Request for Proposal
Research activities to support Ahlan Simsim Iraq content development on resilience capacities
(August 2021)

Introduction

Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit media and educational organization behind Sesame Street, the pioneering television show that has been reaching and teaching children since 1969. Today, Sesame Workshop is an innovative force for change, with a mission to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. Sesame Workshop and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) partnered to create Ahlan Simsim (“Welcome Sesame” in Arabic), a program that delivers early learning and nurturing care to children and caregivers affected by displacement in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Through a brand-new, local version of Sesame Street and in-person direct services across the region, Ahlan Simsim reaches displaced and host community families wherever they are—from TV and mobile devices to classrooms and health clinics—with the vital educational resources that they need to thrive.

Sesame Workshop is expanding content development and direct services programs in Iraq. The geographic focus for the child, facilitator, and youth direct services interventions of this project will be in Ninewa, Anbar, Salah-al-Din, Kirkuk, Baghdad and Basrah. Additional governorates may be added. The target beneficiaries include children ages 3-8 and their caregivers, facilitators of early education services for children ages 3-8 and youth ages 15-29 across all of Iraq; with a special focus on communities that have experienced displacement because of ISIS and children from marginalized communities including religious and ethnic minorities.

Research Overview

To inform the development of new content and programs specifically for Iraq, Sesame Workshop is seeking a research firm to conduct a needs assessment and formative research in Iraq. The needs assessment will be conducted prior to content development. Formative research will be conducted to test content.

The major goals of the needs assessment will include:
- Understanding caregivers’ parenting needs
- Understanding cultural nuances around song, storytelling, and dance
- Understand children’s and caregivers’ knowledge around themes of perspective-taking
- Understanding children and caregivers’ perspectives of and importance of identity, diversity and inclusion
- Learning more about professional needs and challenges of people working directly with young children and their families

The major goals of the formative research will include:
- Understanding engagement, appeal, comprehension of content with caregivers
- Understanding engagement, appeal, comprehension of content with children
- Test Teaching and Learnings Materials (TLM) content for facilitators
• Test applicability and relevance of content for target beneficiaries
• Provide specific recommendations to improve appeal, comprehension, and engagement of content

Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the research firm include the following:
• Hire interviewers with necessary skills including working with vulnerable populations and young children
• Lead training of interviewers
• Conduct pilot data collection
• Reviewing, adapting, and translating instruments into necessary languages
• Securing IRB approval
• Develop a data collection work plan
• Develop a risk management plan for data collection including considerations for changes in accessibility and COVID-19
• Oversee data collection
• Process data and conduct data quality control checks
• Analyze data to address key research goals

Deliverables

All deliverables will be overseen by and coordinated with Sesame Workshop New York:
• Final English and local language instruments
• Data collection work plan
• Summary of key findings from pilot
• Risk management plan
• Raw data in English
• Coded data in English
• Analytical report in English on the findings for each study (up to two drafts per study) including an overview of methodology
• Coordination with Sesame Workshop. Throughout this work, the contractor will participate in – and as needed, lead or facilitate – calls and meetings with Sesame Workshop as needed.

Research Logistics

It is critical that the study is completed in a timely manner and that the local research team can deliver a high-quality report within a tight timeline.

• Protocols will consist primarily of qualitative interviews. Interview sessions should be between 30-60 minutes for adults and 10-15 minutes for children.
• Interviews can be conducted either in homes or at another secure location (community-based center etc).
• Formative research will include testing of multimedia content so the research firm must be able to show families video content using a laptop, tablet, TV, or projector.
• Interviews should be conducted as individual interviews. However, if logistical constraints make this impossible, we are open to discussing the possibility of collecting data via focus groups instead.
• Proposals should outline appropriate measures to prevent exposure to COVID-19 including safety protocols for participants, interviewers, and supervisors for any face-to-face research.
• Due to changing accessibility, the research firm is requested to provide accessibility assessments and replacement options during data collection.

Sample Size

Research firms will propose recommended sample sizes for each study based on accessibility and budget. Participants in this study should include a diverse cross-sample of Iraqi communities, including those who have experienced displacement because of ISIS and children from marginalized communities including religious and ethnic minorities.

For the needs assessment, it is preferred that participants from all governorates are included in the research unless there are accessibility or security limitations. For the formative research, research firms are requested to include one or two governorates.

Timeline: The tentative timeline for research activities is January-May 2022 but is subject to change based on accessibility and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Budget: US $240,000.00 (inclusive of all travel and related expenses)

Submission: The deadline for submission is September 24th, 2021. Please submit proposals to Samera Zaidi (samera.zaidi@sesame.org).