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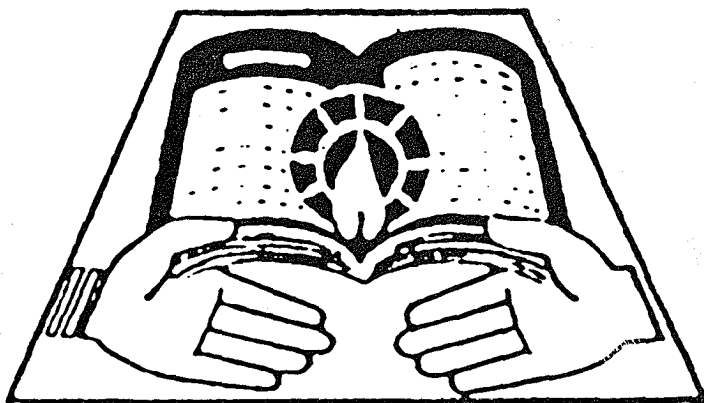
assessment

Action-Learning Manual

A Guide for Literacy Practitioners

by

Sumon Tuladhar



A Literacy Linkage Series Manual from the
Literacy Linkage Program

Assessment
Action-Learning Manual

A Guide for Literacy Practitioners

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Sumon Tuladhar

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

The Literacy Linkage Series Manuals

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* 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.

The activities and information in this manual, *Assessment*, were developed to provide more detailed information on how to assess the progress of literacy learners in a whole language literacy program. The manual was developed by Sumon Tuladhar of the Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) and edited by staff of the Center for International Education. Many of the ideas and assessment tools described in Unit Two were developed by literacy teachers in Massachusetts and published in the series *Adventures in Assessment*, edited by Loren McGrail. The tools have been adapted and presented here to encourage experimentation and use by literacy programs in Nepal and other developing countries.

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:

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Introduction

Action Learning Manuals teach practitioners the theories and methods of community-based literacy education. The manuals are based on the assumption that literacy programs are most effective when local practitioners work closely with learners to create their own materials and curriculum. The Action Learning Manuals present basic concepts and guidelines to help practitioners analyze their own situations and design appropriate materials and learning activities.

Who is this manual for? This manual is designed for facilitators, supervisors and trainers of literacy activities. The manual guides the facilitator in making and using assessment tools with their own classes. Supervisors and trainers can use this manual to provide in-service training to facilitators. Learners are critical to the action learning process. Learner input gained through interviews is used in the design and assessment of tools.

What is involved? This manual describes many ways to do learner assessment as well as the role assessment plays in the teaching learning process. The manual guides you through the sequence of examining the concepts of assessment, reflecting upon your experiences and then putting into practice what you have learned.

1. Make Notes: The manual is divided into three units. Each unit includes basic concepts, examples of assessment tools created by literacy facilitators, and guidelines for creating your own tools. Space is provided next to the assessment tools for you to make notes about how you can adapt these ideas to your local needs.

2. Experiment: Throughout the manual, you will find activities called “Learning From Your Own Experience”. These activities are intended to help you experiment with the new concepts presented by creating your own assessment tools and collecting information and ideas from literacy learners. As you speak with learners and experiment with using assessment tools, you will discover new ways to improve your program. You are strongly encouraged to be creative and explore innovative ideas as you interact with learners.

3. Keep Records: When conducting action learning, it is important to record your experiential learning. Space is provided in the book for you to write your insights, or you can start a separate notebook for that purpose.

4. Make a Filing System: Good records are a critical part of learner assessment. Records allow you to monitor each learner’s progress. This

manual explains how to make a portfolio for each learner. The portfolio will include a set of files to organize the student's work and the assessment tools that you create.

5. *Evaluate this Manual:* Your feedback is an important part of this field test. If you have any comments or questions as you work with the manual, please contact the Literacy Linkage Program staff at the locations provided in the Foreword. After completing the manual, please fill out and submit the included evaluation form. This will help us greatly in developing a manual that best meets the needs of you, the user.

Learner Assessment vs Learner Evaluation In your work you have probably encountered terms such as assessment, test, evaluation, feedback, and appraisal. These words describe the process of measuring achievement or identifying issues related to the progress of a learner or a program. Some people use these words interchangeably. Others consider evaluation to apply more broadly than terms like assessment, test, or feedback.

For the purpose of the action-learning manuals, the term evaluation refers to issues related to a whole program - its progress, achievement, problems, etc. Similarly, assessment refers to measuring the progress of learners. It is often assumed that learner assessment means testing. Assessment includes a variety of ways to measure progress of which testing is only one. Other methods of assessment include interviews, writing samples, listening to someone read, observation, and journal selections. This manual focuses on the broader concept of assessment because we feel it provides a more accurate understanding of learner progress than testing alone.

In the field of adult education there is a great deal of controversy about the proper way to conduct evaluations and assessment. Government agencies, donors, and policy makers want clear, simple proof that learners are learning. Standardized tests enable them to compare results across an entire country and identify problem areas. In response to the need to make these broad comparisons, educational experts often work within very narrow definitions of evaluation and assessment. As a result, many people think of evaluation as a process to determine the extent to which measurable, predetermined objectives have been realized.

Educators have been taught that they should set an objective that states precisely what students should learn. At the end of their course, they should be able to measure to what extent each student has met that objective. This process of objective setting and achievement measuring is standard procedure in many educational projects. Donors and governments want to know if their program objectives are being met.

In general, evaluation is a systematic method of identifying the worth or value of a given educational activity. This definition implies that the tools or instruments used to measure achievement are capable of determining the

value of an educational project. If the evaluation tool is too narrow and cannot see value that lies beyond its scope, the tool can have a negative impact on the project and everyone involved. For example, a standardized literacy test developed for an entire nation may not measure how a local program was able to help learners develop more self confidence in addressing community problems. Rather the results may only show that learners made minimal progress in reading skills. This could be problematic for the future of a program that may have contributed a great deal to a community's development in ways that are not evident by the measurements used.

Many evaluators and educators dispute the value of tests and narrow evaluation or assessment tools. They believe that the purpose of evaluation and assessment should be to improve educational programs. If the purpose of evaluation is to improve a program, then it does not make sense to evaluate a program after it is complete; evaluation must be part of program development.

Formative evaluation refers to evaluations that are conducted during program implementation. This entails using the information from the evaluation to make programmatic changes while you conduct the program. Summative evaluations are done upon program completion. Summative evaluations can be used to make decisions for future program development.

It is important to use a variety of evaluation approaches so that all aspects of a program are considered, not just learner performance on standardized tests. H.S. Bhola, in *Evaluating Literacy for Development: Projects, Programs and Campaigns* (1990), defines evaluation as a process to generate exact and precise information which should be usable to improve development, educational, or training programs. According to this definition, a variety of tools and methods are used. Bhola identifies eleven different forms of evaluation:

1. Needs Assessment
2. Base-line survey
3. Learner evaluation
4. Achievement and attitude testing
5. Personal evaluation
6. Curriculum evaluation
7. Institutional or organizational evaluation
8. Product evaluation
9. Impact evaluation
10. Cost-effectiveness evaluation,
11. Self-evaluation

Bhola uses the term "learner evaluation" to mean roughly the same thing that we mean by learner assessment.

Within each of Bhola's broader approaches there are many additional

evaluative methods and tools. In this manual, you will learn various approaches to learner assessment. You will also create new tools and approaches to assess learner progress and improve program effectiveness.

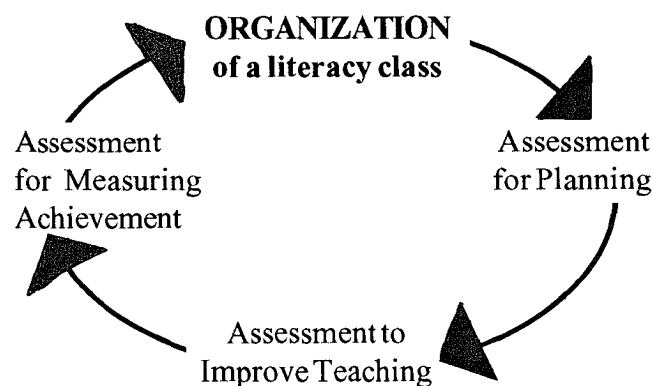
What is Learner Assessment? Assessment is a tool for you, the facilitator, to identify issues to work on to make your program more successful. For learners, assessment enables them to measure their learning progress and achievements. There are three times when it is particularly important to look at the learners' progress; these are:

- 1) when planning a class,
- 2) while teaching a class, and
- 3) when completing a class.

There are two types of learner assessment that are appropriate for different uses. One type is used to identify issues that affect the teaching-learning process. Another type is used to monitor learner achievement. Within the category of learner achievement there are three sub-categories, which are:

1. Learner Assessment for Planning Literacy Lessons
2. Learner Assessment for Improving Literacy Lessons
3. Learner Assessment for Measuring Achievement

There is an important link between assessing a learner's progress and organizing teaching/learning situations. To assess the learner's progress is to assess the quality of the teaching materials and methods you are using. You adapt your materials and methods according to the needs of the learner. The following chart shows how each of the three types of assessment are used during a literacy class.



1. Organizing a Literacy Class: As a facilitator or program supervisor, you organize a literacy class. This entails collecting a variety of learning materials and learning about different methods and techniques to facilitate

your teaching/learning situation. Organization also entails learning about the community you are working with and identifying the different situations in which people need to use reading and writing. Once you have this information, you are ready to conduct the first assessment with the learners.

2. Learner Assessment for Planning Literacy Lessons: When conducting a class, the first order of business is to assess the learners' interests and abilities through discussion, then together plan what you would like to do during the literacy classes.

As you begin working with the learners, you will find that your plans do not always work. What you thought were appropriate methods and learning materials may not suit your learners. It is possible that the goals that your learners have set will turn out to be too ambitious. At some point you may wonder what your learners are getting out of the class. At this point you are ready to do some more assessment.

3. Learner Assessment for Improving Literacy Lessons: Over the course of teaching a class, you and the learners will discover many things about yourselves and the program. The astute facilitator can use this information to improve the lessons. You, the facilitator, can see what is being learned and where the lesson needs improvement. The information that will allow you to do this will come through observation of the learner, direct feedback, and documentation of the learners' progress. The compilation of this information constitutes an assessment plan.

This information will allow you to revise and improve your teaching approach. This may mean selecting different teaching materials, and methods of delivering these materials. The assessment may reveal that the class goals need to be revised, to be more or less ambitious. Assessment of teaching helps confirm which materials and methods are effective.

4. Learner Assessment for Measuring Achievement: Upon completion of a course or book, assessment tools help you revisit the progress you and the learners have made. The learners can set new goals for their next undertaking. This is a good time to think about post-literacy or continuing education activities, as well as ways to improve your teaching. You may change your program as a result of the assessment. The learners may continue working with you, or they may be ready to move on to new learning experiences.

Thus, learner assessment is an on-going collaborative process between the learner, the facilitator's methods and the learning materials used. Since the learners are a part of the teaching-learning process, they should be part of the assessment and planning process. When learners are involved in assessment or evaluation from the beginning, it is called participatory evaluation. This type of evaluation or assessment entails that the learner is involved in the process, and will have access to the same evaluation information as the facilitator.

Learning From Your Own Experience: Now that you've read about using assessment at three points in your program - planning, improving, and completing your teaching process, stop and reflect on how you are currently doing assessment. The following questions are designed to help you apply what you have learned about assessment to your current teaching assignment. Use the space below to write notes for yourself in response to these questions.

1. Who wants you to do learner assessment?
2. Why do you do learner assessment?
3. What do you assess?
4. When do you do learner assessment?
5. What kinds of information do you collect?
6. What methods do you use to collect information?
7. How do you use the information you collect?
8. What problems do you see in your assessment process?
9. What changes would you make to improve it?
10. What would you like to learn about assessment?

Your Experience with Assessment:

Unit One: Learner Assessment for Planning Literacy Lessons

At the start of a literacy class it is important to ask the learners why they want to read and write; what are their literacy needs? This discussion helps both the facilitator and the learner identify goals for reading and writing. These goals are what motivate learners to keep attending class even when learning is difficult. This assessment will provide you with an insight into your learners' strengths, interests, goals, and needs. Some literacy programs include a pre-test to assess new learners' existing reading and writing skills.

Assessments done at the beginning of a program are a tool for formative evaluation because they are used to form or plan the literacy program. Many people think adults drop out of literacy classes because they are not motivated. Thus formative assessment is particularly important because it seeks to provide the learner with an appropriate and useful learning experience.

For example, one older woman who had dropped out of a literacy class in rural Nepal was very sad that she could not learn to read. More than anything, she wanted to be able to read the holy books that her family owned. She thought that since she knew the stories so well, that she would be able to figure them out if she learned to recognize the words and letters. But her class only focused on practical things like the importance of clean water and good nutrition. She felt these subjects were relevant for her daughters' interests, but not for her. Discouraged, she dropped out of the class. A pre-assessment interview would have told the facilitator exactly what would motivate this woman to learn, and the facilitator could have incorporated her interests into the lesson plan. By recognizing each individual's motivation for learning to read, facilitators can provide encouragement and assistance to help learners reach their goals.

This type of pre-assessment is often referred to as an Intake Assessment or Start-up Activity. Assessment tools teach you about your learners so that you can plan more appropriate learning activities for them. The intake process is usually done individually with each learner, but the activities can be adapted for a small group or a whole class. Literacy practitioners use many innovative techniques for the intake assessment. A typical intake process includes five different types of assessment tools:

- a. Initial Interview
- b. Reading Sample
- c. Writing Sample
- d. Goal Setting
- e. Learning Contract

A. INITIAL INTERVIEW:

There are two purposes to the initial interview: to get to know the learners, and for the learners to learn about your program. This will help them feel more comfortable coming to class. When learners come to an interview, it is important that the facilitator:

- * make them feel comfortable because it was probably a great effort for them to decide to join the literacy class, and to come;
- * encourage the learners to ask questions at any time during the intake process;
- * assure the learners that your discussion will be confidential;
- * ask them why they want to learn reading and writing;
- * explain what will happen in the literacy class and how long it may take to reach their goals;
- * explain your intake process to the new learners: Tell them about the reading sample, writing sample, goal setting, and learning contract.

Notes: Keep track of questions and information that might be appropriate for your literacy program's initial interview and intake process.

B. READING SAMPLE:

The purpose of a reading sample is to assess the reading capability of the learners before they enter the program. This will help you adapt to the students' ability level, and thus be a more effective teacher. It will also help you measure the learners' progress as the program proceeds. Even if you think a person is unable to read, the reading sample activity can still be worthwhile because it teaches you about the learner.

Spread several examples of reading materials on a table or mat. Possibilities for inclusion are: literacy primers, books, newspapers, letters, documents, alphabet charts, student writing, or locally available product packages such as cookie wrappers or milk cartons. Some materials should be those that the student is familiar with. Include others that might be new to them.

Invite the students to pick up the materials and look at them. Observe what each person is comfortable reaching for, whether s/he holds things right side up, what interests him/her. Ask him/her what items they have seen or used before. For example, does s/he have a friend who reads letters or newspapers for him/her?

Ask the student to choose something to read out loud to you. Watch what s/he selects. Did s/he choose it because s/he is interested in learning to read the item? Was it too easy or difficult? Was the student too shy to choose anything? Provide encouragement for any amount a person can read, even if it is only recognizing a few letters on the alphabet chart or a word on a packet of biscuits. Note the person's interests and abilities in reading. This information can be helpful in planning learning activities and encouraging the new learners.

Notes: Make a list of readily available reading materials that you could use in your reading sample.

C. WRITING SAMPLE:

Similar to the reading sample, the writing sample allows you to see what writing ability and interests new learners have.

To obtain a writing sample, spread some pencils, pens, notebooks, papers, envelopes and forms on a table or mat. You can also include a form that you develop for this particular exercise. The form can have spaces for learners to fill out their name, address, date, etc. You can use the form to collect information about the learners' educational experiences or reasons for coming to class.

Invite them to pick up the materials. Discuss with them their experiences with writing. For example, have they ever mailed a letter? Did they write it themselves or did someone write it for them? Have they had to fill out forms or sign documents? Do they know how to sign their name or do they make a mark or thumbprint? How do they feel about their writing experiences?

Invite them to write on the papers that they are familiar with - to sign a document, address the envelope, fill in the form, or draw a simple figure on the paper. Observe what they can do and how comfortable they are with the different materials. If learners are very shy and have never been taught to write, encourage them to try out the pencil and make some designs or marks. You can show them the first letter of their names to build their interest and confidence. In many cases learners cannot write at all.

However, it is important to encourage them to write whatever they can. Sometimes, due to lack of self-confidence, learners who come to the class for the first time may tell you they cannot write. Often with a little encouragement they will write at least some letters of the alphabet or even their name.

Notes: Make a list of things people in your community need to know how to write. How can you incorporate these into your literacy program? Be sure to consider local languages and scripts that the learner might know, as well as more conventional uses of writing. One outside evaluator surprised program staff with the discovery that the ‘illiterate’ students had been using Arabic script to help them remember how to pronounce the words in their literacy primers.

D. GOAL SETTING:

After assessing the learners existing literacy abilities, help them establish some literacy goals. This should be a collaborative effort between the teacher and the learner. When learners have a role in setting their own goals, they are more likely to have a sense of empowerment about their own learning. Your role will be to help the learner specify a realistic goal and plan related activities. Here are some tips to help your learners set goals:

- * Start with questions. For example, What do you want to learn in this class? What do you want to be able to read and write? If they have no ideas, you can suggest goals based on the initial interview.
- * If learners are not able to name goals, let them choose from a list that you have prepared. You can prepare a list based on your observations of the community and learner feedback. Let them choose one or two from your list. At the end you can ask them to add some ideas to the list.
- * Break down general goals into smaller steps so that the learner can see their progress. For example, many new learners say they would like to be able to write a letter to a family member. Letter writing involves many of the steps of learning to read and write. Make the learner aware of the steps and make every step a learning activity to reach the larger goal.

Notes: Talk to learners and people in your community and find out why people want or need to learn to read and write. Make a list of possible learning goals to use in your community. Break the general goals into smaller steps.

How to identify the steps to a goal and plan learning activities:

When literacy classes are based on learners' goals, the facilitator needs to plan new activities to help the learners reach their goals. If the class is required to complete a particular text, the facilitator can set aside a few minutes in each lesson for learners to work on their individual goals. If the facilitator is not using a text and is responsible for creating the lessons, he or she can plan all of the learning activities to work toward the goals identified by the learners.

When breaking a goal into steps, consider the reading or writing goal. Observe people who already have some or part of the skill and think about the different things they need to know to master the skill. Learners can assist by interviewing people they know. For example, the learner wants to learn how to write letters. The facilitator can help them list all of the things that writing a letter entails: think of a message, use the proper greetings and language, write the sentences, understand the postage, know how to properly address an envelope.

Together make a list of these activities and check off what the learner already knows how to do. Then the learners plan how to help each other acquire the skills. Here is a list of eight skills learners can work on to learn letter writing independently.

- * Think of a letter in their mind and dictate it to a writer;
- * Learn to recognize and read the words they have dictated;
- * Copy the words they want to learn and learn to write words independently;
- * Write the parts of a letter including common greetings and forms;
- * Properly address an envelope, and use stamps and postal procedures;
- * Remember how to write their own important words and sentences as well as common greetings and forms;
- * Write a letter with help on difficult words and sentences;
- * Think of a letter and write it by themselves.

This list of steps will give the learner a sense of how long it will take to reach their final goal. It also identifies at least eight activities that can be worked on with a class or small group. Some educators call these steps learning objectives because each one can be used as the objective of a

lesson plan.

Learning from your own experience: Try breaking a goal into steps and see what kind of practice activities you can think of.

E. LEARNING CONTRACT:

When setting goals, it is often helpful to make a learning contract. A learning contract is a written agreement between you and the learner. It lists which activities will be done to reach the goals. Learning contracts have gained popularity because they help the learners and the facilitator connect literacy lessons to goals the learners are motivated to achieve, thus helping the learners focus on the reasons that brought them to class. The learner helps create the contract and by signing it commits to work toward the goals.

Malcolm Knowles, one of the best known advocates of adult education, popularized the use of learning contracts in a recent book, *Using Learning Contracts*. His research reveals that when adults go about learning something naturally, they are highly self-directed. "Evidence is beginning to accumulate," he says, "that what adults learn on their own initiative they learn more deeply and permanently than what they learn by being taught."

Experienced facilitators know that it takes time for learners to understand the relationship between their abilities, efforts, and goal. The facilitator explains how they will help the learner practice the skills needed to reach their literacy goals. The facilitator explains the time commitment the class requires. They discuss how long it might take to complete some of the steps involved in reaching the goals. The commitments to work are recorded in the contract.

Notes: How do you think the idea of a written learning contract will be viewed in your community? How will you translate the words "goal" and "contract"? Do these ideas make sense in your culture? What kinds of contracts are the learners familiar with? How can making a contract based on personal goals and effort affect the motivation to learn?

How to fill out a Learning Contract:

1. Sit next to the learner so that you are both looking at the contract from the same side. This will enable you to help the learner read and write as you complete the contract together.
2. Explain what the contract is and why you are doing it.
3. If the learner has many goals, put them on a list and help the learner prioritize them.
4. Decide on one goal for reading and one goal for writing. Some programs include personal goals. These help you to know more about the learner's motivations and interests.
5. Help the learner set specific goals. Talk about the steps involved in reaching the goal. If the goal is not realistic, maybe one of the steps would make a better goal.
6. Write one goal at a time. Together think about the steps involved and how much time is available. List the steps under each goal.
8. Discuss with the learner how you will know if the goal is achieved. Write this information under comments.
9. Discuss the time line for each activity with the learner. Set a date for the completion of the goal.
10. Both you and the learner will sign and keep a copy of the contract. If the learner does not know how to sign his or her name, have them copy it.

Learning From Your Experience

Assessing Plans for a Literacy Lesson: Review your notes for each of the assessment tools in this unit. Decide how you can adapt the tools for your situation. Create a plan for assessing learners that are starting a literacy class. You may choose to do the following;

1. Collect materials for reading and writing samples.
2. Plan questions to get acquainted with the learners and to identify their goals and interests.
3. Design a learning contract that meets the needs of your program and the learners.
4. Complete the assessment activities and record the information you collect.
5. Start a filing system. Create a file for your intake assessment plans, materials, and forms. Make files to save the information and contracts for each learner.
6. Review the information you collect from the learners. Consider their goals and the steps involved. Figure out how classroom activities can address the goals.
7. Write about your experience conducting the assessments. What did you learn? What worked well? What didn't work? Did anything surprise you? What would you do differently next time?

Notes:

Unit Two: Learner Assessment for Improving Literacy Lessons

The assessment tools discussed in this unit are examples of approaches to formative evaluation. Formative evaluations are an on-going process that enables the facilitator to adapt a program to the needs of the learner as they proceed. They are sometimes called "along the way" or on-going assessment. On-going assessments are connected to daily learning activities.

Many functional assessment tools can double as instructional tools. In this unit the assessment tools are interwoven with daily teaching-learning activities. The purpose of these tools is to help you answer the following questions:

1. How are learners progressing with their learning?
2. How are they responding to your teaching methods?
3. How successfully are you and your learner advancing towards the goals that you set together?

It is important to check on your teaching and learning progress several times over the course of a class. You can use the learner assessment tools in this unit to check your progress and make adjustments where necessary. If you find that your learners' goals are too ambitious, you can break them into smaller steps. If you find problems with your materials or methods, you can work on ways to adapt them for your learners.

The following list includes several tools that have been developed for on-going assessment activities in this unit.

- a. Learners' Journals
- b. Facilitator's Journal
- c. Portfolios
- d. Anecdotal Records
- e. Dialogue Journals
- f. Learner's Self-Assessment
- g. Learner Conference
- h. Filing System

Read the descriptions of the tools and consider which ones would be appropriate for your program. At the end of the unit, you will have the opportunity to analyze and test these tools in your own situation in the activity "Learning From Your Own Experience".

A. LEARNERS' JOURNALS

A journal is a series of daily notes that learners keep for themselves when they come to class. Even new learners can participate in this activity.

What: Journal contents are often personal. They can also be a log of what happened, what worked, what went wrong, a new understanding gained, reflections on an incident, words of wisdom, weather reports, or anything that comes to mind. When you advise learners to keep journals, it is important to help them feel free to experiment with writing their personal thoughts.

Why: Journal writing motivates learners to find things from their daily life to write about. Regular journal writing improves writing skills and helps people learn to organize their thoughts. Over time, you will see the learners' writing grow from a simple sentence (or a picture and a few words) to several sentences, then to a paragraph or page. Learners' journals allow you and the learners to assess their growing ability to write. When they look back on their earlier efforts, they will see how their skills are improving.

How: Many new learners who come to literacy classes are unable to write at all. A journal exercise may not seem appropriate for them. However, with a little creativity you can develop a system for them to express their thoughts. One way is to encourage the learners to express their feelings with drawings, or to write down a single word that is meaningful to them. They can choose the word and you can show them how to write it in their journal. Encourage them to write as much as they can without help each day and to copy things that others write into their own handwriting. A facilitator can even do a group journal exercise with the whole class in everyone is asked to contribute a sentence. The facilitator may ask a question like, "What did you do today?" The facilitator writes each person's answer on the blackboard. The learners then choose words or sentences to copy into their notebooks.

After some practice, the learners will be able to initiate some of their own writing. You can suggest topics or they can write whatever they want. The purpose of journals is to learn how to put personal thoughts and observations on paper. Journals are not for teaching grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Every few weeks, you can sit with each learner and discuss how their writing is progressing. Talk with them about the content of their writing and where they get ideas to write about.

Ask the learner questions about events they have recorded. Encourage them to add detail if the story is incomplete. Many people find it helpful to write about problems that they cannot discuss with other people. It is important to respect the privacy of some journal writing. As a facilitator,

you can encourage private writing by telling learners that they can choose what they want to share and what they want to keep private.

When: The key to using journal writing is to have the learners write at a regular time. Some facilitators ask students to write at the beginning of class while they wait for other students to arrive. Those who come late can stay after to write in their journals. Choose a time for writing that fits the needs of your class. Sometimes journals are easily lost or forgotten at home. For this reason some facilitators have a place in the classroom to keep everyone's journals.

Notes:

B. FACILITATOR'S JOURNAL:

This is similar to the Learners' Journal, but it is for the facilitator to write down observations and reflections about the learners, and the effectiveness of teaching methods and materials. The purpose of a Facilitator's Journal is to assess yourself and think about ways to improve your teaching.

What: In a Facilitator's Journal you record your observations of the class, stories or anecdotes about specific events and critical incidents related to teaching-learning situations. You can write about what did or did not work. You can describe something new you learned or write down ideas for future use. Your journal is more than a personal diary; it records your perspective as a facilitator which encompasses all of the learners in your class as well as yourself.

Why: This journal will help you to plan the teaching-learning process in your classroom. It will help you identify the building blocks and barriers to learning.

Building blocks are things which learners do and say that can be used for teaching a new concept. For example, a learner may ask a question about a sick child which may prompt you to collect information from the district health post and plan a series of reading and writing lessons on monitoring children's health problems.

Barriers to learning are things which learners do and say which indicate they are having difficulties with learning. For example, one facilitator working in a Muslim society observed that some of her students didn't look at the page when they were supposed to be reading aloud. She realized that in the Moslem culture when people study their holy book, the Koran, their goal is to memorize the text. When the goal is to memorize, it is not

important to look at the text. The facilitator realized that if she wanted her students to decode letters and words, she would need to talk to them about a new way of reading.

Your facilitator's journal is also a good place to record things about the learners which you would like to discuss with them personally.

How: Try to find a few quiet moments each day to reflect and write briefly about your observations of what happened in class. Many facilitators who have never kept a journal fear that it will just create extra work for them. On the contrary, most facilitators find that taking a few moments to write about the day helps them to think of creative ways to prepare for the next class. Thus, journal keeping serves two purposes for the facilitator, recording the class session and planning the next one. You may want to include brief general notes and more detailed notes for each learner.

When: It may be helpful to jot down your notes as soon as possible after class while your memory is still fresh. Or you may prefer to have some time to think about the class and write down your notes at the end of the day.

Notes:

C. PORTFOLIO:

A progress portfolio, or a writing folder, enables you to chart the progress of each student. It is often used to save the materials learners write in class.

What: A portfolio is a folder, envelope or binder with the learner's name written on it. It is used to hold writing samples and records. The first things to go into the portfolio are notes from the initial interview, a copy of the learning contract and the first reading and writing samples. Later, other work that the learner produces gets put into the folder: journal entries, learning logs, a list of things they have read, writing samples, drafts of writing, as well as self-evaluations, a facilitator's weekly report and any record of learning activities.

Why: It is often difficult to measure the progress of someone who is learning to read and write. Over time, the materials collected in a portfolio are evidence that the learner is making progress. Earlier writing samples may be only a few words written by an uncertain hand. Later writing will

reveal skills with forming words and sentences. The handwriting will be stronger, the ideas more clear. Both the facilitator and the learner can look through the writing samples in the portfolio to remember the struggles and the break-throughs. Goal-oriented learners can use the portfolio to document their progress with examples of their achievement. A portfolio serves other purposes as well.

- a. It is a learner-centered assessment tool that documents learner growth on an individual basis.
- b. It provides a place to record evidence of learning. The contents can be discussed with the learner and others.
- c. It is a formative assessment tool that can be used by the facilitator to plan learning experiences.
- d. Examples from learners' portfolios can be used in a program report or published in a newsletter or booklet for a summative evaluation of the class.

How: Let the learners take ownership of the portfolio. Explain the portfolios to the learners during the first class so that they can help keep records and save their writing samples. Some facilitators like to give each learner a folder on the first day of class and let them write their name and address on it. With that first step learners begin to create their portfolio. Every time they write or read something new, a record is added to the portfolio. They can even add things to the portfolio that they create outside of class. By the end of the class, the portfolios contain a collection of each learner's progress and accomplishments. From time to time, the facilitator and learners can look at the portfolio contents to review progress, identify areas of improvement, areas to focus on, revise old goals and set new ones.

When: Portfolio assessment is an on-going project. It starts with the intake assessment and becomes a permanent record when the class is completed. Do not wait until the learners' writing is perfect to add it to the portfolio. Early samples allow you to compare with later work, so you can see the improvement. At the end of the class, you and the learners can select the best writing from each portfolio to make a class publication.

Notes:

D. ANECDOTAL RECORD:

Anecdotes are brief stories that describe meaningful incidents or events related to the learner's progress. They are generally observations about the learner's efforts to use new reading and writing skills. Even something as simple as trying to read the words on a matchbox or bringing a document to class are worth recording.

What: An anecdotal record is similar to the facilitator's journal. Some facilitators even include anecdotal records in their journals. Journals, however, generally contain a wider variety of information and reflections than anecdotal records, which focus on specific incidents or events. Depending on your preference, you may want to keep a separate anecdotal record book. You may also want to encourage learners to record anecdotes in their journals.

Why: The advantage of anecdotal records is that they record very specific information about an event or action that shows a learner using his or her new reading and writing skills. This record can help you make observations of how people learn to read and write. For example, when one facilitator noticed her learners teaching friends under a tree one day, she decided to keep an anecdotal record of all the examples she could find of literacy learners teaching others. She observed that even the slowest learner was teaching someone, her mother. Anecdotes can give precise information on the learner's achievement in many areas outside of class which traditional assessment tests overlook.

How: Describe each incident or event with enough description to make a small picture of what happened. You can keep the stories in a notebook, or put them on separate pieces of paper and slip them into the learner's portfolio.

When: You can either write the story down right after the incident/event, or wait until you have more time. Be sure to do it before you forget the details.

Notes:

E. DIALOGUE JOURNAL:

As the name indicates, a dialogue journal is a notebook in which two or more people have a conversation through writing. The facilitator begins the dialogue or conversation by writing a question in each learner's journal. The learners then read the questions and write an answer. They complete their entry by asking the facilitator a question in return. The facilitator then reads the journals and answers each learner in writing. The difference between this journal and the Learner's Journal is that this is an open letter written by two people. Learners can also do dialogue journals with each other.

Why: A dialogue journal is an important channel of communication between you and each learner. You can use it to learn more about each other as well as to assess the learner's progress. It is an on-going assessment because it contains a growing record of each learner's writing. As with the Learner's Journal, the learners should feel free to write without being concerned with making mistakes. Use other activities to teach grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The purpose of this journal is to help the learner figure out how to say things in writing. A dialogue journal also allows the learners to express issues and problems that are bothering them that may be difficult to discuss. Over time, the dialogue journal also allows you and the learner to see how they have progressed.

Since the dialogue journal is a form of on-going assessment, you can also use it to improve your teaching and to help you plan your lessons. As you see grammar, spelling and punctuation errors in the dialogue journals, make a note to yourself. Plan ways to teach the correct forms during a class activity or individual instruction. Encourage the learners to use the correct form the next time they write. Be careful not to embarrass individual learners by pointing out their errors in public or in insensitive ways. If a learner asks you to correct the errors in his/her journal, feel free to do so since s/he requested your help. But do not let spelling or grammar lessons stop the free writing.

How: You can make a dialogue journal with any kind of paper by stapling or sewing the pieces of paper together. You can also use exercise notebooks.

Begin by writing a small note or question in each learners notebook and give it to them. Some facilitators make a "mail box" where learners can put the notebook when they finish writing. Explain that the dialogue journal is a written conversation. They are to answer your questions as well as write other things they want to tell you in this journal. If they want to ask you questions, you will answer in their journal. They return the journal to you after they write their response. Continue the dialogue on a regular basis until the end of the class.

Dialogue journals can be adapted to the ability level of the learners. Beginners may only be able to write a few words or a sentence. In this case you can write things related to the class lessons so that they will recognize familiar words.

When: Dialogue journals are an on-going activity. With more advanced students, the conversation may go in any direction and be any length you and the learners choose. With beginning literacy learners, you may want to start with a simple learner's log (see below) and move to a dialogue journal later.

Notes:

F. LEARNER'S SELF-EVALUATION:

When learners have their own learning goals, a self-assessment tool is designed to keep them motivated and aware of their own learning process. Self-assessment can make learning more meaningful and encourage learners to become active in shaping their own learning experiences.

What: A learner's self-evaluation is an on-going process in which learners assess their own learning. For example, at the end of each week learners write what they have learned during that week. There are many ways to do self-evaluation. Some facilitators create special charts or forms for the learners to fill in. Six examples of self-assessment tools are described below: Group Evaluation, Self-Evaluation, Learner's Log, Goals Checklist, Spelling Self-Test, and Reading List

Why: This assessment helps learners be in charge of their own learning. The weekly progress report provides them motivation to learn more. At times when they do not feel they are making any progress, they can look back over their week and reflect on what may have slowed their progress. The learner's self-evaluations will provide you with many useful hints about how to proceed with your planning.

How: Learners can conduct self-evaluation individually or in a group. In the beginning, when most learners cannot express their feelings in writing, it is easier to do the self-evaluation orally in a group. Later, when people are more familiar with the process, they can start to do individual evaluation. Individual self-evaluation sheets can be saved in each learner's portfolios. Group self-evaluations can be saved in a class folder.

When: Self-evaluation can be an effective learning and assessment tool if it is done on a regular basis. Self-assessment encourages learners to take responsibility for their own learning. Most facilitators do it weekly, others do it more often. As your learners develop their reading and writing skills, there are other types of self-evaluation that they can do on their own. Facilitators have many tools for this purpose.

1. Group Evaluation: For this you will need newsprint or a blackboard. Write the question: “What did we learn this week?” Have each learner name something they learned, then you write the responses on the board or newsprint. This may be a new concept for some and you will need to encourage them. Remind them of things done in class or things you observed them doing well. Write down whatever they say. If they say something complicated, have the group help you summarize it in a word or a phrase. Don’t overwhelm the group with complicated writing.

When the list is complete, you can use it as a reading and writing exercise. Have the group read it out loud together. Have individuals find the answer they gave and copy it into their journal. Have them write a sentence. As the learners become more skilled, you can make the self-evaluation more complex by having them answer several questions or fill in a chart. Self-evaluation exercises are also good practice for reading and writing. By using different kinds of charts and asking different questions, you can teach the learners to think about their progress and organize information about themselves in many different ways.

2. Individual Self-Evaluation: Give each learner a small sheet of paper with a blank chart or questions for the self-evaluation. The example below is to assess progress on reading, writing, and math skills.

As you discuss items on the chart, learners can fill in their own response. Ask them what they learned in each topic (reading, writing, and math). The fourth box is for them to record how they felt about their progress. For example, some may say they were frustrated, happy, confused, fulfilled, motivated, and so on. New learners may need help writing their answers. Each time the learners write self-evaluations, save the sheet in their portfolios. These sheets record the learning milestones in the learner’s handwriting. Every now and then, have the learners look through their self-evaluations so that they can see the list of things they have learned. They will be interested to observe their improved handwriting and ability to write longer answers.

3. Learner’s Log: A learner’s log is a record kept by learners. It is a type of learner’s self-evaluation. Usually facilitators set aside class time for writing in the log at the end of week. To write a log, the learners look back at what they learned in a week and write their reflections. You provide a guideline for their writing, this can be the same questions each week or different ones.

4. Goals Checklist: If the learner is working on a general goal that has been broken into smaller steps, you can create a checklist of all the steps. The learner can review the list and check off each step as it is accomplished.

5. Spelling Self-Test: Another type of learner self-evaluation is a spelling or vocabulary test. In this activity, the learners select words they want to spell from their personal notebooks or a dictionary. They copy the words on one side of the page, then fold the paper so that they cannot see the words. The facilitator or another learner says the words and the learner tries to spell them from memory. Then the learner unfolds the paper and checks to see if they spelled the words correctly.

6. Reading List: The purpose of a reading list is to encourage learners to read many different kinds of materials. Each time they read something in class or outside of class, they can report their accomplishment by writing the name of the item on a list. Some facilitators make a small form where the learner can also write what they thought about what they read. Materials that can be reported on the list include: books, poems, songs, pamphlets, signs, letters, etc. If you live in a place where there is not a lot of reading material available, encourage learners to share with each other things that they find to read.

Notes: Which of these self-assessment tools could be adapted to your situation?

G. LEARNER CONFERENCE:

One of the best ways for a facilitator to assess learners' progress is to talk with them on a regular basis and find out how they feel they are doing.

What: A Learner Conference is a one-to-one meeting between the learner and the facilitator. The purpose of the conference is to find out how each learner is doing both inside and outside the class. This is also a chance for you to re-examine the learning contract to check progress or make adjustments.

Why: Each learner is a unique person with a different background, experience, and values. You will discover many things about how each person learns and uses reading and writing differently as you take time to talk with learners individually. This will help you better understand each

learner and their everyday life situations. This information will help you be more effective in guiding the learners through difficult learning situations. Conferences will allow you to find out information that you would never see or hear in the “teacher position” at the front of the class. This meeting also gives you an opportunity to assess how your learners are doing in the class.

How: Schedule enough time for each learner so that you are not rushed. Some facilitators like to schedule a 15-20 minute meeting. Make sure that this meeting is an informal talk session and encourage the learner to do most of the talking. This is a good time to review the learner’s goals from the learning contract. You can both look at your journals, logs and records. Share things you have written about the learner that show his or her progress in reading and writing. Review the learner’s work and point out improvements. For example, if spelling is much improved in recent journal entries, show this to the learner.

The portfolio will be very helpful during this conference. Ask the learner to tell you about the various materials in the portfolio such as which piece of writing they like best or which materials they enjoyed reading. This is also a good time to see how much they are using their reading and writing skills outside of class.

Some facilitators fill out a form or log each time they have a learner conference. This form helps them remember which learners they have met with and what was discussed.

When: Some facilitators like to have weekly conferences if their class is small enough. Other facilitators hold a few conferences each week with different learners. They try to talk to each learner at least once a month.

Notes: How could you organize learner conferences in your program? How would you keep records? How often could you conduct conferences?

H. FILING SYSTEM:

You may have noticed that on-going assessment involves many forms, journals, and records. This is because record-keeping is the key to assessment. If there is no record of what a student has done, there is no way to see their progress. Many literacy facilitators and programs set up filing systems to organize assessment records.

What: Each facilitator and program has to choose a system that works best for them. One system involves creating a folder for each learner. The

simplest form of assessment is saving examples of student writing so that comparisons can be made with later attempts. In addition to writing samples, notes from assessment tools, observations, and self-tests can also be added to the folder. From time to time, the facilitator and learner look through the folder together and assess their progress. The facilitator, supervisor, or program director can look at all the folders to assess the progress of the whole class.

Why: When a facilitator is responsible for many learners, it is difficult to remember everyone's needs and interests. By organizing each learner's goals, assessment records, reading lists, and writing samples into a folder, the facilitator can keep track of everyone's progress. The filing system makes the process of learning to read and write more visible to everyone involved.

How: Every facilitator has to develop a set of assessment tools that fits the local situation. In addition to using the tools and forms mentioned in this manual, you can also create your own as an on-going assessment system for learners.

In many situations it is not possible to have notebooks and folders and multiple forms for every student because paper is in short supply. Choose a few of the assessment tool that will work most effectively for your situation. Remember that each assessment tools is also a teaching tool. Conversely, every reading or writing exercise provides information for assessment. A good facilitator constantly observes what the learners are doing with each assignment and keeps some sort of record to document learners' progress.

Finally, it is important to remember that the purpose of on-going assessment is to improve the literacy class. Assessment tools can provide you with ideas for classroom lessons. Conferences can give you ideas for discussion and writing exercises. From observing learner's writing you can get ideas for grammar and spelling lessons.

Notes:

Learning from your own experience: Choose several different assessment tools from this unit and figure out how to adapt them to your literacy program. Create your own forms or notebooks to fit your situation.

Try out your assessment tools with at least three learners. Ask them to tell you what they thought about doing the assessment activities with you.

Figure out how to set up a filing system to keep track of each learner's progress. Plan the system around the time and resources that are appropriate for your situation.

Try keeping a journal for a few days to write about your experiments with assessment tools.

1. Describe what you did.
2. Explain why you chose the tools you did.
3. Write about your experience using them with learners.
4. Comment on the learners' reactions to the assessment activities.
5. Write about your reactions to the assessment tools: What did you like and dislike about the experience. What will you plan to do in the future?
6. Make a plan to continue using on-going assessment in your program.

Notes:

Unit Three: Learner Assessment for Measuring Achievement

At the end of a literacy course, everyone wants to know what was accomplished. Donors, supervisors and program directors who have not been involved in the daily progress of the literacy class are especially eager to know if the class was successful. Your final assessment responsibility is to develop a plan to assess the learners' achievements for the whole course. This form of assessment is a summative evaluation.

You will have three audiences to report to. The first group is your class. Each learner should receive a final assessment of their achievement and completion of the course. Many programs give a certificate. Others hold a celebration or ceremony to mark the completion.

The second audience interested in your final assessment is your funding organization. If you are a program director, you know that you have to submit regular reports to your funders documenting the learners' achievements. Usually these reports ask for numbers or other details about the learners' achievements.

In recent years, more and more governments and donors are asking for measurable evidence that learners can read and write. Some are requiring test scores and many are searching for the perfect standardized or national test which can be given to compare all programs. This demand for summative assessments is putting a lot of pressure on programs.

The third audience is yourself. There is much that you can learn by reviewing all the information you have compiled in your on-going assessments to help you prepare for the next class you organize. This information can also help your organization plan more effective classes in the future. In this unit, you will learn how to organize assessments to satisfy the needs of your learners, your funding agency, and yourself.

A. FINAL ASSESSMENTS FOR LEARNERS:

The most important things learners need to know at this point are how well they have done and what they should do next. A final assessment should be a time to celebrate the progress everyone has made during the course. The assessment should focus primarily on achievements. At this stage, you and the learners look back at the portfolios, journals, learners' self-evaluation records, learner conference notes, and any other records documenting the learners' work.

You may want to select one or two of the best writing samples from each learner and compile them into a class publication. Another activity is to invite friends and relatives to a special celebration where learners read some of their work out loud, and perform songs and dramas to demonstrate what they have learned during the course. These activities highlight

achievements and motivate others to join the next class.

The second part of the learner's assessment should focus on what learners want to do next. Your program may offer follow-up courses in post-literacy or continuing education. Some learners may want to organize their own reading group or study circle and meet on a weekly basis after the class ends. Others may join income-generating groups, health clubs, or other community organizations. You may have some learners who want to join the formal school system. The final assessment is a time to talk to learners individually about their plans and hopes for the future. You can help them set new goals for their individual learning.

What about achievement tests at the end of a course? Achievement tests given at the end of a course can create an unnecessary burden for most learners. These tests are designed to compare people with national standards but provide no information about individual growth or progress. There is little benefit for a learner in knowing that they are in the 50th percentile of test takers, or that they scored at a 5th grade level. These arbitrary levels only have meaning for educational statistics and are usually not helpful to adults and the use of literacy in their daily life. Some tests may be useful for placing a person into the formal school system, but this may not be necessary for the adults in your literacy program. You will need to analyze your own situation and decide how to deal with the issue of standardized tests.

Learning From Your Own Experience: What ideas do you have for helping learners in your program measure their achievement?

Notes:

B. FINAL ASSESSMENTS FOR FUNDERS:

You can make a final assessment for program funders by compiling a report which summarizes the achievements of all the learners in the class. This program assessment will use two types of measurements to compare and summarize the information from learners' portfolios, the facilitator's journal, logs, self-evaluation forms, etc. These two types of measurement are referred to as quantitative and qualitative measures or indicators.

Quantitative measures summarize things you can count and measure with numbers and scores. You can make quantitative summaries of attendance, dropouts, scores on spelling self-tests, number of books read or pages written. By looking through your records, you can identify many

things that can be counted and reported to funders. Some of them will be a pleasant surprise to governments and funders who have to make complicated decisions based on a few numbers about attendance and dropouts.

Qualitative indicators summarize achievements which are difficult to measure with numbers. They require written description and stories. You can write qualitative descriptions of changes in your learners' confidence, writing style, attitudes, and motivations.

Most funders and government organizations prefer quantitative assessments and evaluation because they are responsible for funding programs that serve large numbers of learners. They do not have time to look at each learner's portfolio or read a story about their growth in self-confidence. They often have a standardized vision of literacy learning and ask for reports to confirm if the national model is being implemented effectively.

It is usually the responsibility of the local literacy program directors to submit reports to the government and funders. In addition to sending in the required numbers, they can also use their report as an opportunity to educate the funder. Program directors can use information from the learner's folders to give the funders information about real learners. For example, a program director can compile a list of learner's goals and compare them to the goals of a national functional literacy program. Or they can examine writing samples and write a report about how long it takes a learner to progress from writing simple words to writing paragraphs. They can also include anecdotes about the learners to bring life to a number-centered report.

Learning From Your Own Experience: Think about the assessment and evaluation reports required by your funder. Critique their system and think of creative ways to educate them about what really happens in a literacy program. You can use the following suggestions to organize your report.

1. List the things you have to report to your funder.
2. List the things you would like to tell your funder about the progress and problems of your learners. Think of creative ways to summarize and report this information.
3. Plan a strategy for using your Learner Assessment to educate your funder.

Notes:

C. FINAL SELF-ASSESSMENTS:

One of the most important outcomes of an on-going learner assessment is that you collect information and ideas from the learners which you can use to improve your teaching and the quality of your program. Since teaching and learning are interconnected, facilitators and learners constantly influence each other. Whenever you work with a learner to assess his or her progress, you also reflect on what you have been able to do for them. Facilitators who use on-going assessment in their literacy programs find that assessment tools help them get input from learners to solve problems and to think of creative ways to organize learning activities.

Learning From Your Experience: Take a few minutes to reflect on the things you have learned from this manual. Try some of the assessment tools on yourself. Put yourself in the place of a learner doing this action-learning manual. Write about your experience.

1. What did you learn from assessing your own learning experience?
2. How do you feel about your ability as a facilitator or supervisor to use self-assessment to improve your skills?
3. What are your thoughts about your progress as a literacy worker?
4. What goals have you set for yourself? What do you need to do to achieve them?

Notes:

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Glossary

Assessment Tools vs Standardized Test: Assessment tools are made by facilitators to measure their students' achievement in class. These tools are not scientifically tested or designed to apply universally. They must be adapted by each facilitator to fit the learners and local situation.

Standardized tests are designed by specialists, and tested for validity and reliability to measure a certain type of achievement. They are used to compare students in very different circumstances. They are often not effective for motivating learners or for measuring progress that is relevant to success in life.

Facilitator vs Teacher: Facilitator is a term often used for the person who is responsible for assisting people to learn through a variety of activities. This term is mostly used in adult literacy classes and in workshops. A facilitator respects the past experience of the learners and asks for their input when preparing lessons and designing learning activities.

The term teacher is used most often in the formal schools. A teacher is seen as an authoritative person who holds the knowledge and controls the teaching-learning environment.

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