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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE EDUCATION w  
AND INTERNATIONAL EXTENSION COLLEGE  
DISTANCE TEACHING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES 1987  
CASE STUDY 15  
THE SUDAN EXTENSION UNIT (SEU)  
WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION  
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## Starting the SEU

The idea of starting a refugee educational project in the Sudan was first raised by the International Extension College in 1980. They envisaged that such a project would take a distance teaching approach. IEC's justification for a project of this nature was that education is as much a 'need' of refugees as are the other kinds of support they get, but often their 'educational needs' are neglected. Distance teaching, they argued, would be an effective way of teaching a larger number of refugees.

It was agreed with the government of Sudan that preparation for this project, since called the Sudan Extension Unit, should involve a survey of refugee educational needs and it was anticipated that three broad types of educational activities would be offered by such a project:

- I
- non-formal education
- correspondence courses at the secondary education level
- vocational training

What was attempted was what IEC has come to call a 'quick and dirty' survey, aiming to provide indication rather than hard statistical conclusions - indications which will have to be substantial in future through build-up of experience in the field, and through further much more precise research and evaluation. The general conclusion of the survey is that distance education can contribute to the educational needs of the refugees, and that amongst refugees there is a considerable demand for education of all types.

The SEU was formally established by an agreement between the Sudanese Ministry of Interior, office of the Commissioner for refugees (COR), and the International Extension College (IEC). The agreement was signed in June 1985, and was deemed to have come into effect on December 1st, 1984.

## Eritrean and Ethiogiant refugees in the Sudan

Refugees have been entering the Sudan from Eritrea since the mid 1960s. In March 1981, government estimates put the number of refugees in the Eastern Region of the Sudan at 419,000 of whom roughly 390,000 were from Eritrea, with the rest almost entirely from Tigray. Since then refugees entering the Sudan have certainly increased, in late 1983 the numbers entering the Eastern Sudan took a dramatic turn upwards in the wake of the severe famine in Southern Eritrea, central Tigray and the neighbouring province of Wollo. In February, 1984, refugees were crossing the border at a steady rate of 500 every day. The border between Ethiopia and the Sudan hasn't in the past been of any significance much more than a line on a map. Pastoralist tribes and farmers of both countries were crossing the border and have maintained social and economic bonds between their different branches. The armed struggle and economic disruption have added new dimensions to it, and turned what was once a two-way commerce into a one-way exodus.

In the Eastern Sudan there are 23 refugee settlements and about 6 reception centres. The refugee settlements vary in age from between 15 years and 3 years and in population roughly between 5,000 and 35,000.

3%  
Geographical terms in this case study are used for convenience and have no political significance.

The refugee settlements are divided into three economic sectors. The majority of settlements are classed as land settlements, in which unutilised land has been set aside for refugees to cultivate. As a general rule a plot of between 2-4 hectares has been allocated to each family. A number of problems have arisen with this approach, which have limited the viability of the land settlements, some of which are - poor quality of the agricultural land. For a variety of reasons, not every family has access to the full amount of land it is entitled to, many families have failed to make full use of the land allocated to them - either the family labour supply is insufficient or because of a previous non-agricultural background.

The second major type of settlement is the wage-earning sited near irrigated schemes and planned to provide labour for them. Refugees who live in such settlements depend heavily on seasonal labour hired by tenants, who are themselves limited in what they can pay. Seasonal labour, on irrigation schemes is both temporary and poorly paid, and these refugees who depend on it survive with difficulty.

The third type of settlement is the urban settlement planned to provide menial jobs in the towns near which they are sited. At present there is only one urban settlement operating.

For all types of settlements, the private commercial sorghum and sesame farms in the Eastern Sudan offer further opportunities for seasonal employment. A considerable number of refugees live in Sudanese towns. Estimates of numbers of urban refugees range between 20,000 and 50,000 for each of the main towns in the Eastern region - Gedaref, Kassala and Port Sudan - as well as for Khartoum, the capital city of the Sudan. Urban employment opportunities for refugees tend to be casual, unskilled and unstable, even for refugees with employment skills.

#### Refugee Administration

Refugee affairs are looked after by the office of the Commissioner for refugees (COR) set up in 1967 under the Ministry of Interior. The Commissioner and his staff, in each town and in regional offices are responsible for planning, setting policies, liaising with government bodies and voluntary agencies involved in refugee affairs, fund raising and dealing with status problems of individual refugees. In the eastern region, assistant commissioners are based in three towns namely, Gedaref, Kassala and Port Sudan. The administration of the settlements is centred on the office of the general project manager based in the eastern region, in a Sudanese town called Showak, who supervises the activities of the different project managers in charge of each of the settlements and who is responsible for the administrative development and policy. At settlement level the project managers' staff consists of various officials some of whom are seconded from other government departments, such as the public health and security organs and departments of agriculture. All the project managers and their staff members are Sudanese nationals.

The refugees living outside the settlements in the Sudanese towns are provided with very little assistance by COR or other humanitarian agencies operating in the Sudan. ID cards to urban refugees are issued by COR only to the lucky ones who managed to get a job usually as guards and domestic servants in Sudanese houses. Jobless refugees living in towns are very much insecure and they are put in prison when discovered.

In the settlements the first settlers were provided with one hut per family which was built by the government. The huts consist of a wooden frame with straw walls and roofs. Subsequent improvements and additions are the responsibility of the individual refugee family. It is admitted that asHut construction in this way offers the refugees short-term shelter and after one or two rainy seasons it is normally necessary to rebuild. Additional huts to house large families, additional straw shelters, and thorn fences to keep out animals, are often required in addition to the basic hut provided. Much of this work is done by the refugees themselves on a communal basis, specially for poor families.

#### Aims of the SEU

The aims of the SEU are two fold; on the one hand to,offer the opportunity of formal education outside the Sudanese educational system to refugees whose education at home has been curtailed by circumstances, and to those refugees unable to find places in the secondary schools; on the other hand, to assist refugees in general and particularly those with little or no education to adapt better to their environment and to develop relevant living skills.

In order to fulfil these aims the SEU is undertaking three sorts of activities.

(a) The non-formal education in which the priority areas are seen as health and functional literacy.

(b) A programme of formal courses from post-primary to '0' level in conventional school subjects based on a combination of regular tutorial classes and individual correspondence study.

(c) Vocational education. The SEU is giving considerations to conducting a survey to identify appropriate tyhes and levels of vocational education, and to identify the possibilities for the practical aspects of vocational courses. The finding of this survey will form the basis for discussions of SEU's further involvement in this area.

#### The Current programmes of the SEU

##### a) Non-formal education

The current non-formal education programme of the SEU consists of two pilot projects: functional literacy and primary health care.

These two areas were identified as being of high priority for refugee communities following the result of a surveyt carried out by the IEC in 1985. They are also areas where it was felt the SEU, within its existing resources, could make a useful contribution in helping the refugees to improve their standard of living, in the short to medium term. Work in both areas has been initiated as pilot projects in order to allow for monitoring and evaluation of the methodology adopted before expanding the projects.

##### (i) Functional literacy pilot project

The SEU is the only organisation to set up an organised functional literacy campaign for refugees in the Eastern Sudan.

The first step in initiating the pilot project was an investigation in April and May 1986 of conventional literacy classes being run by various agencies in refugee settlements. The investigation included the demand for the classes, the languages used, the methods and organisation of the classes, and the success rates and problems.

Case studies of educational needs among refugees

11: Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan

On the basis of this investigation a survey was carried out in May, 1986, of three settlements namely, Abuda, Khashmel Girba, and Umgurgur, to assess the feasibility of a functional literacy pilot project. Interest in the idea was strong in the settlements and Khashmel Girba was selected as the pilot area. Criteria of selection included community support and all-weather access by road. The latter criterion is found to be important in terms of monitoring the progress of the pilot project.

Discussions were held with the general project manager, project managers of the settlements surveyed and other humanitarian agencies working in the areas. Furthermore, more specific discussions were also held in the pilot area, as a preliminary preparation to set up the pilot project, with the COR manager of the area, other agencies, womens' and elders' committees, and refugee organisations, to provide the community base of the project and to publicise it. Agreement was obtained for the next stage of the process, a "key-word" identification survey in June and July, 1986.

Key-words are those which are developed with the community as defining the most salient issues and problems they have to confront. Because of their salience, key-words form an ideal basis for effective functional literacy learning materials.

Major areas of concern for the community dealt with basic needs: health, shelter, food, security, education and development, and particular importance was attached to health issues which gave increased validity to the parallel SEU non-formal project in primary health care. Tigrigna, the widely spoken language of the target group, and Arabic were chosen as project languages based on the interest of the target group.

From August, 1986 the SEU has been preparing draft learning materials in Tigrigna. The basic materials prepared for the literacy groups include: literacy primer, numeracy booklet, story book, flip chart pictures, flash cards and leader's guide. We are using Arabic literacy primer and numeracy booklet prepared by the Sudanese National Adult Education and Literacy Council for a nationwide campaign. The Secretary General of the Council is an SEU Advisory Board member.

Literacy groups will meet for a nine month period. At the end of the period it is expected that they will have basic skills in reading and writing. The programme emphasises a group learning approach. We have 400 participants. These are divided into two groups, of which 200 are following literacy in Arabic while the rest are doing Tigrigna. There are ten study groups (five for men and five for women) for each language group. There are 20 participants in each group. The groups meet four times per week. Each group is led by a group leader selected from the community. The group leader, a literate person, is trained in how to:

- use the literacy materials
- help the group study key-words and letters in the creation of new words
- assist group members in their individual practice sessions
- lead the group discussions on the problems using the flip chart, story book, primer and numeracy booklets and discussion questions in the guide
- keep a register and fill in the group assessment forms on each session.

The learning process is outlined on the next page.

## STEPS IN A LEARNING SITUATION

### REVIEW

Recognition of Horde from

previous lessons

### STUDYING KEY WORD

7

variede drille In recognising

### READING AND DISCUSSION

'key' words - Reading of The story

- In association with a picture - Discussion of The

- on a flash card problems within The

- on The chalk board community context

### 3 STUDYING NEW LETTERS

- Every letter in Tingna has a family which

consists of a key-letter and derivatives

### 6 READING BASIC TEXTS

- Read individually or

- Start with one family and study The shape and

sound of The key-letter and its derivatives

one family

Ex.1

n (h- "- 'I n. -n Il

T'BE', IE I lell IBAI IBIE' IBHI 'Bol

KEY-letter derivatives

Exdhmmhmmh

gLEELJ 'SU' 'Sl' 'SA' 'SIE' 'SH' '50'

KEY-letter derivatives

In pairs The Text on

The

Index card

### 5 WRITING EXERCISES

- Initially word crea-

The difference in shape between fl and N can be

BE; :5:

easily described. Recognition of The differences

In shape among key letters can help The learner To learn using letter

study The letters very easily

- Produce in writing

The new letters

- Writing words and

### WORD AND SENTENCE CREATION

Constructing words from

sentence

letter of The same family.

If it is difficult To construct words using members of

The same family, form sounds by combining randomly two

letters at a time.

Ex.3

from example 1

Fr.- (Ln nn- nn a\_n nq ?rdlfferenf

BO-BI BI-BH BA-BU BE-BE BI-BO BE-BA sounds

'I'I

BA-BA child's word for father

from example 2

PL h

SI-SO - one Third (1/3)

h-h .xnn hf: hh #5 )

SU-SH Sl-SH SIE-SA SA-SH SO-SU

j different

sounds

The focus of the group meeting is on the learning of the literacy skills, based on 'key' words. However, one component of the learning process involves discussion of the key words and its relevance to the lives of the participants. One of the aims of a life oriented approach to literacy is to increase peoples' awareness and change behaviour. It is largely through discussions that this happens. Each problem is presented through a story and picture. The learners are encouraged to explore the relevance of the situation presented to their own situation. Through discussions they discover and analyse their attitudes, explore various solutions and new possibilities.

(ii) Primary health care pilot project

Health care for refugees in Sudan is a confused and contentious area. There are over eighty foreign agencies offering services to refugees and many of them focus all or part of their work on some kind of medical services. Each medical agency determined its own level of treatment which is generally considered higher than the standards in the country.

All the medical agencies operating in the Eastern Sudan based their programmes on a heavily curative orientation, allotting nearly all of their personnel, time and resources to the running of clinics, in-patient facilities and therapeutic feeding centres.

The general problems of refugee health services apply particularly to primary health care (PHC). Preventative health care at the community level is the essence of PHC, but there is at the present time no refugee PHC policy from agencies or government, and PHC services, including health education, are seriously neglected relative to curative medical services operating through conventional clinics and hospitals.

4

As a result of this refugees are sceptical of the value of oral medication, but consider injections to be potent (no matter if the drug was quite inappropriate!). Even when shown that sufficient fluid by mouth would save the life of a baby with diarrhoea - which is the main cause of death in the camps - mothers are slow to accept the message.

The initial plan of the SEU was to develop a comprehensive programme combining PHC education and campaigns at the community level. This programme was to be undertaken in its pilot stage through a bilateral agreement between SEU and the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), the largest organisation offering refugee medical services in Eastern Sudan. After a lengthy period of planning leading to a detailed proposal and two workshops of three days each, organised by SEU for the medical team leaders of SCC, the proposed SEU programme was rejected by the Sudanese Ministry of Health. The main reason given for the rejection was the undesirability of yet another agency becoming involved in health education and services at a time when government is seeking rationalisation and greater control of those services.

Following the rejection of the proposal, intensive discussions were held between May and August, 1986 with Sudanese health authorities, particularly the COR health unit.

A consensus emerged from these discussions which has formed the basis of the present PHC work of the SEU.

There is a clearly defined need for locally relevant learning materials in PHC which can be used by agencies in the training of their PHC workers. It was stressed that such materials must be compatible with the national PHC policy of the Government of the Sudan in order to avoid another rejection, although this does not formally apply to refugee PHC at present. In response to this expressed need, and with the agreement of the COR health unit, the SEU prepared a learning syllabus based on the Sudanese Community Health Worker (PHC) training syllabus. The syllabus defines key areas of PHC concern and learning objectives. The syllabus forms the basis for the preparation of twenty self-study learning and teaching booklets, designed to be used by agencies in training their PHC workers. To draw from the experience of SCC in preparing the teaching learning materials, we are using its experienced medical staff as writers of the booklets., SCC selected two writers and they were trained by SEU on how to write self-study materials for a period of one week.

The booklets are being prepared in English by a team of qualified refugee medical personnel from both SCC and SEU. When prepared booklets will be translated into Tigrigna and Arabic. The booklets contain both PHC information and instruction on methods by which the information may be disseminated.

In the pilot stage fifteen health tutors from SCC will be trained by the SEU in the use of the materials. They will then use the materials in training 200 home visitors (PHC workers) already recruited in 17 settlements.

iii) Other areas of non-formal education

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The area of non-formal education where progress has been slow is vocational education. We had chosen not to deal with vocational training at the initial stage of the Unit's development. In part this was because it is an area that needs more investigation to define specifically what role SEU might have in vocational training, and in part it was because the major vocational training projects have been launched by ILO/UNHCR and GT2, since the survey of refugee educational needs was conducted by the Sudan Extension Unit.

Since August, 1986 the SEU has been gathering information about existing vocational and income generating projects. This information will assist the SEU making decisions about its future role in this field.

#### Formal Education

Courses leading to GCE 'O' level, of London University.

As the first stage of this programme an intensive one year refresher course at lower secondary level has been developed. The course covers English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The language of instruction is English. The programme is intended to prepare students for later studies leading to the University of London General Certificate of Education (GCE). The SEU will offer GCE courses as from June 1987.

The programme employs 30 self-study booklets each with an average of 100 pages, including illustrations and study exercises. The booklets are written by qualified refugees and Sudanese part-time staff of SEU. All written materials are reviewed by independent subject specialists before publication. The self-study programme is supported by regular tutorials and study groups for students. The SEU has study centres in three towns, namely, Khartoum and Kassals, based in existing schools, and in Gedaref at the SEU regional office. The pilot



programme has 200 students. Enrolments will be expanded in June 1987, after an evaluation of the first year of the programme has been carried out.

#### Administration of the SEU t

The SEU has got two offices in the Sudan. The head office and teaching materials production centre is based in Khartoum, the capital city of the Sudan, and the regional office, which is mainly the non-formal education centre is in Gedaref, the provincial town of the eastern region, with an easy access to the refugee settlements. Almost all the humanitarian organisations involved in refugee development programmes operate from Gedaref.

The total staff of SEU numbers 48: 33 refugees, 14 Sudanese, and one expatriate (the director). Most senior and professional staff are qualified refugees. 4

#### Table 1

Staff composition by contract status

Khartoum

Kassala (Study Centre)

#### Table 3.

Staff composition by origin

To assist the director and staff of the SEU develop and implement appropriate programmes, an Advisory Board is formed.

Members of the Advisory Board include representatives from: .

- % Commissioner for refugees

- % Deputy commissioner for refugees

- % Assistant commissioner for refugees, Gedaref regional office

Director General of Education Eastern Region

- % The Director of SEU

- % Director General of Social Welfare

- % Director, School of Extra Mural Studies, University of Khartoum

- % Secretary General National Adult Education and Literacy Council

- % Education Officer, UNHCR

- % Health Education Department, Ministry of Health, Khartoum

- % Director, Sudan News Agency

- % UNICEF

4%

Sudan Council of Churches

The Commissioner for refugees, or his designated representative, is chairman of the Advisory Board. The director of the SEU, or his designated representative is Secretary to the Advisory Board. The Advisory Board meets at least once every 6 months.

Budget

The International Extension College had obtained funding for this project from five different sources at the initial stage of setting up. They are Overseas Development Administration (British Government), the Commission of the European Communities Christian Aid (UK), Dutch Church Aid and Services to Refugees, and Swedish Church Relief.

The budget for the first financial year was modest. It was, however, adequate to establish the project.

MAP A :AFRICASHOWING SUDAN AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

gaunt  
KEY  
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Railway I 2 I  
PM  
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Utban soitloment I : I  
Wage earning settlement I : I  
Transit camp I i I  
0 I ,0 30 \$ 50  
scuttmouemesl  
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WC  
WEE SETTLEMENTS Kassala Province (Mm 309500)

SUDAN EXIENSION UNII ORGANIZAIIIONAL SIRUCIURE I  
 ICILR/SEU ADVISORY BOARD I- ' ' ' ' I  
 "I\_"I KHARTOUM OFFICE "I\_ A" m\_.  
 ADMINISIRATION DEPARTMENT \_ \_  
 Office Co-ordinator/Non\_Formal Education  
 Co-ordinator  
 External Affairs  
 Officer2  
 Administrator/Finance Officer  
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 Assistant Administrator ADMIN 0EPARTMENT3  
 Secretaries Driver Admin Clerk  
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 Students  
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 I Part-time or temporary appointments  
 2. Assiating the Director with external a'fairs  
 5 Administration department glaff in Gedaro'