



“Maybe I’ll be a police officer... maybe a journalist... maybe an astronaut!”

—Khokha

Big Dreams Sparked by a Spirited Girl Muppet

Globally, an estimated 510 million women grow up unable to read and write – nearly twice the rate of adult illiteracy as men.¹

To counter this disparity in countries around the world, there’s Sesame Street. Local adaptations of Sesame Street are opening minds and doors for eager young learners, encouraging girls to dream big and gain the skills they need to succeed in school and life.

We know these educational efforts yield benefits far beyond girls’ prospects. They produce a ripple effect that advances entire families and communities. Increased economic productivity, reduced poverty, and lowered infant mortality rates are just a few of the powerful outcomes of educating girls.

Our approach is at work in India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Afghanistan, and many other developing countries where educational and professional opportunities for women are limited.



Our Approach

Around the world, local versions of Sesame Street are designed to counter negative attitudes and the gender gaps that stem from girls' limited educational experiences. Our coproductions promote literacy and basic skills that are critical to both girls and boys. But, perhaps even more importantly, they do so in a context that values women and girls and their contributions to society.

How do we do that? Through inspiring role models and the right support from both the males and females in a girl's life.

On Sesame Street, girls are engaged in pursuits that are fun and interesting. They take pride in their accomplishments, and are confident that they are valued. They are always ready to learn, and know that, with work, they can attain any profession.

Full of inspirational songs and strong female characters, our programs put girls' empowerment center stage. Take the ever-curious Chamki, a Muppet from Galli Galli Sim Sim, the Indian version of Sesame Street. Chamki is thrilled to share what she

loves about school: having lunch with friends, playing sports, and, of course, learning new things every day.

In Egypt, a Muppet named Khokha is helping girls aim higher. She happily imagines herself in a variety of professions: as a doctor, a police officer, or even an astronaut. And Khokha isn't going at it alone; she's cheered on in her efforts by the boys and men in her life.

That reaction is a vital part of our approach: addressing the role of male peers in gaining acceptance for girls. Our programs illustrate that household and community responsibilities are not gender-specific. Just as we show women holding government offices, we model how boys can help around the house. By illustrating the engagement and encouragement of boys and men, we foster the belief that girls and boys have equal rights and responsibilities. In this way, brothers come to see their sisters' contributions as just as valuable as their own.

This approach is also at work in Afghanistan, where less than two-thirds of children are enrolled in primary school — a rate that's even lower for girls. Baghch-e-Simsim, the Afghan version of Sesame Street, is delivering lessons in literacy, math, and life skills, with a special emphasis on girls' education.

Watched by millions of children across the country, Baghch-e-Simsim shows real-life girls in situations that have the power to change gender attitudes. In one episode we follow 6-year-old Zainab on her first day of school, helped along the way by her supportive parents and brother. Through Zainab's example, Afghan girls see the classroom as a place where all children belong. As Zainab puts it, "I am really proud of myself. School is a very good place." Through our global girls' education efforts, we are working hard to ensure all girls around the world feel the same.

90% reinvested in families

When an educated woman's income increases, she may reinvest as much as 90% directly towards her family's needs, compared with an average of 30-40% for a man.²

Introducing girls to some inspiring role models

Egypt: Khokha, a Muppet on *Alam Simsim* in Egypt, dreams of being an engineer, a doctor, and a lawyer all at the same time.

Khokha and her friends help children learn letters and numbers while working to change attitudes about girls' education. *Alam Simsim* places special emphasis on the education of girls, an effort central to Egypt's commitment to lifting the status of women.



India: Chamki is a vibrant 5-year-old who lives on *Galli Galli Sim Sim* in India. She has a flair for language, building her vocabulary with new words and creating clever tongue twisters.

Chamki is a problem solver, too, and puts these skills to use as the witty Detective Chamki. She serves as a bright and energetic role model for girls across India.

South Africa and Southern Africa: Kami, a Muppet on *Takalani Sesame* in South Africa, is HIV-positive and was orphaned after her mother died of an AIDS-related illness.

HIV/AIDS affects a disproportionate number of young girls and women in the region.⁴ In a country where an estimated 12 million children under the age of 17 lost at least one parent to AIDS in 2005,⁵ Kami serves as a positive example for all South African children. She's well informed about the disease and comfortable expressing the ways in which she copes with her illness.

Bangladesh and Afghanistan: Tuktuki, a Muppet on *Sisimpur* in Bangladesh and *Baghch-e-Simsim* in Afghanistan, has an insatiable curiosity about the world.

Tuktuki comes from a low-income family and recently started attending school. She serves as an example to girls, demonstrating their potential to excel—an important lesson in Bangladesh where two-thirds of the adults without basic literacy skills are women.³

Her role is just as crucial in Afghanistan, where girls' access to education is severely limited. Gulguly's (as she is known in Afghanistan) determination to succeed in school shows all Afghan children that girls have a place in the classroom just as much as their brothers.



Kami's confidence is also at the heart of *Sesame Square*, our coproduction in Nigeria. Kami's friend Zobi, a male Muppet on the show, reinforces that girls are equally capable of greatness, a fact underscored by visits to the show from real-life Nigerian heroines, including a female pilot and the singer, actress, and politician Onyeka Owenu.

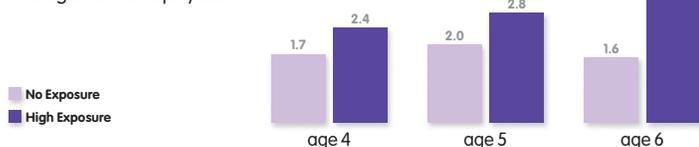
Measurable Impact

In countries around the world, Sesame Street programs are moving the needle on gender-equity attitudes while providing skills young children need for a bright future.

Egypt

Nearly 12 million children in Egypt watch Alam Simsim, making it among the top 5 most-watched children's television shows in the country.⁶ A 2006 study conducted by The Johns Hopkins University, in association with El-Zanaty & Associates in Egypt, examined children's learning from Alam Simsim. The study found that viewing the program was linked to better performance on tests of literacy and math skills and that exposure to Alam Simsim was linked to a less gender-biased mindset. Children who viewed demonstrated more gender equitable attitudes.⁷

Sesame's Impact on Gender Attitudes
Average Gender Equity Score

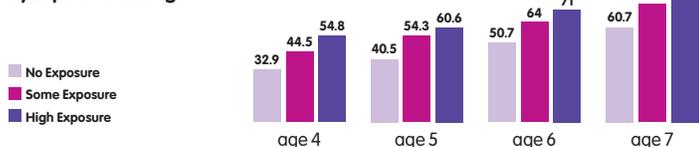


Bangladesh

Studies from projects in 15 countries (including South Africa, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and India) show that Sesame Street coproductions promote basic skills acquisition and early academic learning⁸—both critical to girls' education.

In Bangladesh, nearly 7 million children watch our Sisimpur coproduction.⁹ A longitudinal study of more than 6,000 children from urban and rural areas in Bangladesh found that viewing Sisimpur is linked to faster attainment of basic skills.¹⁰ Children with high exposure to the series performed on tests of literacy and math at the same level as non-viewers who were a year older. These findings were strongest for children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

Overall Literacy Skills by Exposure and Age



Note: Means are adjusted for child's gender, residence, mother's education, family income, and performance at Wave 1. The sample includes children tested at Waves 1 and 2 (N= 4,688).

Bangladeshi children who watch Sisimpur show faster attainment of academic skills essential to girls' education, with literacy scores of 4-year-olds 67% higher than those who don't watch.¹¹

Afghanistan

Families are seeing an impact from our Baghch-e-Simsim program across gender lines. In a focus group of Afghan parents who watched the show, the response of the 48 female participants was overwhelmingly positive. Viewers describe the show as both educational and entertaining, capturing the attention of young viewers and imparting useful and positive lessons, such as improving their children's grasp of the alphabet, numbers, colors and such concepts as self-confidence, decision-making, and emotions.¹²

Numerous participants credit the show with helping them better understand how to treat children to support their mental and emotional development. Of particular note are a handful of instances in the Kandahar focus groups in which children demonstrated a new or renewed interest in school after being exposed to the show. In several cases, elder male relatives were persuaded to permit girls to attend school—an excellent sign for children with a lifetime of opportunities ahead.

To learn more about funding opportunities, please contact Anita Stewart, Senior Vice President, Strategic Partners & Development, Sesame Workshop, at anita.stewart@sesame.org or +1 212 875 6889.

ABOUT SESAME WORKSHOP

As the creators of Sesame Street and other children's programming, the mission of the nonprofit Sesame Workshop is focused on helping kids learn, grow, and reach their full potential. Our goal is to make learning fun at home and in the classroom by combining our lovable Muppets, sophisticated use of media, and a curriculum that addresses kids' critical developmental needs. We work in partnership with parents, educators, and child experts to find appropriate ways to address the unique needs of today's children from ABCs and 123s to delivering lessons about health, emotional well-being, and social tolerance around the world.

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