

1996

# Producing Newsletters for New Literates

Mainus Sultan

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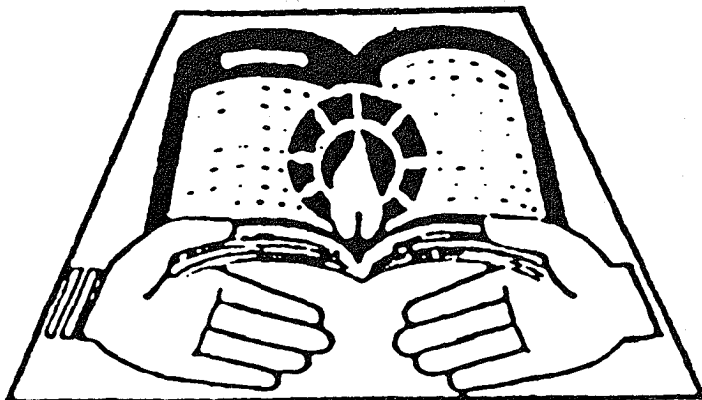
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producing  
**newsletters**  
for new literates

Action-Learning Manual  
*A Guide for Literacy Practitioners*

by

Mainus Sultan



A Literacy Linkage Series Manual from the  
**Literacy Linkage Program**

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Producing Newsletters for New Literates  
Action-Learning Manual

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*A Guide for Literacy Practitioners*

by

Mainus Sultan

The **Literacy Linkage Program**  
The Center for International Education  
Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development

# **The Literacy Linkage Series Manuals**

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**Producing a Newsletter for New Literates**

**Role Play**

**Whole Language: An Integrated Approach to Reading and Writing**

**Literacy and Learning in Families and Communities**

**Assessment**

**Supervision and Facilitator Support**

**Gender Perspectives in Literacy**

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## Foreword

This manual is part of a series of Action-Learning Manuals that was developed to assist community-based practitioners to expand their knowledge of the theory and practice of adult literacy and nonformal education. The purpose of the series is to assist practitioners to develop literacy activities and materials based on local needs, interests and resources.

The series offers the practitioner a wide variety of activities to choose from to meet the diverse needs of community literacy groups. The manuals are designed to complement each other, but can also be used independently. Two of the manuals, *Whole Language: An Integrated Approach to Reading and Writing*, and *Literacy and Learning in Families and Communities*, provide the core concepts for literacy learning. The other five manuals provide creative ideas and techniques for implementing those concepts. It is not imperative that *Whole Language* and *Family Literacy* be read before a practitioner attempts to implement ideas found in the *Role Play* manual, for example, but it might be helpful.

The *Whole Language* manual introduces basic concepts and strategies for teaching reading and writing skills by involving learners in the creation of lesson activities and learning materials. The *Literacy and Learning* manual introduces basic concepts and strategies that develop locally relevant literacy activities and materials through researching issues and resources in the family and community. The other manuals in the series provide additional information and guidelines for implementing effective local literacy programs.

This manual, *Producing a Newsletter for New Literates*, was designed to provide more detailed information on one method for creating local literacy materials. It was written by Mainus Sultan of the Center for International Education who has experience developing local newsletters in Bangladesh. The manual was reviewed and edited by staff and graduate students at the Center for International Education.

The Action-Learning Series was developed by the Literacy Linkage Program - a collaboration between the Center for International Education at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA and the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) at Tribhuvan University in Nepal. Send inquiries and correspondence to:

Literacy Linkage Program  
Center for International Education  
285 Hills House South  
University of Massachusetts  
Amherst, MA 01003  
USA

Literacy Linkage Program  
Research Centre for Education  
Innovation & Development (CERID)  
P.O. Box 2161  
Tripureshwar  
Kathmandu, Nepal

fax: 413-545-1263  
tel: 413-545-0747  
e-mail: [cie@educ.umass.edu](mailto:cie@educ.umass.edu)

fax: 977-1-226639  
tel: 977-1-215647

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## Introduction

This manual is designed to help you create a newsletter with and for the new literates served by your literacy program. Step-by-step guidelines explain the process of publishing a newsletter including how to organize facilitators, learners, and new literates to collect local news stories, how to edit, do a layout, and publish a local newsletter.

**Who is the manual for?** The manual is designed for literacy and nonformal education practitioners who want to provide graduates of their literacy classes with interesting and relevant reading materials.

**What do you need to do?** Newsletter production requires creative planning. This manual is meant to be a framework to guide you through the process of creating a newsletter. Begin by reading through the manual and think about how you can apply the information to your work situation. The activities will make more sense after you have tried them out.

While you are reading, please write down your comments and thoughts. If you find a point of disagreement, make a note. It is not necessary to follow the steps mechanically. If at some point the guidelines are not applicable for your situation, think of creative ways to adapt the guidelines so that they are useful to you.

## PROCESS

The manual is divided into five activities, each of which provides you with guidelines for developing your newsletter. The five activities are: planning, assessment, writing, putting it together, and distribution & feedback.

**A. Planning:** Newsletter production requires planning. The planning section of this manual provides guiding questions that will help you think about what you need to consider in your planning. You will develop a form for organizing the relevant information. The questions, and the resulting information that you collect will help you shape your plan. You may choose to develop a more elaborate plan than is described in this manual. Feel free to add your own ideas to develop the type of plan that works best for you.

**B. Assessment:** The newsletter you produce will be a cooperative effort on the part of the learners, facilitators, and other community members. This activity guides you through a needs, interests and resource assessment to help you work with these people.

**C. Writing:** This section provides guidelines on how to write for new readers.

**D. Layout:** This section includes guidelines for layout. A sample layout of a two-page newsletter is located in the back of the manual.

**E. Distribution & Feedback:** If you know what readers want in a newsletter, you have a better chance of creating a product that it is useful to them. The last step of the newsletter project is to field test the product and collect feedback from readers. You will develop a form following the guiding questions listed in the feedback section. The form will help you to collect and record information that you gather from your readers. You can then categorize, analyze and incorporate the information into the final product.

**F. Evaluation:** We are interested in improving the quality of this self-learning manual. Your feedback is critical to that process. Please complete the evaluation that is included at the end of the manual. Include a brief report about your experience creating a newsletter. If you found the guidelines difficult to follow at any point, identify the problem area(s) along with your suggestions for improving them.

**G. Sharing Experiences:** The purpose of this module is to encourage people to produce newsletters for and with new readers. We are interested in seeing a copy of your newsletter and hearing about your experiences in developing it. We would like to share the experiences of people like yourself through our Literacy Linkage Program newsletters and workshops. Through shared experiences, you and others will be able to learn about how other literacy programs are producing materials for new readers.



## Newsletters for New Literates

The purpose of a newsletter is to provide stimulating reading material for new literates. A newsletter can be called many different names, such as news sheet, periodical, magazine, or newspaper. The difference between these formats depends mostly on the schedule (how often it is produced) and the size. Although most newsletters range in size from two to eight pages and are generally published on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, the size and schedule of a newsletter varies ultimately depends on the availability of resources.

A newsletter can enable a new reader to explore new interests, possibilities and ideas. It allows an organization to impart information that is relevant to a new reader's everyday life. A newsletter can create an opportunity for both literacy learners and new readers to interact with print media. Studies indicate that a newsletter can successfully reinforce a new reader's learning ability.

A newsletter should represent the problems and interests of the learner's living environment. Literacy learners are often the marginalized poor of a society. Few national newspapers cover local news, let alone the problems and issues that are important to the poor. A newsletter designed for new literates should focus on local problems rather than national or international issues.

The content of a literacy newsletter should reflect the views of adult learners. It is also an appropriate vehicle for documenting their life experiences. This can be accomplished by recording oral stories and historical events that have cultural significance to the new literates. The second purpose of a newsletter is to create a communication network among learners, new literates, and literacy providers.

### ACTIVITY #1: PLANNING

The first step of newsletter production is planning. The following exercise is designed to help you organize the many different tasks of producing a newsletter. First, think through the guiding questions listed below. You may want to discuss them with your colleagues. Select the questions that are relevant to your cultural context. Feel free to adapt the questions to fit your local needs.

As you answer the guiding questions, write down your information, insights, and ideas. Charts, diagrams or columns may be helpful in organizing the information you collect. Organizing and discussing the information will help you to analyze the situation. This information is the foundation for your newsletter project.

## Guiding Questions

1. Who are the potential readers?  
How large is the population you want to reach?
2. What is the level of their reading and writing?
3. What issues interest them?
4. What information resources do you have access to?  
Is this information appropriate for your target group?
5. What will be the size of your newsletter?  
What size paper? How many pages?
6. How often will the newsletter come out?  
(Monthly, bi-monthly, weekly, etc.?)
7. What printing facilities are available in your area?  
Are there other ways that you can make copies?
8. How will you distribute the newsletter?  
Who can help you?
9. Who will be the potential sources of news and stories?
10. Other questions that are important to ask in your local context:

## ACTIVITY #2: NEEDS, INTEREST AND RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

**1. Needs and Interests:** Before producing a newsletter, you need to have some understanding of the educational needs of the learners and new literates. You also need to know what they want to read. You may think that they need to read about pit latrines and oral rehydration, but if they would rather read about local politics and folk tales, they may not be motivated to read the newsletter. If you are aware of the reader's needs and interests, it will be easier to produce an appropriate and successful newsletter.

**2. Recognizing Resources:** Identify people who can provide news and stories. Talk with learners, new literates and facilitators and invite them to work as news reporters. Some facilitators may be able to submit news in written form. Others may not be able to write their news, but they can collect information and report it to you orally. You can record the news from the oral sources and prepare it for the newsletter. Talk with learners and facilitators to identify the best sources of oral histories.

### 3. Collecting Information on Needs, Interests and Resources:

Informal conversations with potential readers will help you to better understand their needs, interests, and resources. You can also visit literacy classes or hold meetings with literacy class graduates to get their suggestions about what can be addressed in the newsletter. Literacy facilitators, teachers and program organizers are all good sources for suggestions.

When you conduct your interviews or informal conversations, talk with people from a variety of backgrounds so that you hear a variety of interests. For example, if you talk only with male learners, you will not benefit from the perspectives of females. If you talk only to teachers and field workers, you will not gain the perspectives of new readers. The reporters and storytellers should also represent the different groups who will read your newsletter.

Also collect material such as riddles, local jokes, proverbs and folk songs. The learners and village elders may be the best source of these materials. The focus of this newsletter is to promote local news, however, you may come across national and international news which will be of interest to local readers. When looking for national news, look to the national newspapers.

### 4. Organizing Information about Needs, Interests and Resources:

Prepare a list of individuals interested in working as reporters or storytellers. Conduct the preliminary interviews to find out what people want to read. After the preliminary interviews are completed, make a summary of what you learned. What are the most commonly suggested topics? Some of the suggestions may be suitable for future issues of the newsletter. The following chart is an example of how you can plan and organize the information you collect. Use the blank chart on the following page to organize your own information. Feel free to design a new chart to suite your situation, add new categories and pages as needed.

**Needs, interests, resource assessment for newsletter. Sample chart.**

Who will read the newsletter	Needs	Interests	Resources
Local pottery makers (mostly men)	They are losing income due to competition with manufactured imports.	They would like to advertise a special fuel-saving pottery cooker that the rural development organization taught them to make.	Oldest potter in the community would like to tell the story of how pots were made by his great-grandfather who invented a new technique.
Mothers	They are concerned about child care for their young children because they have to work in the fields much of the day and they want their older daughters to attend school.	They enjoy making songs and would like to learn more. They would like a song section in the newsletter.	The village health worker wants to write a regular column on healthy advice for parents.
Primary school age children	Many are having trouble with math concepts.	Reading stories.	A secondary school student would like to make crossword puzzles and math riddles for the paper.
Landless farmers and laborers (women and men)	They would like information about income-generating opportunities.	They want to know their legal rights.	Five widows in the class want to tell how they lost the title to land their husbands owned.

**Information Summary Chart**  
**Needs, interests, and resource assessment for newsletter.**

Resources				
Interests				
Needs				
Groups who will read the newsletter				

### **ACTIVITY #3: WRITING NEWS ARTICLES AND STORIES**

**1. Criteria for News and Views:** It is important to understand what kinds of information new literates want to read in their newsletter. Usually new literates relate more easily to local news than national and international news. Local news and events are more familiar to the new reader's own cultural context.

Common events of community daily life are rich potential sources of news and articles. A description of a neighbor's marriage festival may be more interesting than the complex issues of national politics. The success of a literacy class graduate can make an interesting story and motivate learners. The picture of a newborn baby can be published if it is culturally acceptable. (If you do use pictures, always get permission from, and credit the photographer.) Political or cultural events that have an impact on the local community can be highlighted. Community members and literacy class learners can be interviewed about their response to these events in order to promote local perspectives.

You will need the help of many resource people in the community to collect the local news. Review the list of resource people you identified in Activity #2. How can you organize them to collect local news? Will they be able to do the writing themselves or will they need assistance or training? The following sections will help you organize and train resource people to help you with the writing.

**2. Techniques of Writing News and Stories:** Writing for new literates can be more difficult than writing for an educated audience. The writing should be clear, simple, and direct. Avoid words that carry double meanings, nuances, and ambiguity. Use language that is close to the spoken language of your audience.

Studies show that learners can easily read words they have learned in their basic literacy books. Therefore, it is recommended that you examine the basic primers and make a list of words which were introduced in these materials. The list of words will help ensure that you use familiar vocabulary in the newsletter. If there are too many unfamiliar words in the newsletter, it may be difficult for the new literates to read.

If you do use new words in a news story, repeat the same words frequently. Studies show that if a new word is used five times in a text, a learner can figure out the meaning of the word from the context. Introduce a new word gradually with a ratio of no more than one new word for every ten known words. No more than 15% of a text should consist of words that are new to the reader.

Use short and simple sentences when writing for new literates. If a sentence is too long, a new reader may forget the beginning by the time they reach the end. Compose sentences that are eight to ten words long. The composition of a long paragraph has the same problem that a long sentence has. Use short paragraphs averaging no more than six lines.

**3. Learner's Involvement:** There are many ways to involve literacy learners or new literates in the process of writing a newsletter. You can organize a writer's workshop and invite them to write whatever they want to write. Or you can select a topic for discussion and invite everyone to write about it. A writer's workshop can generate articles or even enough material for an entire newsletter.

Another way to involve learners in a newsletter is to introduce a question and answer column in the newsletter. Encourage readers to send in written questions regarding agriculture, income generation, literacy or whatever they are interested in. By responding to their questions, you begin a dialogue with the readers.

Ask the literacy learners and village elders to collect proverbs, folk sayings, songs and riddles. Knowing that they will have their names printed in the newsletter may motivate them to collect these resources. These short proverbs, songs, and riddles can be used as fillers to fill up extra space between the major articles and stories.

A "letters to the editor" column is often a big favorite in newsletters. Your newsletter can also publish readers' letters as a regular feature. Encourage the literacy class learners and new literates to write letters describing their experiences, opinions, and concerns.

Initially, many learners may not be comfortable writing. If this is the case, help them share their experience and stories orally while you record them. When they are done, read what you have written back to them to make sure you wrote it accurately. Incorporate their corrections. The recorded versions can be edited and used in the newsletter.

**4. Piloting the News and Articles:** Once the articles are written, it is necessary to pilot them. Piloting entails testing written material to understand how well the materials are communicating the information to the reader. This will also give you an idea of how the learners perceive the material. The feedback that you get will help you edit or adapt your material for your audience.

To test the materials, find two or three new literates and have them read the pieces aloud. As they read, listen to how they are pronouncing words, reading sentences, and understanding the meaning. If you notice that they have difficulty reading, you may need to adapt the text. Ask a few questions to understand their comprehension of the text. Is the content of interest to them? Is important information left out?

## **ACTIVITY #4: PUTTING THE NEWSLETTER TOGETHER**

**1. Editing:** You will need to work with the reporters to help make their articles interesting and clear. The process of article editing usually begins when the first articles are collected and continues as more are written. Editing entails correcting grammar, spelling, and sequencing of the material, as well as deciding what material to use and what to leave out.

**What should go in the newsletter?** Topic selection is a major editorial decision and you will need to establish criteria for making your selections. Criteria you may want to consider include: clarity of writing, timeliness of news, relevancy of topic, length of article, authenticity of source, etc. Keep in mind that the newsletter should not look cluttered. With the space constraints of a short newsletter, it is particularly important to resist cramming too much information in too small a space.

*CLARITY OF WRITING:* All of the written pieces need to be edited for grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity, consistency, and style. Read through all of the material before you begin formatting. Read slowly to check for grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes.

It is likely that you will be using learner-generated materials for your newsletter. Some editors tend not to make major changes to learner-generated articles, the reason being that learners love to see their writing in an original form. However, if you find a learner-generated article has a serious problem in terms of communication, you may need to make some changes so that the message is communicated to the reader. If the topic communicates well, you may choose to ignore the grammar. When selecting a learner-generated story, look for a piece that will interest a large number of readers.

*TIMELINESS:* Be aware of the timeliness of events. Most people are not interested in reading old news. A news piece should be brief and concise. Put the basic information on the first paragraph. The basic information should include: what, when, where, who, why, and how.

*AUTHENTICITY:* News stories must be accurate, and they should include more than just the reporter's point of view. It is the editor's responsibility to see that this happens. Reporters should include accounts from witnesses of an event. Reporter's or editor's opinions do not belong in news columns. Opinion can be voiced in other parts of the newsletter.

*ORGANIZE:* When you begin editing, you might not have all of the necessary contents collected. For this reason it is important to organize the editing. A filing system will help organize the materials. Categorize the files under headings such as learner-generated materials, oral stories, news, interviews, etc. Once you have edited a draft, write the date on it so that if you have multiple drafts you will be certain which is the most recent. Save materials for future issues in a separate file or in topical files.

Once the majority of the contents is collected, start thinking about what sort of identity the newsletter will have. This means developing a master design that will be used for future issues. The layout of the first issue will follow the outline stage. Both steps will be discussed in the following sections.

## Determining content

Some organizations have an editorial board. An editorial board is a group of people who meet to decide what type of material, and which articles to include in a publication. Once you get your project off the ground, you may want to create your own editorial board. For the purpose of a literacy group, the board should include new literates, facilitators, and others interested in the success of the newsletter. Board meetings can include training sessions to teach members about the many aspects of preparing a newsletter.

**2. Outline:** What will your newsletter look like? What will it be called? A catchy name with cultural relevance to readers will make it more appealing to potential readers. Ask participating reporters for their suggestions.

Size is another consideration. How big will the newsletter be? It is better to start small, maybe with four pages. You can always expand in the future if you want. Knowing how much space you have to work with allows you to make editorial decisions in terms of how many articles you need and how long they should be.

What topics or issues will be addressed in the first issue? How will you organize the articles? What sequence will they be in? Prioritizing the information will help you make decisions about what to use and what to save for another issue. File the unused material.

When deciding how you will allocate space for different topics, one possible breakdown of space is the following:

Topic	Space Allocation
local news	20%
national news	10%
oral story	30%
learner's letters	10%
question/answer column	15 - 20%
editorial	5%

Reserve some space, maybe 5%, to accommodate any adjustments you may need to make when doing the layout. Proverbs and riddles, for example, can be used to fill extra space, or you may choose to reserve some space for them.

You may be tempted to fill in every little space with text or a picture. Do not do this. A page that is jammed with things makes the page harder to read. Balancing the contents with white space makes the page more inviting to the reader and easier on the eye. Use white space to separate sections, articles or pictures, and to draw attention to an item.

*MAKE A DUMMY:* A dummy is a draft of the newsletter that gives you an idea of how an issue will look. A dummy can be made by pasting the newsletter together in a fashion that mimics the size and appearance of the finished version. Place headlines, column headings and illustrations just as you would in the finished version. The dummy will help you to organize and visualize the newsletter. A dummy is also helpful to communicate with people at the printing press. (See appendix for a sample dummy.)

**3. Layout:** Visual presentation is important. People prefer an attractive, illustrated product. Likewise, if the visual presentation is poor, learners may be less interested in reading it. The following considerations are important when doing the layout.



1. Leave adequate space in the margins and between paragraphs. There should be space between articles to alert readers to where one article ends and another begins. You may draw a line or use a small decorative piece of artwork to separate topics.
2. Leave proper space between words, sentences, and lines. The composition should not be crowded.
3. Avoid breaking words at the end of the line to avoid confusing readers.
4. Try to place a full article or news story on one page. New readers usually have difficulty finding the second piece of an article on another page.
5. Use a large type size so that new literates can read without difficulty. Stick to one type size for all of your text. Do not try to make an article fit a space by making the type a smaller size, instead, edit the article to fit the space. Choose a slightly larger type size for headlines, section headings, etc. Photo captions can be slightly smaller than the text type. Be consistent with your use of fonts. It is safest stay within the same font family, using variations (such as bold, semi-bold, serif, sans-serif) to distinguish different uses of text, such as headlines, captions, etc.
6. Test the illustrations and pictures before using them in the newsletter to be sure that they are communicating the intended message. You can pre-test the pictures or illustrations by having two or three new literates or literacy learners look at them. While they are looking at the pictures, observe their reactions. Ask them a few questions to assess their level of comprehension.

**4. Final Editing:** After the dummy and layout are prepared, look at the draft form of the newsletter as a whole. Read it carefully. Ask a colleague to read it over to check for errors that you might have missed. Consider how to incorporate this feedback.

*CONSISTENCY:* The information presented in the newsletter needs to be consistent. Avoid contradictory information. For example, if one article is about the benefits of organic farming, don't publish an article about the benefits of pesticides in the same newsletter, or at least in the same issue. Contradictory information confuses the reader.

*BALANCE:* It is the editor's task to see that a proper balance of news is published. There should not be too many of any one type of article. A variety of material brightens the paper and offers something for a range of readers.

*HEADLINES:* Every story or news item must have a headline to describe it. The headline should attract the interest of the readers at a glance. It should give

them a quick but accurate idea of what the story is about, and make them want to read it. Some editors prefer to put action into each headline by including a verb. For new literates use a complete sentence for headlines so that the meaning is clear. Headlines are a common place for oversights. Double check yours.

*EDITORIAL:* Once the contents of the newsletter have started to take shape, you may want to write a brief editorial. An editorial often reflects the policy of the supporting organization. You can express your opinion regarding the material that you are presenting, keeping in mind the policy of the organization. You may choose to write about the purpose of this newsletter as the first editorial. You can also write editorials on different issues that effect the readers. When writing an editorial on a local issue, remember you are the voice of the community. Make sure that your facts are correct and complete before making a judgment. Examine both sides of an issue before you state your views.

*FILLERS:* At the final stage of editing, you may find you have more empty space than you anticipated. There probably won't be enough room for an article, but you can use this room to add slogans, clever sayings, proverbs, riddles, or cartoons.

*MASTHEAD:* The masthead is a small box with details about the production of the newsletter. The masthead is located in the same space in every issue. It can be located on the bottom of the last page, on the second page, or wherever you wish. The masthead should contain the following information: a) name of the editor and staff, b) name and address of the publisher and name of the printer, c) how often it is published, and d) ordering information.

*POLICY:* Finally, as an editor you should be aware of the policy of the organization that you are working for. The orientation of your organization may influence the contents of the newsletter. Be clear about whom you represent. Examine the freedom of press regulations, if there are any, in your country.

## ASSIGNMENT

After reviewing the information in this section, organize a group of people to work on the first issue of the newsletter with you. Use the information from the manual to help you complete the following activities.

1. Identify your working group and their strengths and weaknesses that may help or hinder the process. Delegate responsibility according to their strengths. Some can collect news, others can write articles, collect oral stories, make illustrations, design the layout, etc.
2. Identify sources of information and strategies for tapping them. Collect and write the news articles and stories.
3. Set up the criteria for selecting material for the newsletter and deciding how much space to allocate to each item.
4. Make a dummy and pilot test it with at least three people.

**Reflection:** After completing these four activities, meet with your working group and talk about your experiences making the first newsletter. Make a list of the things that worked well. What would you do differently that might improve the process next time? You may want to hang one or all of these lists on the wall of your workplace to remind you about the teamwork needed to make a successful newsletter.

## ACTIVITY #5: PRINTING, DISTRIBUTION & FOLLOW-UP

**1. Printing:** The final production task of a newsletter is printing. Literacy professionals around the world prefer a desk top offset machine for printing. However, if you do not have access to this kind of machine, you may need to get the newsletter printed at a commercial printing press. If this is not possible, the other alternative is a cyclostyle or mimeograph. If you choose mimeograph printing, find someone with clear handwriting to do the stencil.

To obtain information regarding printing in your area, ask people where they get their materials printed. The NGOs, INGOs and government offices might have printing facilities. A local school or a college might have a mimeograph machine. Contact them to see if they would allow you to print the newsletter using their facilities. They might even give you a discount.

If all of these printing possibilities fail, the last option is to produce a handwritten newsletter on big poster paper. This technique is known as a wall magazine. This involves producing two or three copies of a wall magazine and hanging them in places accessible to readers at various locations in the community.

**2. Distribution:** Be creative in your distribution. It may be easiest to send copies to the facilitators of each literacy class. Provide extra copies for learners to pass on to their neighbors. You may want to reach new readers who have completed the classes. You can also send copies to local NGOs and other organizations who provide services in the community. These groups may want to submit articles or information for future issues. Some organizations have had success selling their newsletters in the market place for a small cost. Finally, be sure to send a copy to your donor agencies to keep them informed of the needs and interests of the community you serve.

**3. Feedback:** Once the newsletter is distributed, collect feedback so that you can continue to improve future issues. You have already pre-tested the contents during the piloting phase. Now you need to field test the entire newsletter. Consider the following questions:

1. What is the overall reaction of the readers?
2. What topics did they like?
3. What topics did they not like?
4. Why didn't they like a specific topic?
5. Did they have difficulty reading the newsletter?
6. Did they have difficulty understanding the contents?
7. What part of the newsletter did the learners find difficult to read or understand?
8. Which piece of the newsletter communicated well?
9. Which piece of the newsletter did not communicate?
10. What are the reasons for the communication gap or miscommunication?
11. Did they understand the pictures or illustrations?

Answering the above questions will allow you to improve future issues of the newsletter. Since the readers are your only reliable source of information, you need to communicate with them. Prior to talking with the learners, design a form or questionnaire to record their feedback. Keep separate columns for the different categories of information that you include, such as news and oral stories. Now go to a literacy class and have some learners read the newsletter in front of you. Observe their reactions and listen to their comments. Write down the comments. Ask specific questions about readability and comprehension.

Literacy facilitators and field organizers are two additional sources of feedback. Learners often feel safe disclosing opinions to their facilitators and, in some cases, to field organizers. A facilitator has the opportunity to observe the learner's reaction in a natural class setting. Talk to facilitators and field organizers. Ask them what they observed while the learners were reading the newsletter. Their opinions on the newsletter will also provide a new perspective.

Categorize the information you collect according to the source. For example, separate the feedback you got from learners from the feedback you

got from literacy program graduates. How can this information help you improve the newsletter so that each group can enjoy it more? You can also categorize feedback about each type of news item. For example, what did the readers think of the oral stories, the national news, the local news? Which sections did they like best? Which were their least favorite? You can make many improvements to the newsletter by collecting and organizing the feedback into categories. Listen to your readers.

## **FINAL REFLECTION**

After completing all of the activities involved with producing a newsletter, it is time to reflect on what you learned from your experience. Meet with your working group and discuss your experiences. Make lists to help you organize your ideas and improve future newsletters.

Make lists of the following:

1. What the readers liked about the newsletter.
2. Topics, articles, stories, or news that the readers did not like.
3. Suggestions the readers have for future publications.
4. Ideas to improve the next issue of the newsletter.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

A report on the workshop for writing instructional materials for nonformal education. (1980). Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre.

This report reflects the experience of literacy professionals in the field of materials development. It includes a brief discussion on the process of writing and designing instructional materials for the rural new literates. Besides describing the writing procedure, it also focuses on technical considerations for the production of reading materials.

Jennings, J. (1984). Writing for adult neo-literates; FIVDB, Sylhet, Bangladesh. (Mimeo).

This discussion paper is a compilation of information regarding writing techniques for new literates. It synthesizes field experiences of preparing reading materials. This paper includes the techniques of newspaper production as well as guidelines for writing. It also focuses on using the controlled vocabulary approach for writing and field testing. This document can be obtained on request from FIVDB. P.O. Box: 70, Khadimnagar, Sylhet, Bangladesh.

Lawrence, R.T. (1971). Rural mimeo newspapers: a guide to the production of low-cost community papers in developing countries. UNESCO; France.

This booklet describes newspaper production in Liberia. It includes a detailed experience of publishing mimeo newspapers in Liberia as well as a simple "how to" guide for the editor and publisher. This document is an elementary manual for literacy professionals or journalists with no professional experience.

Shaw, W.D. (1976). Communicating with Pictures in Nepal. NDS and UNICEF. Kathmandu, Nepal.

This study was jointly organized by the National Development Service (NDS) and UNICEF in Nepal. The focus of this study is to examine how rural people perceive pictures. The emphasis of this research was to understand what kind of pictures would be the most effective in communicating through booklets. The findings of this study have been used to produce *Communicating with Pictures*, which provides practical advice on what kind of visual aids are most effective.

## Evaluation

Please complete the questionnaire below and return it to:

**The Literacy Linkage Program**  
**Center for International Education**  
285 Hills South  
University of Massachusetts  
Amherst, MA, 01003 USA  
Fax: 413-545-1263  
E-mail: lse@educ.umass.edu

1. What did you like best about the manual?
2. What did you like least about the manual?
3. How long did it take you to complete the manual?
4. In your opinion, was the amount of work required by the manual too much, about right, or too little?
5. What advice would you give to another person about using this manual?
6. Was the information contained in the manual complete? What additional information should be included?
7. Was the writing in the manual clear? Were you able to understand all of the concepts easily? Which concepts were difficult to understand?
8. Additional comments.

*Thank you for your feedback. We have enjoyed working with you!*

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# Name of Newsletter

Name of organization, Date of publication

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Most important news  
should go here

Shorter news articles  
should go here

Space for a letter  
column

Another short news  
article

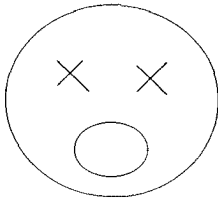
An interesting picture of  
community members in  
action. The picture should  
relate to one of the cover  
articles.

Filler such as a proverb

*Include a caption underneath to  
identify the people in the photo and  
describe the activity taking place.*



photo of narrator of oral story



Oral story

Editorial

Question and answer column

Filler, such as a proverb, joke,  
announcement, or cartoon

## Masthead

Name of organization:

Editor:

Publisher:

Printer:

Ordering information: