

TRAINING TEACHERS in Literacy for Women in Africa project



Photo from a 10-day training for new Yao teachers in Namwera, Malawi

MAIN AIM

Main aim of the teacher training process is to equip teachers with skills and knowledge of how to conduct and teach adult learners using the Mother Tongue-Based methodology.

GOALS OF THE LWA TEACHERS TRAINING:

The goals are to:

1. introduce teachers to the local language orthography used in the materials and to have them practice reading and writing the language.
2. train teachers on how to use the primer and the corresponding teacher's guide and grant them time to practice teaching.
3. address topics like the five components of reading, how to ask good questions of a text, how to correct learners, qualities of a good teacher and principles of adult teaching and learning.
4. address practical issues, e.g. how to do: assessments, filling of class registers, learners' mobilization, and class organization.
5. train the teachers on how to organize improving literacy activities after the end of the primer lessons.

IDENTIFICATION OF TEACHERS

Teachers are identified by their communities through local leaders that include chiefs, community development leaders and in some areas, religious leaders.

A village/community will identify several potential people through community announcements and local adverts. The shortlisted will then undergo a recruitment process. A job interview is held by the community leaders/ religious leaders and the LWA Language Supervisor. The interviewers will select two teachers, and these will be sent for teacher training.

Apart from getting involved in the selection process, community leaders do motivate the teachers by deliberately involving them in several development activities like farming, health and hygiene programs and give them farming land and some leadership positions like becoming members of the Area Development Committee. These motivations encourage the teachers to work very hard in their classes.

Almost all teachers engaged are local villagers, but they are well supported and motivated to take up the challenge, though they have never done any teaching before. The teachers believe that poverty and other challenges can be eradicated in their areas if people are literate, and that no development can be achieved with large numbers of illiterate people.

TYPES OF TEACHERS TRAININGS

1. TRAINING FOR NEW TEACHERS

The teachers are trained for 10 days. The lessons are held from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm about 8 hours a day, but sometimes the time is extended depending on the complexity of the lesson. The 10-day training is for new teachers with no teaching experience. It may also include teachers with experience from other adult literacy providing institutions but lack experience in teaching the mother tongue-based methodology.

2. REFRESHER TRAINING

The refresher teachers training is held for 5 days. The refresher teachers training targets experienced teachers who are already engaged in teaching LWA classes.

3. ON JOB TRAINING

The teachers are continuously followed and mentored by the project supervising team to improve their teaching skills. When a teacher is found to be having challenges the supervisor or monitor assists them by giving them extra information and instructions. If the teacher is still struggling, he/she is invited to the office for further training in the area of difficulty. In some cases, another experienced teacher is assigned to assist the struggling teacher.

4. REVIEW MEETINGS

Each year there is a project review meeting where the project staff and teachers meet to share experiences and challenges for the past year and plan together for the next year. During the meeting, extra lessons on areas where teachers have been having challenges are presented and explained. Teachers are given an opportunity to ask questions on any matter that they do not understand clearly. The review meeting is also used as a platform to share with the teachers' new things that have emerged; for example, how to conduct the new Improving Literacy methodology, how to teach basic mathematics, sensitization on the new government adult literacy policies etc.



Literacy supervisor gives feedback to Lomwe teachers after a class in Phalombe, Malawi

FACILITATION DURING TEACHERS TRAINING

The initial teachers training is led by a literacy consultant who trains and mentors local facilitators. When the locals become conversant, skilled, and good facilitators, they take over the facilitation work from the literacy consultant. In the early years of project implementation, local language experts are involved in the actual training, and these may be language translators, and do help in the teaching of the orthography.

Teachers who have experience teaching LWA classes and who are committed and have a good command of the teaching methodology will have the opportunity to train as instructors.

The teachers' training is very engaging and practical and a very participant practices to teach in groups.



Lomwe teachers participated in a group discussion during teacher training in Phalombe, Malawi

TIME FOR TEACHERS TRAINING AND CLASS LEARNING

The teacher trainings in Malawi are mostly held from February to March. This is so because classes start in April and end in October. The timeline is like this because the learners are given an opportunity to concentrate on their farming activities. Farming activities start in November and harvesting is done by March. During the farming season very few people can come for classes.

The rainy season normally starts in November and ends in March or early April. Most of the classes are conducted at open grounds with no shelter, so conducting classes in this period may be challenging to the learners.

END OF TEACHERS' TRAINING

At the end of teacher training, teachers participate in a graduation ceremony where they receive certificates. In most cases senior government officials, chiefs and partners are invited to the function.

The teachers are provided with teaching and class materials like; primers, teachers guide. alphabet charts, story books, blackboards, dusters, chalks, exercise books, pencils etc.