



SUCCESS STORY

Marginalized Girls in Al-Wadi Join Literacy Classes



USAID Yemen, Basic Education Support and Training Project

Naseem and her colleagues display what they have learned over the past six months

The *Akhdam*, literally meaning “servants” in Arabic, who cast at the very bottom of the Yemeni social status and are by far the poorest, got the opportunity to learn how to read and write for the first time in their lives thanks to the USAID adult literacy class in Al-Shukani School in Al-Wadi District in Mareb.

The *Akhdam* (more appropriately called “*Al-Muhamasheen*”, or the marginalized ones) and their children are unable to attend school because they are sent out to work either as street sweepers or in the gardens and the houses of the Al-Ashraf (the highest ranking tribe in Al-Wadi and throughout Mareb). The very few who do try to get an education often drop out because of harassment.

Al-Shukani School has been supported by USAID over the past four years (2004-2008) during which the school received major renovation, and it is now being supported by the USAID BEST-Yemen Project. BEST-Yemen project conducted an awareness campaign through the imams of the mosque to call women and girls, particularly those from the marginalized community, to participate.

Twenty teenage girls and women varying in age from 12-30 years old, enrolled in the adult literacy class. Despite their long, busy working day, they still managed to attend with no absenteeism because of their strong will to learn. In fact, their facilitator, Kareema, says that they were very keen to complete their work early in order to attend the afternoon literacy session.

Naseem Mohammad, age 16, stated, “I feel lucky to have joined the literacy class; it is an opportunity that has never been available for me. After six months of intensive learning, I can now read and write any given word, and have benefited a lot from the life skills programs. I now perform prayers and proper ablution, which I honestly never knew about in the past. Thanks to our facilitator Kareema who has been very patient and has been treating us with respect, and thanks to the USAID BEST-Project who has helped open literacy class for us.”

A similar class exists for the marginalized women and girls in Abdurahman Bakir in the district of Amran that has 20 girls registered.