

Fostering a Social Practice Approach (SPA) to Adult Literacies for Improving People's Quality of Life in Western Rwanda

1 ABOUT THE PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

The "Fostering a Social Practice Approach to Adult Literacies for Improving People's Quality of Life in Western Rwanda" project is funded by the Scottish Government under the Scotland-Rwanda fund. The project was initially implemented from 2018 to 2022, with subsequent extensions in 2022 and 2023. The project is expected to conclude on 31st March 2024 and will have received a total of £1,695,783 in funding.

The project is implemented by the University of Aberdeen, the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research-Rwanda (IPAR), the University of Rwanda's College of Education (UR-CE), and Gacuba II, Rubengera, and Mururu Teacher Training Colleges. The project is located in the Western Province of Rwanda, specifically in the Districts of Rubavu, Karongi, and Rusizi where the three Teacher Training Colleges are located. Western Province is the poorest province in Rwanda, with the majority of its population living in rural areas (Abbott et al., 2020).

LITERACY IN RWANDA

Literacy is a human right and essential for a better quality of life, helping to lift people out of poverty, improve mental wellbeing, have healthy and educated children, and engage in civic participation (Abbott et al., 2020). In Rwanda, the literacy rate for individuals over fifteen is around 73% (NISR, 2018). However, in practice, when including individuals who can only read a passage of text with difficulty it is around 50% (Abbott, 2019). Thus, around half the adult population in Rwanda are illiterate, with women and people living in rural areas making up the majority of this figure. Rwanda recognises that adult literacy is essential for poverty reduction and improved health. The Rwandan Government has developed an adult education policy (MINEDUC, 2014), but this has not been satisfactorily implemented.

Lack of literacy skills impacts people's confidence. It restricts entrepreneurship, job opportunities and limits the support parents can offer children with their education (Abbott et al., 2020).

The project's overall objective is to **develop, implement and embed a social practice approach for adult literacies education in Rwanda that can be managed and delivered by local institutions to support people's livelihood through poverty reduction and inclusive socioeconomic development.**

The project aims to improve adult education provision in Rwanda whilst developing a relevant curriculum and teaching methods tailored to adult learners' everyday needs.

A SOCIAL PRACTICE APPROACH

Evidence has shown that the teacher-centred and decontextualised methodologies that were being used in adult literacy programmes in Rwanda were ill-suited for adult learners. These methodologies do not promote knowledge and skills retention (Abbott et al., 2020). In response, the project trialled the social practice approach (SPA) to teach adult literacies.

SPA is more effective in comparison with the teacher-centred approach. It is practice-oriented and focuses on people's everyday livelihood practices. It considers learning as purposeful and embedded in people's social contexts (Street, 2016). It empowers learners to identify problematic issues that matter to them as the basis of the adult classes. SPA teaches literacy skills that people want through activities focusing on peoples' everyday lives and livelihood practices (Abbott et al., 2020). It emphasizes doing and learning together rather than learning first and doing later (Visser, 2012). It is embedded within peoples' social contexts and is student-centred.

In Rwanda, SPA was implemented using different teaching activities which have included compost manure making for kitchen gardens, singing, dancing, and walking. Other teaching techniques have included role-play, working in pairs and groups, case studies embedded within local contexts (e.g., farming), problem and solution mapping, ethnographic walks, and games. The project adapted the existing adult education curriculum in Rwanda to make it learner-centred and context-specific.

Classes are led by community adult literacies tutors (CALTs) trained in SPA, ensuring literacy teaching skills are embedded within communities and that adult learners contribute to decisions about what they learn.

The project has found that SPA is more effective than a teacher-centred approach for adult learners. Findings from course evaluation show over 90% satisfaction with the SPA teaching techniques by adult learners, such as through opportunities to work collaboratively. They also



indicated that they gained new skills and knowledge from the course, and they were making use of the knowledge and skills in their lives.

2 ACHIEVEMENTS

As of March 2023:

$$2 + 3 = 5$$

University of Rwanda-College of Education (UR-CE) staff trained in the Social Practices Approach (SPA) as Professional Developers by University of Aberdeen staff

$$13 + 47 = 60$$

Teacher Training College (TTC) staff trained and awarded the CPD Diploma in the SPA by the UR-CE

$$1 + 3 = 4$$

Staff from an NGO, Association Rwandaise Des Travailleurs Chrétiens Féminins (ARTCF) trained and awarded the CPD Diploma in the SPA

$$1 + 3 = 4$$

Other national and local government education officials (district directors of education, Rwanda Basic Education Board, Ministry of Education) trained and awarded the CPD Diploma in the SPA

$$209 + 280 = 489$$

Community Adult Literacy Tutors (CALTs) trained in SPA by TTC literacies tutors and ARTCF staff

$$13,996 + 3,139 = 17,135$$

Adult learners graduated from courses taught by CALTs using the SPA in western and southern provinces

49,696 indirect beneficiaries of graduates (estimated)

Positive outcomes graduates experience include:

- Improved health, hygiene, and nutrition.
- Greater involvement in community development.
- Enhanced financial capabilities and opportunities.
- Act as a role model for others in the community.
- More positive outlook to life and increased confidence.
- Improved individual and household decision-making.
- Improvement in farming management practices
- Development of a culture of saving money through saving groups
- Support children's education
- Improved marital relationships.

(Mtika et al., 2023)



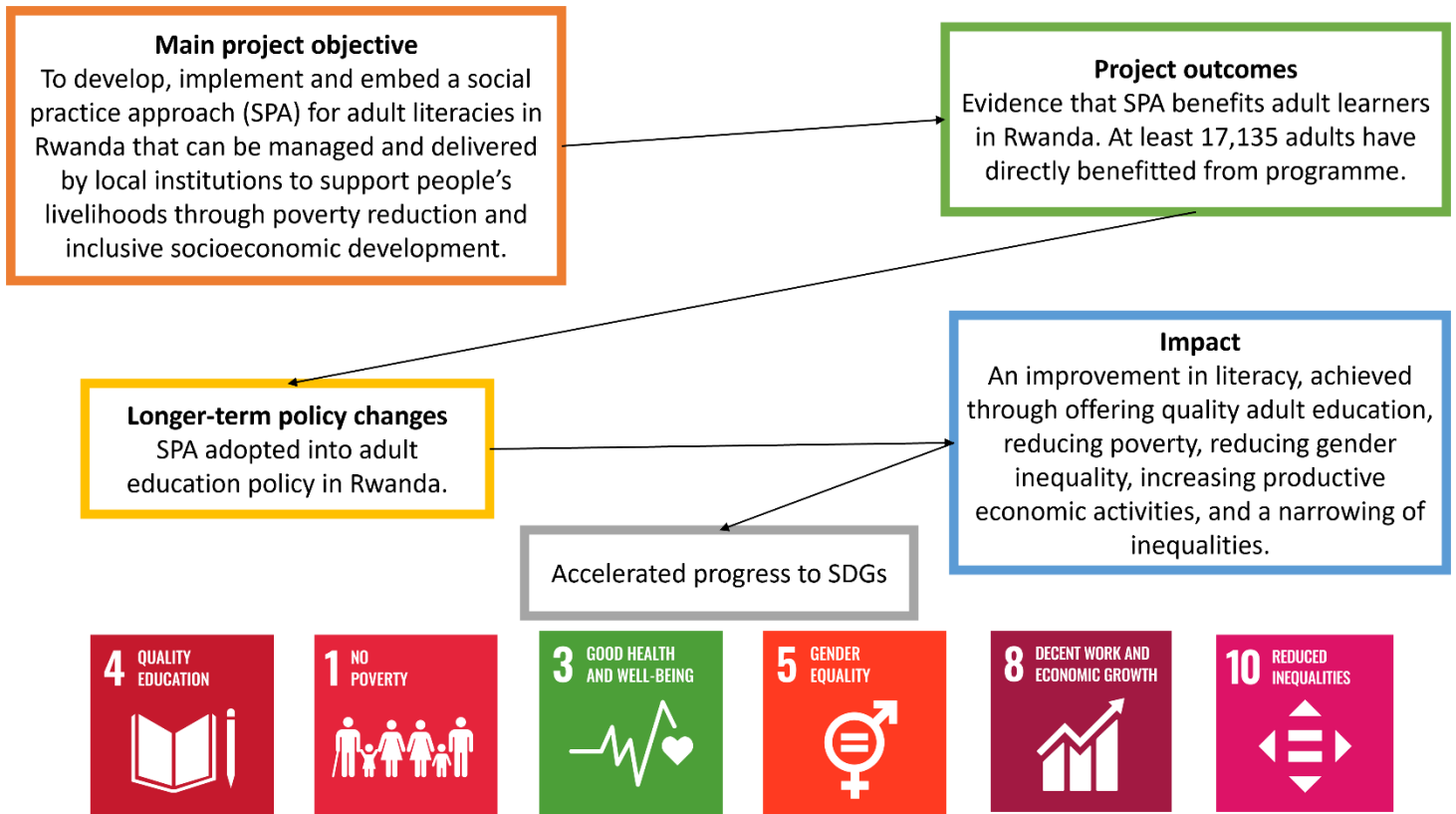
Photo: Adult learners taking part in a compost manure making for kitchen garden case study session.



Photo: Graduation for adult learners on the SPA.

3 IMPACT PATHWAY

Our impact pathway shows how we will go from the main project outcome to the accelerated progress of the Sustainable Development Goals.



4 REFERENCES

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The project “Fostering a Social Practice Approach for Adult Literacies to Improve People’s Quality of Life in Western Rwanda” is funded by the Scottish Government under its Scotland-Rwanda programme 2017-2023: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/rwandadevelopment-programme-2017-2023-grant-awards/>

The views in this brief cannot necessarily be taken as representing the views of the Scottish Government, the Court of the University of Aberdeen or any of the project partners.

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