



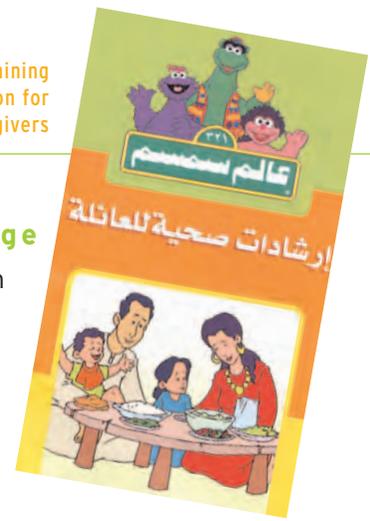
The Impact of *Alam Simsim's* Health Education Outreach Initiative



Alam Simsim is an Egyptian adaptation of Sesame Workshop's landmark educational television series for preschoolers, *Sesame Street*. It is an original, multi-episode, half-hour series developed by Egyptian educators, child development experts, writers, and film makers, with a curriculum specifically tailored to the educational needs of Egyptian children.

Alam Simsim's lessons are illustrated through humor, music, fantasy, and daily life situations. In addition to the fundamentals of literacy, math, cognitive and social skills, there are messages about girls' education, health, and the environment. The series is co-produced in Cairo by Al Karma Edutainment and Sesame Workshop (New York), under the patronage of Egypt's First Lady, Suzanne Mubarak. Major funding is provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development in Egypt (USAID/Egypt), in cooperation with Egypt's Ministries of Education and Information. *Alam Simsim* has been airing daily on Egyptian television since August 2000, along with an outreach program designed to strengthen the impact and extend the reach of its on-air messages into communities throughout Egypt.

This document summarizes a study examining the impact of a health education initiative that was implemented as part of the *Alam Simsim* outreach program. Drs. Sarah Loza and Iman Soliman of Social Planning, Analysis, and Administration Consultants (SPAAC) in Cairo led the research effort. The study assessed the learning that took place after exposure to educational materials and training sessions.



The Outreach Program

Alam Simsim's outreach initiative was designed to promote messages related to health, hygiene, and nutrition for parents, caregivers, and their families. The program included extensive two-month training sessions for parents and caregivers, as well as outreach kits containing educational materials such as books, posters, a healthy habits calendar, and flash cards. The program reached nearly 11,000 families and was implemented through 20 local NGO's working in rural regions. Currently the program is being extended to reach an additional 37,000 Egyptian families.

The Research Study

Researchers interviewed 300 parents and caregivers and 200 children (ages 4-7) from mid- to low-income communities in Cairo and Beni Suef, Egypt. Half were assigned to an experimental group that participated in the outreach program; the other half were in a "control" group that was not exposed. In addition, a cultural anthropologist conducted in-depth observations of five households in the experimental communities before and after exposure.

Gains in Knowledge

As a result of participation in the program, parents, caregivers, and children exhibited change in knowledge and behaviors related to health, hygiene, and nutrition.

Health

Awareness of important health behaviors increased after participation in the program. For example, while knowledge of immunizations such as the DPT1 vaccine for Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), and Tetanus remained relatively unchanged for individuals who had not participated in the program, 32% more parents and caregivers demonstrated knowledge of this vaccine after involvement in the outreach program. (See Graph 1.) The parents and caregivers who participated in the program were also more likely to report that they took their children to the doctor for check ups than those who were in the "control" group.

Hygiene

The outreach program had a measurable impact on the hygiene of parents/caregivers and their children. For example, exposure to the outreach program resulted in reported increases in the frequency of washing hands before eating; washing face with soap and water; using an individual towel, rather than a shared one, for drying; brushing teeth; and covering nose or turning away when sneezing. (See Graph 2.)

Nutrition

Changes in nutritional knowledge and practices were also associated with the program. Parents and caregivers participating in the program reported an increase in their consumption of fruits and vegetables. This knowledge of good nutritional practices was also passed on to their children, who were more likely to report changes in their nutritional habits (such as drinking milk and eating more fruits and vegetables) than children in the "control" group. (See Graph 2.)

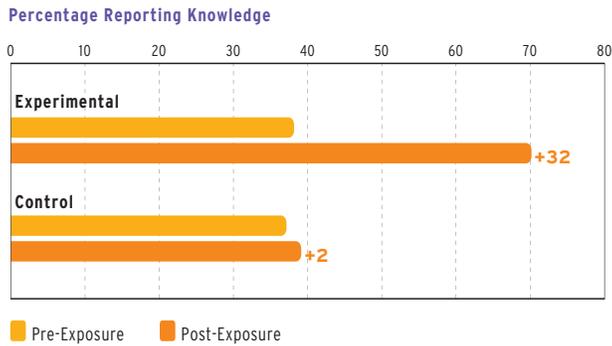


Outreach flash cards promote the importance of hygiene practices



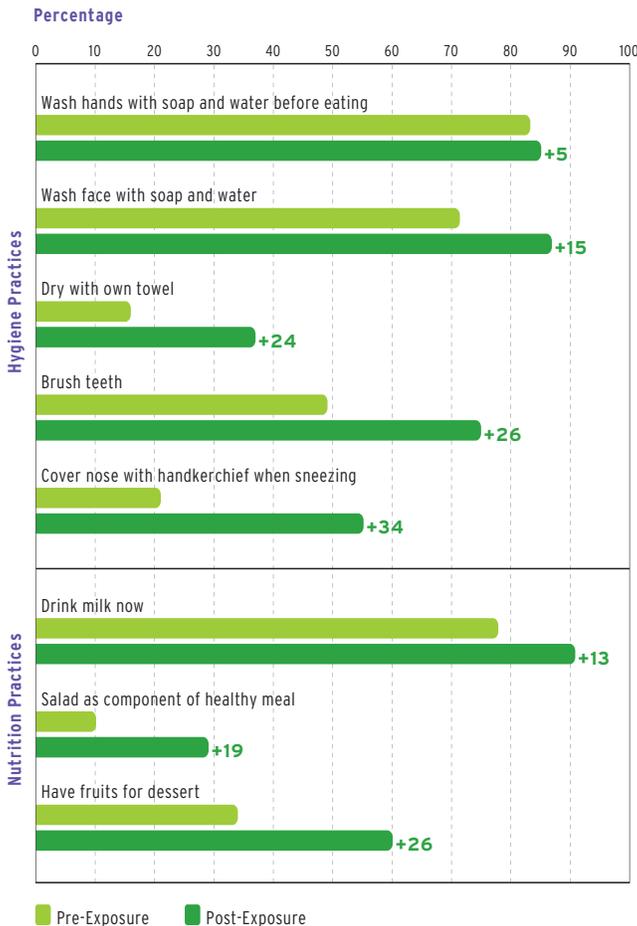
Graph 1:

DIFFERENCE IN PARTICIPATING GROUP'S AND NON-PARTICIPATING GROUP'S PERCENT GAINS IN PARENTS/CAREGIVERS REPORTING KNOWLEDGE OF DPT1



Graph 2:

CHANGES IN CHILDREN'S HYGIENE AND NUTRITION PRACTICES



Knowledge into Practice

A cultural anthropologist's observations of households confirmed the results of the quantitative study. Further, the anthropologist found that participants not only gained better understandings of health practices but applied this newly acquired knowledge in their daily lives. Participating families showed improvement in health-related habits such as eating more nutritious meals and engaging in healthier hygiene practices. While there was evidence of positive changes for many families, routines requiring commercial items such as toothbrushes were beyond the means of the poorest households. Notably, some families with limited economic means engaged in effective alternative practices such as brushing teeth with fingers. It was recommended that the *Alam Simsim* outreach program continue to model a variety of strategies, including the most affordable and accessible.

Conclusions

The researchers concluded from their comparisons of pre- and post-exposure interview responses and behavioral observations that the outreach program had a substantial impact on the participants' knowledge and behaviors relating to health, hygiene, and nutrition. The most notable changes occurred with respect to knowledge of good health and hygiene practices, such as the use of a personal towel rather than a shared one, increased percentages of children that brush their teeth everyday, increased knowledge about vaccinations, and generally increased levels of cleanliness. Parents and caregivers also reported that the program information they appreciated most and which had the greatest influence on their practices was related to food and nutrition. There was, for example, substantial evidence that households of parents and caregivers who participated in the outreach activities are now eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. In short, the Alam Simsim Health Education Outreach Initiative had a measurable, positive impact on the health, hygiene, and nutrition habits of those who participated.



KOCHE SESAME >> AFGHANISTAN

VILA SESAMO >> BRAZIL

SESAME PARK >> CANADA

芝麻街 >> CHINA

عالم سمسيم >> EGYPT

1, RUE SESAME >> FRANCE

SESAMSTRASSE >> GERMANY

SESAMSTRAAT >> THE NETHERLANDS

סימרי סוסוסום >> ISRAEL

حكايات سمسيم >> JORDAN

PLAZA SÉSAMO >> MEXICO

SESAM STASJON >> NORWAY

حكايات سمسيم >> PALESTINE

ULICA SEZAMKOWA >> POLAND

RUA SÉSAMO >> PORTUGAL

YANJIA SESAM >> RUSSIA

TAKALANI SESAME >> SOUTH AFRICA

BARRIO SÉSAMO >> SPAIN

SESAME STREET >> USA

Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit educational organization committed to maximizing the power of all media as an educational force in the lives of children. Its products include television, online, CD-ROMs, magazines, books, films, community outreach, and licensing. Best known as the creators of *Sesame Street*, the Workshop produces programming that has been enjoyed in 148 countries, including 20 coproductions reflecting local languages, customs, and educational needs.

Alkarma Edutainment was established in August 1998 with the specific purpose of producing *Alam Simsim*, the Egyptian version of *Sesame Street*. Formed by a group of young professionals with extensive experience in advertising and commercial production, Alkarma Edutainment went on to become the first full service media educational content provider and is on the cutting edge of innovation and creativity in TV "edu-tainment" (education through entertainment).

In 2002, Alkarma acquired Image Productions, a leading commercial production company with a 12-year history in high quality TV commercial and documentary production. Image has a client roster that includes the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, Procter and Gamble, Unilever, General Motors, Pepsi Foods, Ford Motor Company, John Snow Inc., and Greencom.

Alkarma Edutainment strives continuously to keep its leadership position in the field of production by developing and producing new programs. *Yalla Beena*, the award-winning children's program, was developed and produced by Alkarma for Egyptian Television, and the company is currently developing several new programs that will air late in 2004.

Social Planning, Analysis and Administration Consultants (SPAAC) is an Egyptian private consulting firm established in 1981. SPAAC is committed to development in Egypt and the Arab region and has carried out more than 200 projects in all aspects, areas and sectors of development, and in all geographic areas of Egypt, encompassing the 26 governorates. SPAAC has also worked in countries in the Arab Region such as the Palestinian National Authority, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. SPAAC undertakes projects of analysis, planning, technical assistance for upgrading capabilities and institutionalization, social marketing and mass media for raising public awareness, and research for policy and decision-making. SPAAC has worked in sectors as diverse as public/ primary health care, environment, gender, agriculture and rural development, micro-enterprises, NGOs, urban planning, etc. The firm has worked at the national, regional and local community level, with bilateral and international donor agencies, government, the private sector, and NGOs.

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