive impact on the lives of the participants.
2. Adult Literacy participants learnt other skills alongside literacy. These include income generation skills.
3. The support from other local and international agencies to the FRC' Adult Literacy project is minimal.
4. Those graduates of the Adult Literacy project become more conscious of their rights and participants more actively in community activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are put forward:

- I. That FRC continues its support to the Adult Literacy project in the Bo Township.
- II. That FRC expands its Adult Literacy project to include other parts of the South not already benefiting from the project.
- III. Local and international agencies be encouraged to put more premium in supporting Adult Literacy as this will minimize illiteracy in the Bo Township and the entire country as a whole.
- IV. More adults be encouraged to join Adult Literacy sessions.
- V. That more Adult Literacy circles be opened to cater for those adults who are interested in the Literacy program but have not been fortunate to have the opportunity to enroll in any circle.
- VI. The Adult Literacy facilitators, be put on permanent salaries to motivate them to ensure the sustainability of the project.
- VII. A good management structure be put in place to ensure the effective use of the resources and sustainability of the literacy circles.

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