

# Flexibility in literacy programs – keeping the learner in mind<sup>1</sup>

Sue Hasselbring

University of South Africa (doctoral student in Linguistics)

## **Abstract**

*Successful and sustainable literacy programs are based on an accurate understanding of the learners' needs, lifestyle and culture. When assumptions about learners are inaccurate or when all learners are assumed to be identical, the literacy program may face challenges that seem insurmountable. Many aspects of the Tswana adult literacy program in Botswana are based on accurate assumptions about learners who live in village communities. However, many of the pre-literate people in Botswana live in rural areas outside of villages. Their needs, lifestyle and culture are different from village residents. Aspects of the literacy program that work well in villages sometimes prevent the spread of literacy in more rural areas. Some simple program alterations, which take into account the needs of the learners enabled learners in one rural area to succeed.*

*Program alterations included creative use of resources, including activities to build pre-literacy skills, adapting to social and cultural norms (related to class membership and seating arrangement), accounting for dialect variation and varying language ability, and empowering learners and their school children to share knowledge with others.*

## **Introduction**

Since literacy programs are for the benefit of literacy learners, program design should be based on an accurate understanding of the learners' needs, lifestyle and culture. Program leaders' goals and assumptions (about the learners and about available resources) affect the way they plan programs, even though their goals and assumptions are not always clearly defined. Some literacy programs face problems because inaccurate assumptions were made about the learners or because planners failed to appreciate the differences among learners and learning situations.

The Tswana adult literacy program of Botswana was based on an assessment of the needs, lifestyle and culture of Tswana literacy learners living in villages. However, some Tswana pre-literates live in more rural areas and have needs, lifestyles and cultures different from those living in villages. As a result, aspects of the program that were beneficial in villages hindered the program's effectiveness in more rural settings.

In one rural region of Botswana where literacy levels were particularly low, some simple program alterations were made that took into account the specific needs of local learners. The results were encouraging. The remainder of this paper presents some of the specific changes that were made to the program to make it appropriate for rural learners as well as general principles that guided program planning.

## **Background**

**Residential patterns.** In the Botswana housing census, seven major categories of communities are enumerated: city, town, village, settlement, lands, cattlepost, and other. Villages, lands, cattleposts and settlements are the communities in focus in this paper. The first three of these are traditional residential communities while settlements have only existed for the past twenty years. Each category of community is described further below.

---

<sup>1</sup> ©Sue Hasselbring, 2003

A *village*, which must have a population of at least 500, is led by a traditional chief. Some villages have populations of over 20,000. Every village in Botswana has a primary school, a clinic and offices for the chief and the tribal police. Larger villages each have several primary schools and clinics.

Each village is surrounded by agricultural areas (*lands*) where the women plant and harvest crops. Some families have a second small home at the lands where the women live during the growing season. The population of the lands is highest during the planting months (December to January) and harvesting months (May and June) and lowest from July to November. Some families live at the lands year round. The lands are close enough to the villages that children living at the lands can walk to school daily.

Beyond the lands are *cattleposts* where the cattle were traditionally cared for by the men during the crop-growing season. After the harvest, the men and cattle returned to the village for the winter. Today, cattle remain at cattleposts year-round. The cattle are usually tended by people of minority (i.e. non-Tswana) ethnic groups who live at the cattleposts year-round. The populations of cattleposts range from three to eighty, with twenty being the average number.

In the past twenty years, the government of Botswana has established a number of *settlements* for people who previously had no traditional village. The majority of settlement residents are people of minority (i.e. non-Tswana) ethnic groups. Few job opportunities are available in settlements and many of the residents depend on government subsidies. Settlements range in population from 100 to over 500.

**Literacy situation.** Botswana's adult illiteracy rate (age 15 and over) is 20% for women and 26% for men (UNESCO: 2003). However, pre-literates are not evenly distributed in the country. The 1991 census<sup>2</sup> does not contain direct information about literacy. However, it does contain information about levels of schooling, age, and place of residence. Based on this information, the distribution of pre-literates in the country was calculated (Government of Botswana: 1994). People who have never attended formal school are less likely to be literate than those who have. However, some of those who never attended school have learned to read either through adult literacy classes or from friends.

Table 1 indicates that people in urban areas have higher rates of school attendance than those in villages or in rural areas. In urban areas, only about one sixth of adults age twenty and over never attended school. Over a third of those age twenty and over in villages never attended school. The rate is lowest in rural areas (that is settlements, cattleposts and lands) where nearly three fifths of adults never attended school. In addition, the total number of people who never attended school who live in rural areas is greater than the number living in villages. These figures (especially those for villages and rural areas) include elderly people who feel they are too old to read. The potential number of adult literacy students is slightly lower than the figures in the table.

Location	Population age 20 +	Subset Never attended School	Percent never attended school
Urban	165,795	27,758	16.7
Village	272,371	93,712	34.4
Rural	162,343	97,092	59.8
Botswana Total	600,509	218,562	36.4

(Government of Botswana, 1994)

*Table 1 – School attendance of adults over age twenty by region and sex - 1991*

<sup>2</sup> The relevant results of the 2001 census are not yet available.

### **Background of the adult non-formal literacy program**

The adult literacy program established by the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) of the government of Botswana begins with literacy and numeracy in Tswana (also called Setswana). After completing the series of five Tswana primers in literacy and numeracy, the learners may proceed to classes in English as a second language.

In the past few years, the DNFE has started a distance-learning program through which learners may obtain the equivalent of a primary school leaver's certificate. This paper focuses on the first level of the DNFE program - literacy in Tswana.

Literacy classes are led by a Literacy Group Leader (LGL). To qualify as an LGL, one must have completed form two, that is, nine years of formal education. The reason for this requirement is that the LGLs should be able to teach both the Tswana and English materials. Each LGL attends an initial two-week training course. One-week refresher courses are offered annually. Other development courses for the LGLs are offered about once a year. Each LGL receives a stipend of approximately US\$1.50 per literacy session taught.

A new literacy class may be started only when fifteen learners are registered. A literacy class may continue only if at least five learners attend each session. The DNFE provides each registered learner with a notebook, a pencil, an eraser and a primer at the learner's level. Literacy classes are to be 90 minutes in length, with sessions held five days per week from February to November each year. Classes may not be held on Saturday or Sunday.

Most literacy classes are held in primary school classrooms in the late afternoons or evenings. Primary schools are equipped with chairs, desks, and blackboard. Many have electric lighting.

A comparison of the Tswana and English materials used by the DNFE reveals that the authors of the materials had certain assumptions. For example, the Tswana literacy materials assume that the learner speaks and understands Tswana well but does not yet know how to read and write it. The English materials are written for English-as-second-language speakers. These materials assume that the learner knows how to read and write Tswana and thus knows most letters of the Roman alphabet but that the learner does not know how to read, write or speak English.

The English materials introduce vocabulary items slowly and thematically, using pictures of common village or small town situations. The materials build upon items and concepts with which the learners in those situations are already familiar, teaching them how to talk and write about these things in the new language, English. The materials also focus on transferring literacy skills from Tswana to English. Because most of the consonants have the same value in Tswana and English, only the English vowels require extensive explanation.

The Tswana materials introduce the letters a few at a time except for the first four lessons which introduce two or three letters per lesson—a total of ten letters in the first four lessons. This seems to indicate that the authors of the materials assumed that learners are already familiar with the most common letters of Tswana. Later lessons introduce only one letter or letter cluster per lesson.

### **Daily life**

As noted above, the daily work and activity schedules vary for residents of villages, lands, settlements, and cattleposts.

In villages, the potential learners, if they are employed, work from about seven in the morning until about four in the afternoon. They are relatively free in the late afternoons. Village residents who raise crops either travel daily to the lands, or live at the lands part of the year. Most of the work at the

lands is done in the morning. The work at the lands is most intensive during December and January and again from May to June.

At settlements, the pattern of activities is different. At settlements, little formal employment is available. Most are in areas where agriculture is not feasible. Some residents of settlements spend a large portion of their day gathering wild fruits, roots and nuts in a 20 km radius of the settlement. Gathering excursions take place three to six times a week. Those who gather have some free time in the early morning or late evening. They also have free time on days on which they do not gather. Many settlements have problems with alcoholism. In some settlements, a large proportion of adults are drunk by mid-morning. There is little seasonal change in their daily schedule.

At cattleposts there is yet another pattern to daily activities. The men are busy tending the cattle every day for a couple hours immediately after sunrise and then again a couple hours before sunset. Some days, the men work nearly all day on projects such as branding cattle, building corrals in addition to their daily responsibilities. Women at the cattleposts go on gathering excursions three to four days a week. The greater abundance of wild fruits near the cattleposts, due to the lower population levels, means the women spend less time gathering than do those who live in settlements. There is little seasonal change in their daily schedule.

### **Some observations about the DNFE program**

Botswana's DNFE literacy program was designed with village residents in mind and has met with the greatest success in villages. The annual and daily schedule of classes meets the needs of village residents well. The use of primary school classrooms also meets the needs of village residents since the classrooms are available at the time of day when residents are able to attend class.

At the 2003 Mother Tongue Literacy Day Workshop in Gaborone, Ms. Morwe, the DNFE regional director for the Boteti Subdistrict in the late 1990s, reported that the literacy classes at Khwee settlement faced many challenges. Among them were 1) a lack of respect of the Literacy Group Leaders by the literacy learners, due in part to the LGLs being much younger than the learners, 2) LGLs quitting after serving only a few months, 3) poor attendance rate at classes, 4) high drinking rates in the settlement, 5) poor oral proficiency in Tswana by learners. Over a period of five years, only a few adults learned to read.

Ms. Morwe indicated that the literacy groups in Khwee were generally run according to the guidelines established by the DNFE. The LGLs at Khwee were required to have Form 2 education. This limited the choice of LGLs to the few young people (in their late teens or early 20s) who have recently completed Form 2. While some young people may be mature enough to teach adults, many are not. If there is not respect between the learners and the LGL, the learners may stop attending, or the LGL may quit. Apparently both possibilities were occurring at Khwee. However, poor attendance at Khwee could also have been due to the fact that some learners had to miss classes each week to go on food-gathering trips. Also, problems of alcoholism contributed to sporadic attendance. Perhaps morning classes at a location other than the school would have been more successful. Another problem was that most learners at Khwee spoke a language other than Tswana as their first language. As mentioned above, the DNFE materials are written for mother tongue Tswana speakers and assume some pre-reading skills.

### **Adaptation of literacy classes at cattleposts**

For three years from 2000 to 2003, I taught literacy classes at cattleposts in the Mahalapye Subdistrict of Botswana<sup>3</sup>. I used the DNFE materials, but the circumstances at the cattleposts, including learners'

---

<sup>3</sup> I initially met the Tsoa people in 1997 while doing a language survey for the Botswana Language Use Project – a joint project of two Lutheran denominations and Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT). During the survey, the

needs and their lifestyle and culture<sup>4</sup> meant that some alterations to the DNFE's recommendations needed to be made. I summarize these alterations below in the following categories: organization of classes, needs of pre-literates, cultural norms, LGL qualifications, dialectal and language issues.

*Organization of classes.* There are no schools at cattleposts so the learners were asked where they would like classes to be held. At most cattleposts, the classes moved several times. In summer, it was under a shade tree; in the windy season, it was inside a wind proof but roofless shelter; in the winter, it was in the sun. When it rained we met in a rondavel, but that was too dark to use on a regular basis. Besides, when it isn't raining, people usually sit outside. When a woman had recently given birth, we met close to her house, so she could listen even though she was not culturally permitted to sit with the other learners.

Being without school buildings also meant we were without desks, chairs and blackboards. Chairs were easy to solve. The people sat on whatever they traditionally sat on: men on chairs or stools, women on mats on the ground. For desks, I encouraged the students to find a hard flat object to hold on their laps. Some cut the side off a 20-liter jug. Other used a piece of metal. Many used nothing.

For blackboards, we used the sand. As I would write a letter, the students would write it in the sand beside or in front of them. If an error was made, it was easily erased and corrected.

The time of classes is not specified by the DNFE, but due to the use of classrooms, the possibilities are limited to mid-afternoon onward in villages. This would have been the worst time at the cattleposts: the men are busy from 3 to 6 pm daily. Again, the learners at each cattlepost recommended the best time. Some preferred the morning, others mid-day others early afternoon.

Lessons could not be held five days a week as recommended by the DNFE due to occasional full-day activities of most learners. Meeting three days a week seemed ideal. Some classes met on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Others met on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. This schedule gave students time to practice each lesson, complete the writing assignment, and seek help from other students if necessary. Most students were able to organize their full-day activities so they took place on days when there were no classes.

Initial class sizes were almost always smaller than the 15 required by the DNFE. However, it appeared that attrition was less of a problem at the cattleposts than in villages. Because extended families often lived together at a cattlepost, the learners would encourage their family members to keep attending. Only rarely did the class size fall below the minimum size for continuing the course.

*Needs of pre-literates.* Most of the cattlepost residents had few to no pre-literacy skills. They had never held a book or pencil. They did not know how to turn pages. They did not know to move from left to right or top to bottom on a page. They had difficulty distinguishing 'b' from 'p' and 'd'. The items they use in daily life are still the same item no matter which way it is turned. They had to learn that the way a letter faces makes it unique from others of the same shape that face a different direction.

---

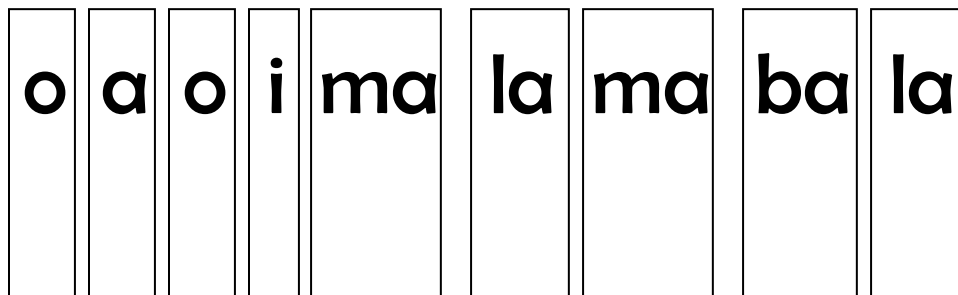
residents of several cattleposts urgently requested Bible and literacy classes. The Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA) responded to this request and in 2000 asked me to live among the people, to teach them to read and to teach them the Bible. I appreciate the support of LBT prior to 2000 and the LCSA through 2003. Ideally, people in the community should have been trained to be teachers. However, none of the residents of the 12 cattlepost met the DNFE qualifications to be an LGL. As a result, I contacted the DNFE and was accepted by them as a volunteer LGL. If I had served only as a literacy consultant rather than a teacher, I doubt that I would have gained the insights that I am now able to share.

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to the Tsoa people (especially Khunong's family) who taught me so many aspects of their culture, shared meals with me and in so many other ways welcomed me as a daughter, sister, aunt and friend.

Rather than starting with the Tswana primers immediately, I taught pre-reading skills during the first sessions. I continued emphasizing these beginning skills we worked through the first several primers. I used small pocket calendars, which I had obtained free of charge to teach page turning, moving top to bottom and right to left. Through their use of money, the students were more familiar with numbers than letters, making calendars an ideal pre-reading tool. I would help each student find the number one. Then they would point to each date as they counted. I would ask, "What number is to the right of three?" - the response: four! At the end of each line I would say, "Nothing is to the right of six, so what do we do?" The response: move down a line and go back to the left. At the end of each month I would ask a similar question before we turned the page.

Writing practice began in the sand; first with 'o' then 'i' since these are simple but very distinct letters. First the learners copied me. Next I asked them either to write the letter I named or name the letter I wrote. Writing with a pencil was first done in their calendars, by circling the current date. I had them point to the date for tomorrow and told them to open their calendars tomorrow and circle that date. If I needed to be gone for a few days, I told them when I would return. I helped them find the date and urged them to draw a picture that would remind them I was coming. Other dates like the arrival of the mobile clinic, the birth of a calf or death of a cow were marked in a similar manner.

I used vowel cards and syllable cards made from thin cardboard boxes to help the students identify syllables that are the same and those that are different. The thin cardboard was from the boxes of things they normally bought: tea or laundry soap. Each card was the width of the syllable written on it. The syllable was written near the top of the card. The bottom half of the card could be stuck down into the sand to make it stand up.



*Figure 1 Examples of syllable cards and vowel cards.*

I used the syllable cards in several ways. When I introduced a new syllable, for example 'ba', I showed them a 'ba' card. I then asked them where another 'ba' card was. We used the syllable cards to build words. I asked them what the first syllable in 'bala' was. When one of them said 'ba', I told each student to take 'ba'. Then I asked what the second syllable was. They each took 'la' and placed it next to 'ba'. Then we read the word 'bala' together. For the first lessons, I made enough cards so that each student could use two of each syllable during the lesson. After about six lessons, they no longer needed their own cards for each syllable. Some students made their own syllable cards to use to practice or to teach others.

As mentioned earlier, the first lessons in the Tswana primer introduced several new letters each session. This may work for students who live in villages who have had more contact with written materials, but most rural pre-literates were overwhelmed by too much new information. I wrote six new lessons that introduced only one letter each in the second to seventh lessons.

The first two Tswana primers included a syllable chart with each lesson as a way to introduce the new syllables and to review ones from previous lessons. After the fourth lesson, only partial charts were included in each lesson. When I noticed that the learners needed more review of the syllables, I made a complete Tswana syllable chart for every student to refer to when necessary.

**Cultural norms.** The DNFE encourages the LGLs to call on individual students to read after the group has read as a whole. However, the predominant ethnic group at the cattlepost has strong egalitarian beliefs: individuals should not show that they are superior to others.<sup>5</sup> When students with lower abilities would read, they would often ask others to help them. I permitted this to some extent. When the helping was more than I felt was beneficial for learning, I spoke to the student who was helping (that is the better student rather than the poorer one), encouraging them that the student who asked for help could figure the word out with less help, or giving them some ideas on how to help the student sound out the word rather than directly telling them the word. In this way, slower students were not embarrassed.

When a student had difficulty sounding out a word, I would ask all the students to point to the first syllable of the word. I then asked them to find the word in the syllable chart. We then started at the top of the column and read the column together (that is, all the vowels in combination with the given consonant). By doing this exercise together, the student who struggled was able to sound out the word in unison with all the students.

In the area of writing, which is an individual activity, I used several techniques to avoid correcting a student directly. At the start of each lesson, I wrote in each student's notebook each of the syllables to be learned that day (usually the consonant in combination with each vowel). The students then practiced writing the syllables. When they finished, I would ask the student which letter or syllable they thought looked the best and why. Alternatively, I would ask which syllable looked most like the one I had written. Sometimes they would mention how the others differed. Other times, I would ask them how they differed, especially if none of the letters were accurate. I sometimes explained what they could do to write the letter so that it was more similar to the example. This seemed to work well. It also helped the students realize that they could evaluate their own writing.

It is important to note, that in the first six to ten lessons, I did not allow erasing. Students who get erasers and pencils simultaneously spend more time erasing than writing. But writing is improved by repetition and practice.

Another cultural norm required that no one sit behind or walk behind a woman who is seated. Because women sit on mats on the ground and men sit in chairs, I initially thought that in large classes, the men could sit behind the women. However, the students expressed discomfort with that plan. I did not learn about the norm immediately, but when they expressed discomfort, I encouraged them to decide the best arrangement for sitting.

Even though the minority ethnic group was in the majority at the cattleposts, some people from the minority group were hesitant to attend the literacy classes when members of the majority group were present. As I observed the patterns of daily interactions at the cattleposts, I noticed that majority group members rarely interacted with minority group members. This was especially true for the women. Based on that, I agreed to teach two classes at some cattleposts.

---

<sup>5</sup> As an outsider, I was exempted to some extent from these norms. However, I believe that living with Khunong's family and learning their culture helped them to trust and accept me more than they would if I had not lived so closely with them. As time passed, some of the older Tsoa people occasionally corrected me when I did not behave in an egalitarian manner.

A man who had moved to a settlement from a cattlepost voiced a similar concern. He told me he wanted me to teach literacy at their settlement. I asked a few questions and learned that an LGL was leading literacy classes at the settlement. I probed further and learned that the classes were held in the area of the settlement where a different ethnic group lived. The man wanted classes in his own part of the settlement. It seems that at early levels of learning to read when errors are frequent and confidence is low, it may be important to have separate literacy groups based on the social networks already in place in a community.

***Literacy Group Leader qualifications.*** Within a month of starting literacy classes, I had requests to facilitate groups at more cattleposts than I could manage. Within six months, some of my students, who were not yet fully literate themselves, had started to informally teach their sibling, spouse or other family member to read. I was thrilled with the interest, but not certain what to do. According to DNFE guidelines, I was only to issue primers to students who attended the sessions I taught. However, because the goal was to help as many as possible become literate, I sometimes issued literacy materials to three other categories of people:

- 1) Semi-literates who already knew the basics of the first two primers but needed to learn the consonant clusters which are taught in the last three primers.
- 2) Pre-literates who expressed a strong desire to learn to read and who told me that a literate person at their cattlepost was willing to help them learn.
- 3) Students of literates who were teaching others to read.

Anyone in the above categories who demonstrated mastery of the material in one primer was issued the next higher primer. Through these methods about eight people completed the five Tswana primers and at least another ten gained some initial literacy skills.

I informed the regional level officers of the DNFE that some literates at the cattleposts were teaching others to read. I requested that these people be allowed to attend the two-week basic LGL training. The officers explained that they were not qualified since LGLs should be able to teach not only the Tswana literacy materials, but also the English materials. When the national director for the DNFE learned that people with lower levels of education were able and willing to teach Tswana literacy in areas where no one met the regular LGL requirements, he urged the regional directors to take the special circumstances at cattleposts into account.

At one cattlepost, the learners who had mastered Tswana literacy, asked their younger sister/ daughter/ niece who had completed standard seven (primary school) to teach them to read English during her three month school holidays. When she agreed, they asked me to find books for them to use. I obtained the DNFE English materials, and showed her briefly how to use them. The students completed the first book during her holidays. Not every family would be willing to be taught by a school child, and not every school child has the maturity to do so. Perhaps adult literacy clubs could be formed in some schools, providing willing rural students with training and materials to use in their home areas during school holidays.

***Dialect and language issues.*** The learners at cattleposts were neither homogenous in ethnicity nor in language. The majority of people living at the cattleposts where I taught were speakers of the Tsoa language. Each cattlepost had at least two if not three or four ethnicities represented. Ethnicities of cattlepost residents included Birwa, Cgaisa, Herero, Kalanga, Kgalagadi, Kua, Tsoa and Tswana, the language of wider communication in the region. Some cattlepost residents spoke their own language better than Tswana. Others spoke their own language and Tswana equally well. Some did not speak the language of their ethnic group, but spoke only Tswana. The dialect of Tswana spoken at the

cattleposts differed in the pronunciation of two letters from the dialect on which the Tswana orthography was based.

When I taught the letter for a sound that does not exist in their dialect, I would begin as usual by asking them to name the picture on the page. When they said “lehatshe,” I asked if they knew anyone who pronounced that word differently. Usually at least one person knew that the people in the south say “lefatshe”. I would then explain that the letter ‘h’ (which also occurs in Tswana) is pronounced /h/ by everyone, but that the letter ‘f’ is pronounced /f/ by some people and /h/ by others. I encouraged them to read the letter with the same pronunciation they use when speaking the word.

Some words in the Tswana primers were unknown to the learners at the cattleposts. This was sometimes due to an obscure word being used. Other times, learners’ spoken proficiency level in Tswana resulted in them not knowing the meaning of a word. Whenever I determined that a word was not understood, I would explain its meaning. Only rarely was there more than one word of this category per session.

When I was aware that some students spoke their own language better than Tswana, I used their own language to a small extent during the lesson. There was always more joy, fun and laughter when I would speak their mother tongue as I taught them to read Tswana. I used it primarily to ask simple questions in the earliest sessions when we used syllable cards: “Where is a ‘ba’?” “Is this ‘sa’?” “Take ‘la’”.

### **Results of the program at cattleposts**

Twenty adults successfully completed all five Tswana primers in the classes I led. At least eight more adults became literate in Tswana through independent study or through one-on-one tutoring by someone else who was literate. Nearly twenty more of those who participated in classes reached a level of literacy from which they could easily proceed through independent study to complete the rest of the five Tswana primers. Five or more boys in their early teens who had previously dropped out of school, returned to school after getting four months of initial literacy skills through the classes at the cattleposts. Over twenty pre-school aged children obtained pre-literacy skills by attending literacy classes with their parents or by being taught by a family member before entering the first year of primary school.

### **General applications**

Not everything that helped learners at cattleposts become literate will work in every literacy program: Not everyone can use sand as a blackboard, because not all soil is sand! But flexibility can be incorporated into every literacy program.

Of course literacy lessons should follow a pattern. Predictability in lessons increases the comfort and confidence of both the learners and teachers. But when the teacher notices that some students are uncomfortable or are struggling, perhaps some modifications to the approach are needed.

When segments of a language community are not participating in or are dropping out of the literacy program, it is easy to think that that segment of the community is innately less able to become literate. But perhaps the literacy program does not take the culture, lifestyle and needs of that segment of the community into account. Perhaps more flexibility is needed.

As Dr. Andrew Gonzales, former Education Secretary in the Philippines, mentioned in his plenary presentation at the Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Bangkok (November 2003), “In a multilingual society, there cannot be one plan – there must be many plans.” More learners can learn and literacy efforts can succeed in even more situations if plans are flexible and if alternative plans are implemented for unique situations.

Literacy committees and literacy consultants will increase the flexibility of the literacy programs by doing the following:

- Listening to the learners; encouraging them to choose the time, the place and the seating arrangement.
- Understanding the learner's culture and lifestyle; adapting the program so that it is acceptable within their cultural norms.
- Using what the people have: their language, their knowledge and the materials that are available to them so they can make learning materials for themselves and for their children.
- Empowering the learners to share their knowledge with others and to learn from others in their community.

### **References**

Republic of Botswana. 1994. *1991 Population and Housing Census: Summary Statistics on Small Areas (for settlements of 500 or more people). Volumes 1 to 5.* Gaborone: The Government Printer

UNESCO. 2003. *Indicators on Illiteracy.* United Nations. Available:  
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/social/illiteracy.htm>