

Literacy Resource Manual

*Susan Malone**

The Literacy Resource Manual is for people who are planning and implementing literacy and education programs in minority language communities. The manual begins with an overview of community-centered literacy-for-development programs, followed by eight chapters dealing with a component of a literacy/education program in minority language communities. Each chapter includes a “work page” to assist in planning that component and additional resources to guide the reader to more in-depth information on that topic, as well as relevant examples. Included in this article are the description of the manual and chapter 1: “Overview.”

About the manual

The Literacy Resource Manual, in its current state, originated in 1991 when I wrote *Developing Tokples Education Programmes* in Papua New Guinea for the National Department of Education in Papua New Guinea. In the years since then, as I have continued to work in minority-language education as a trainer, teacher, and consultant in Asia, I have continued to gather new insights relating to the process of implementing minority language education programs. These insights have been incorporated into this manual so that it now bears little resemblance to the original publication. I also used ideas from this manual when I worked on a recent publication for UNESCO, the *Manual on Functional Literacy for Ethnic Minorities*. Because there are only so many ways to write about this particular topic, readers of both manuals will notice many similar features!

Purpose and priorities

The *Literacy Resource Manual* is for people who are planning and implementing literacy and education programs in minority language communities. It is written specifically for mother-tongue speakers of the languages but can also be used by “outsiders” who are helping the minority language community develop their program. The manual has several priorities:

- Literacy/education programs will be “learner centered.” Their purpose will be to help learners achieve their own educational goals.

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- They will be community centered. Members of the communities, especially the learners (or, if the program is for children, the learners' parents) will participate in making decisions for the program from the very beginning.
- They will be “development oriented.” The programs will not consider reading and writing as goals but as tools to help people achieve their goals. Therefore, as the learners are learning reading, writing, and numeracy, the content of their lessons will be drawn from their own experiences and deal with topics that are especially interesting to them and relevant to their lives. And, whenever possible, the literacy program will be integrated with other long-term education and development efforts.

Organization of the manual

The manual is organized into nine chapters. The first chapter presents an overview of community-centered literacy-for-development programs. Each of the remaining eight chapters deals with a component of a literacy/education program in minority language communities. Following the presentations of ideas in each chapter is a “work page.” Planners can use the work pages to begin planning each component in their own programs. Resource sections at the end of each chapter provide more detailed information about the topics that were discussed in that chapter and examples of additional materials that relate to the topic.

Use of the manual

This resource manual has not been published commercially so that it will be freely available, without cost, to those who are planning minority-language education programs in ethnic minority communities. If you would like to use the manual, please contact Susan_Malone@SIL.org.

Chapter 1. Overview

Thinking about sustainability

Over the years small-scale literacy programs have been started in almost every country of the world. Unfortunately, most of these programs are not sustained for a long period of time. The programs stop and learners do not achieve their long-term educational goals. As literacy specialists, we might ask, “Why do some programs fail and others survive? What can we do to make sure our own programs are successful and sustained?” A study of programs that have been successful and sustained over a period of time reveal that they share several characteristics.

The program is started because people in the community want it. They believe that the program will help them achieve specific goals or meet specific needs. Community members take leadership in planning, implementing, and maintaining their program.

Once the program has been established, people in the community (especially the learners) find that the program is indeed helping them to achieve their goals and meet their needs.

The community has taken responsibility for the program. They make the decisions about it; they evaluate it, and they decide what changes are needed. The literacy program is linked to other development projects

so that as people learn to read and write they can continue to gain new and useful ideas, skills, and information.

The program is linked to other formal and/or nonformal education programs within and outside the community. When learners complete the community literacy program they can continue their education if they want to do so. For example, children who have completed a pre-primary village literacy program can move into the formal education system. Adults who have successfully completed an adult class can move into vocational training.

The program receives necessary support from outside the community—government, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), universities, the business sector, donor organizations, and from other institutions (for example, language and culture associations).

Encouraging cooperation among the “Stakeholders”

“Stakeholders” are all the people that have a particular interest in a program. In a literacy-for-development program, stakeholders are the learners, their families, others that might be affected by the program, and all the people that are involved in supporting it. The following is a list of possible stakeholders in a community-based literacy-for-development program:

- The people who attend the literacy classes
- Their families
- Teachers, supervisors, trainers
- The people who write, illustrate, edit, produce, and distribute the teaching and reading materials
- The leaders of the program
- Other people in the communities in which classes are held
- Local, state, and national religious institutions
- Local, state, national, and international NGOs that are interested in literacy, education, and development
- Local, state, and national businesses that support the program
- Donor agencies that provide funding and other resources for the program
- Local government officials (state and national officials, as well)
- Vocational centers or other adult training programs (if the program is for young people or adults)
- Local schools (if the local program is for children)
- Health, agriculture, and other government agencies that want to communicate information to people in minority language communities

If the literacy program is to be successful, stakeholders need to work together as partners to support it. So, as the leaders of the program, you will need to spend time talking with each group of stakeholders. It will be important to develop linkages between the program and all the potential stakeholders, encouraging them to share their vision about education in the community and building common goals for the literacy program.

Planning the literacy program

Why make a program plan?

If you are planning a literacy-for-development program, a good program plan is helpful because:

It helps you think about what you should do and what resources you will need.

It helps you think about who should be responsible for the different activities and when each activity should take place.

When you evaluate the program later, it helps you know if the objectives have been accomplished and how well they were accomplished.

A plan for a community-based literacy-for-development program needs to be “flexible.” That is, leaders of the program should be able to change the plan if they see that some parts of the program are not working well. Of course, planners cannot predict all the things that might happen as the literacy team begins implementing the program. Sometimes something happens to slow progress (natural disasters, lack of money, etc.). Or, something might happen to move the program more quickly (for example, the government might decide to sponsor training courses or provide funding for literature production). When stakeholders evaluate the program—which they should do regularly (see chapter 8: Evaluation)—they might find that the program *plan* does not match what is actually *happening*. In that case, they should revise the plan so that it is realistic and helpful for their situation.

Planning takes time and people may be tempted to skip this process so that they can start classes quickly. The danger of moving quickly, without a plan, is that the people who are responsible for the program will not have anything to guide them or help them prepare for the next step. A good program plan should tell you where you have been and where you are going. If you look at successful literacy programs around the world, you will probably find that most of them began with a good program plan.

Who should be involved in planning?

If a program is to serve the community, representatives of the community should be involved in planning it. NGOs (including local religious institutions), appropriate government agencies, and other stakeholders can support the community in planning their program but community members should be the primary decision makers.

You can support community decision making in several ways:

- Help several community leaders to visit an established program.
- Show them a copy of a good program plan from another language group.
- Talk with them about the different parts of a program so that they can ask questions and talk together before the actual planning begins.
- Help them identify the resources they will need to implement and maintain the program.

What kind of program can we plan?

Depending on the needs and goals identified by people in the community, the program might be for children, out-of-school youth, or adults. Most programs fit into one of the following categories.

Beginning education classes are for people who have not been to school before. In these classes, they begin using reading and writing to help them learn the things they want to know and do the things they want to do.

Fluency classes are for people who have begun learning to read and write but want to read faster and with more meaning. In fluency classes they learn how to use literacy to learn new ideas and information and to communicate in writing with others.

“Bridging” classes are for people who already read and write in one language and want to become literate in a second language. Bridging classes can go two ways. In some classes, people who are literate in their first language learn to read and write in a second language. In other classes, people who are literate in their second language learn to read and write in their first language. Both of these are “bridging” classes because their purpose is to help people build a “bridge” between the two languages so they can become fluent readers and writers in both languages.

Post-literacy or continuing-literacy classes are for people who want to continue to use and expand their reading and writing abilities in both their first and second languages. These might be village reading clubs, training programs outside the community or formal and nonformal education programs.

Beginning Education Classes	Fluency Classes	Bridging Classes	Post-Literacy Classes
Begin literacy in L1 Begin oral use of L2	Build fluency in reading and writing L1 Build fluency in speaking L2	Continue reading and writing in L1 Bridge to reading and writing in L2	Use L1 & L2 for on-going education: - Formal Education - Distance Education - Vocational training - Reading Clubs - Community Learning Centers

Figure 1. Literacy and education programs that help people “build bridges” between their Mother Tongue (L1) and a Second Language (L2)

What is involved in planning a literacy-for-development program?

The following activities are usually part of a program plan.

Identify the reasons why the program is needed (problem statement)

The first step in planning is to identify the reasons why the community wants to start a literacy program. To get this information you will need to talk to people in the community:

What are their goals for their own lives and for their community? What needs or problems have they identified? Do these needs or problems stop them from achieving their goals? Do they think a literacy-for-development program could help them meet these needs or solve these problems? (See chapter 2: Research.)

Here is an example of a reason for starting a women's literacy-for-development program:

Many women in our community have not had an opportunity to go to school, so they never learned to read, write, or do calculations. They are often cheated when they go to the market because they cannot read prices and do not know how much change they should receive when they purchase goods. They earn money by marketing their vegetables but cannot keep their money in the bank because they cannot read deposit and withdrawal slips.

Set program goals

Goals describe what you hope will be the overall results of the program over a long period of time. Achieving the program goals means that the learners will have achieved their own purposes for coming to the literacy classes.

Here are some examples of program goals.

1. Women in our community will not be cheated when they buy and sell goods at the market.
2. Their earnings will be secure in the bank and will be available to them when they need it.
3. They earn a good income for their families because they use good agricultural techniques for growing their market vegetables.

Specify the overall objectives of the program

The objectives say more specifically what will happen because of the program. Here are some examples of program objectives.

1. Women will learn to read and write and use calculations to help them market their produce.
2. They will learn how to use bank statements and deposit and withdrawal slips.
3. They will learn good agricultural techniques.

Identify the desired program outcomes

Outcomes are the specific things that the program will accomplish. Here are some examples of program outcomes.

1. Within 5 years women's literacy-for-development classes will be established in 10 villages.
2. There will be 2 women trained as teachers for each class.
3. A system will be established for producing reading materials that the women have said they want to read.
4. Etc.

Identify the program outputs

Outputs are the things that the program will produce. Here are some examples of outputs.

At the end of this two-year period we will have produced:

1. A plan for conducting teacher training courses
2. An instructional plan for teaching the women's classes

3. At least 40 beginning reading materials (stories, posters, etc.) in the learners' mother tongue (MT) about topics that the women have said they want to read.
4. At least 40 more advanced (Stage 2 or "fluency" level) MT materials about topics that the women have said they want to read.

Plan the program activities

Activities are the specific actions you will take to achieve produce the outputs and outcomes and achieve the program objectives. Here are examples of activities for a women's literacy-for-development program, where in order to achieve program outputs we will do the following things.

1. Conduct a needs assessment survey.
2. Conduct a Literature Production workshop.
3. Develop a curriculum for the adult classes.

The following activities are usually components of literacy-for-development programs minority language communities. (The remaining chapters of this manual will be devoted to each of the components.)

- Conduct preliminary research. This involves collecting the information that will be used to plan and implement the program (chapter 2).
- Mobilize resources and develop linkages. This involves encouraging a sense of ownership for the program among the stakeholders and encouraging people to work together to support the program (chapter 3).
- Recruitment and training. This involves identifying the people that will be needed for the program, identifying the qualifications they will need, and providing initial and on-going training for them (chapter 4).
- Develop an orthography (writing system). This involves identifying the symbols that will form the writing system (if the language has never been written before) or adapting an existing writing system to fit the language as it is spoken now (chapter 5).
- Develop curriculum and instructional materials. This involves selecting the teaching method that will be used, developing teachers' guides, and planning the content of the lessons (chapter 6).
- Develop literature. This involves writing, illustrating, editing, testing, producing, and distributing a variety of graded reading materials in the local language that are interesting to the readers (chapter 7).
- Evaluate the program and documenting progress. This involves assessing the program and the learners regularly to find out if the program is serving the needs of the community and if you are achieving the program's objectives. Keeping records of the process of planning, implementing, and maintaining the program and of the progress of the learners (chapter 8).
- Coordinate the program. This involves making sure the program goes well (for example, obtaining and allocating funds, keeping records, writing reports) and providing ongoing support and supervision for literacy workers (chapter 9).

Identify the resources (sometimes called "inputs") that will be needed for the activities

Below are examples of resources that would be needed for a Writers Workshop.

Research that provides information about (1) language attitudes and uses in the community, (2) the communities' goals, needs and problems, and (3) resources for the program.

- Training venue
- Accommodation and meals for the participants
- Trainers
- Paper, pencils
- Etc.

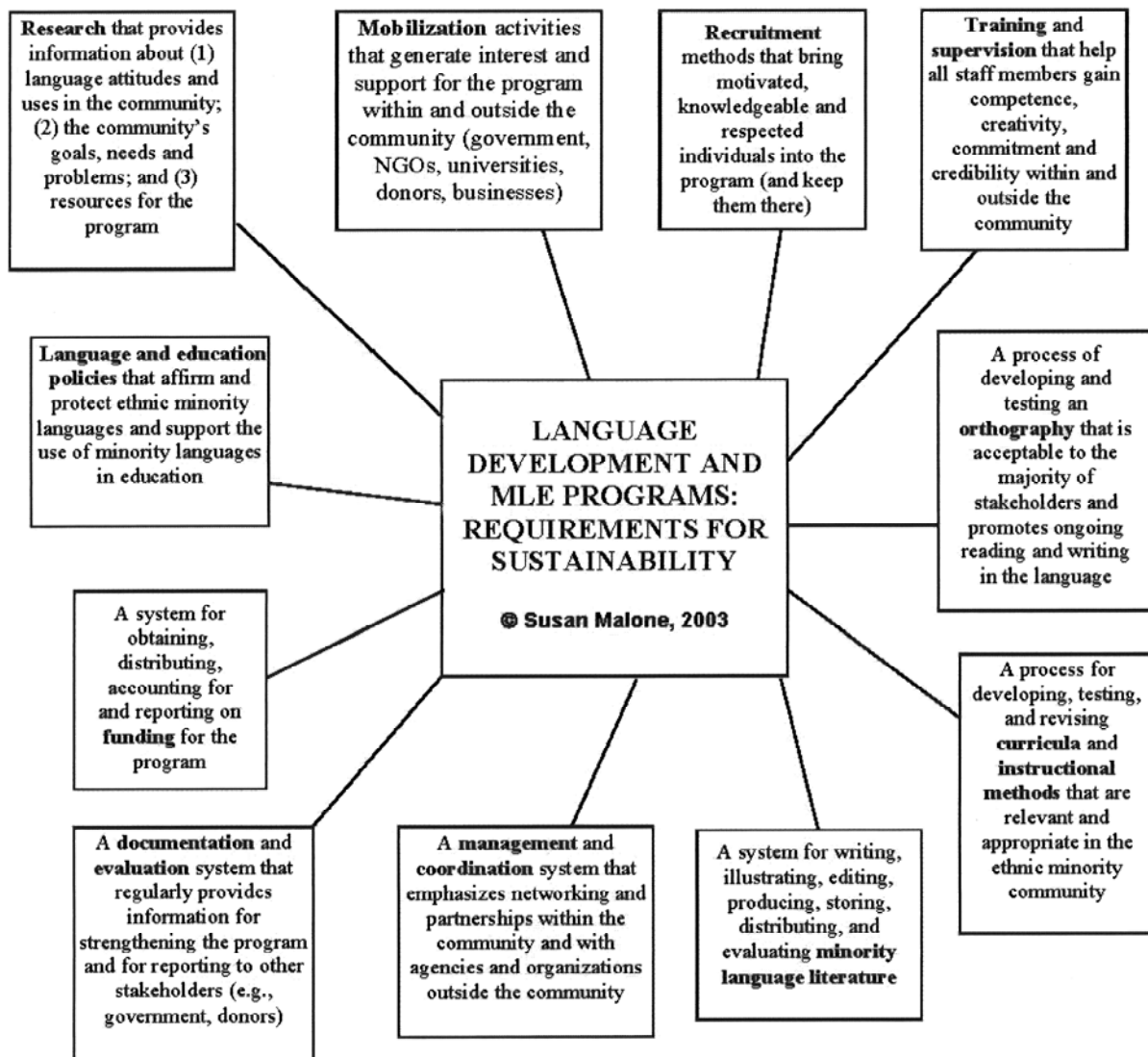


Figure 2. Requirements for sustainability of Language Development and minority Language Education programs ■