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# **January 2012: Final Report**

Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls & Young Women P124070 – Liberia: Support to Women's Economic Empowerment

# **Literacy Strengthening Component**

**Grant #:** TF010014

January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012

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courage to participate in the program. Their participation served as motivating factor

for me and my team to delegate all of time in ensuring that they benefitted from

program and created the interest in improving their literacy and numeracy skills.

Roye B. Bloh Jr.

**Executive Director** 

National Adult Education Association of Liberia

#### 1. Introduction

NAEAL was contracted by the Ministry of Gender and Development to provide two services to the EPAG program in Liberia. The first part of the services was to provide basic literacy skills to 250 girls with very low or nearly no literacy skills in Bentol and Kakata. This was geared toward preparing these girls to fully participate in the business and job skills program of EPAG Round Two. The second aspect of the service was to provide ongoing technical assistance to EPAG's business development skills and job skills service providers in literacy and numeracy strengthening during the regular EPAG classroom training phase. All of these interventions came out as a result of what was observed during Round One of the EPAG training. It was observed that literacy levels varied widely in the classroom and even girls with strong verbal skills often lacked good writing skills.

This final evaluation report of Part II is aimed at providing a summary of the program implementation from June 2011 to January 2012. It reflects an overview of the program, scope of the report, summary of achievements made, how effective was the literacy strengthen program, issues, conclusion, and appendix. Please note that a detailed report on Part I (the mini literacy / numeracy course conducted for 250 girls in Bentol and Kakata) has already been submitted in addition to the regularly submitted training progress reports.

#### 2. Overview of Part II literacy strengthening program

Initially, it was planned for NAEAL to provide ongoing technical assistance to EPAG's business development skills and job skills service providers in literacy and numeracy strengthening. However, when the implementation process started, the need to provide extra support to 50 girls with additional literacy needs evolved. As a result, NAEAL's technical support was tailored into three key activities; the development of specific learning materials for three levels (A, B, and C), technical support to the service providers in the classroom, and extra literacy sessions in Bentol and Kakata.

The program was intended to provide technical support to the trainers in the classroom and provide training and capacity building in specific areas. The Part II services were designed to run for 24 working days spread over a period of six months. The four EPAG service providers were the target beneficiaries and each having 6 days of engagement. To provide the mentioned services, the following strategies were adopted to enhance the process:

- ➤ Assessing literacy / numeracy levels in the classroom
- Developing tips for trainers
- ➤ Developing learning materials for the three levels: low (Level A), intermediate (Level B) and proficient (Level C).

#### 3. Summary of achievements made

This section of the report provides updates on both the quantitative and qualitative data collected and analyzed from the literacy strengthening program. The data provided in this section are based on two evaluation exercises conducted; a post evaluation and an outcome evaluation.

**a. Methodology:** The methods adopted in these two exercises are as followed:

Post Evaluation: NAEAL and EPAG agreed to administer the same literacy / numeracy assessment pre test that was administered at the beginning of the program to the 1,300 Round Two trainees. The aim of this exercise was to measure the improvement the trainees have made in their literacy and numeracy skills. Based on this, NAEAL developed a schedule and shared it with all partners informing them of the different dates the post assessment would be administered. As a result of this, 931 trainees from the 17 training centers participated, as they were the girls in attendance on the given assessment day. Again, the two versions of the A, B, C assessment were randomly distributed as a means of preventing cheating. The assessment papers were taken by NAEAL, scored, and analyzed.

**Outcome Evaluation:** The outcome evaluation exercise targeted both the trainees and trainers. The aim was to gather qualitative data on the impact of the literacy strengthening activities on the trainees and how the activities impacted the work of the trainers. NAEAL developed a set of questionnaires and submitted them to EPAG for review. Based on the approved questionnaires from EPAG, a team was established and trained on how to administer the questionnaires. Based on the timeframe, we agreed that random sample of 5 trainees and 2 trainers will be selected per center. As a result, 85 trainees were interviewed and 34 trainers were interviewed.

#### b. Limitations of evaluation

- The data analysis exercise focus was limited primarily on the quantitative results (of the A, B, C post assessment exercise).
- Because of time factor and the need to conduct the evaluation exercises before January 20<sup>th</sup> (the end of the classroom training phase), only a small proportion (6.5%) of trainees, or 85 trainees, were selected to participate in the outcome evaluation exercise.

#### c. Post evaluation findings

This chart shows the summary pre and post assessment of the 931 trainees assessed. During the pre assessment, 569 girls were in Level A, 200 trainees in Level B, and 162 in Level C. After six months of EPAG engagement, 271 moved from Level A to Levels B and C, Level B increase by 1, and Level C has a growth of 270 trainees. This shows a high increment in the number of girls in Level C which is an indication of a successful achievement in the literacy program.

Please see more details of the results in Appendix A.

	e evaluation result sub-set of 1,300)	Post ev	aluation result
Level	# of trainees	Level	# of trainees
Level A	569	Level A	298
Level B	200	Level B	201
Level C	162	Level C	432
Total	931	Total	931

## **Progress performance**

The data analysis shows that of the 931 trainees who participated in post assessment activity, numerous girls were able to progress from one level to the next.

Pre evaluation result		Post evaluation result			
Level	# of trainees	Level	# of trainees		
		Level A to B	130		
Level A	569	Level A to C	141		
		# of trainees remaining in Level A	298		
Level B	200	Level B to C	129		
LOVOID	200	# of trainees remaining in Level B	71		
Level C	162	# of trainees remaining in Level C	162		
Total	931	Total	931		



#### Rate of progress from one level to another

The result table shows that 14% of the trainees progressed from Level A to B, 15% progressed from A to C, and 14% progressed from Level B to C. On average, the progress rate of the trainees from Levels A to B to C is 29% which is 271 trainees. This is a high rate of progress, especially among the trainees of Level A. It is an indication of the effectiveness of the learning materials, delivery of the materials by the trainers, and the level of interest exhibited by the trainees in improving their reading and writing skills. Besides that, this result shows that with a little teaching and practice a lot can be done to help girls with low literacy achieve improved reading, writing and numeracy skills.

#### Trainees remaining at the same level

The analysis also shows that, of the sample assessed, there are 531 trainees who remained in their respective levels. Nevertheless, nearly all girls experienced an improvement from their baseline scores.

Service provider	Trainees levels but	Total		
	Level A	Level B	Level C	
LEED	48	17	39	104
CEP	33	14	12	59
ARC	119	20	39	178
IRC	98	20	72	190
	298	71	162	531

Although these trainees remained within these levels, they made significant progress in their respective levels. 159 of trainees in Level A have averages between 56-70 points in the post assessment. Comparing their pre and post assessments averages, we observed great differences. Besides their average scores, they have improved in writing, spelling, and arithmetic. The trainees attempted to construct simple sentences on their assessment sheets. This was definitely an improvement, although perhaps not significant enough to push them to the next literacy / numeracy level. 58 of the trainees in Level B improved in their reading and sentence writing skills. Although their sentences

were not perfect, the results are encouraging. 149 of the trainees in Level C have excellent results (above 90 averages) in their assessment.

#### Trainees with scores below average 56 (in Level A)

From the 298 trainees in Level A at the post assessment time, 33 of them scored an average of 0-29 points, 106 scored an average of 30-56 points, and 159 scored an average of 57-70 points.

		Point range	
Service provider	0-29 points	30-55 points	57-70 points
LEED	1	14	31
CEP	7	11	20
IRC	14	41	53
ARC	11	40	55
Total	33	106	159

However, these trainees' assessment work actually shows considerable progresses made in their individual growth. Although these trainees have the lowest scores in the overall post assessment, they made improvement in their writing, spelling, and arithmetic skills. Comparing their results with their pre assessment results, there is a big difference.

#### d. Outcome evaluation findings

#### **Responses from trainees**

The outcome based evaluation was conducted through using questionnaires to interview trainees and trainers. As a result of the qualitative analysis done with the data collected, below are some of the findings.

The questionnaires used for the trainees and trainers are included in Appendix B.



#### A trainee being interview in Kakata

- o 75 (of the 85) trainees expressed their satisfaction with literacy / numeracy strengthening activities. According to them, the program helped to improve their reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. They also expressed confidence in demonstrating these skills. (The other 10 respondents did not disaggregate their feedback with the literacy activities from the regular EPAG training.)
- o 90% of the trainee respondents expressed their preparedness in participating in public activities and making personal contributions in discussions. For example, Erika Kortee was in the mini literacy program in Kakata from mid-March to early-July 2011 and entered the regular EPAG training. She started off with a very low skill level and scored 100% during



the post assessment. Erika said, "I do not only use my literacy skill in the classroom or during training. I apply my skills in the community and my friends are proud of me. I am using my skills to also help my friends especially those in my EPAG Team group."

- All of the respondents expressed their satisfaction in participating in the literacy activities. They said, at the beginning, they thought the literacy program was an extra burden for them. As the training starting progressing, we became more and more interested in the activities.
- o 78 of the (85) respondents said with their present literacy skills they can make lists of items, read short stories, and try to fill in application forms if the opportunity is provided. One of the Level C trainees said: "I can read articles in the paper, understand what I am reading, and do my own analysis on the issue in the article." Another respondent said, "Since I'm able to read and write now, it has become easier for me to make any business plan."

#### Direct quotes from respondents on specific questions:

# When asked if there was anything new you learned, some of the respondents said:

- "Reading what is given in a story and explaining in your own words"
- "How to read a menu at a restaurant"
- "Do problem solving questions and writing receipts. I can talk among my friends now. I am able to convey information to them. I never knew all these things at first"
- o "I can have study class for children in my community"

# When asked how the program can be improved in the future, the respondents expressed the following:

- o "Bring more stories for us to read to improve our reading skills".
- "Extend the literacy training to other communities"
- "EPAG should provide trainees with worksheets and workbook at the beginning of the project"

#### **Responses from trainers**

Although it took considerable effort to win all the trainers' support of the literacy activities at first, in the end the pay off was clear. The 34 trainers who were sampled said the literacy / numeracy strengthening activities helped greatly in improving the trainees' reading and writing skills. They said the problem solving exercises on the worksheets were an effective way of helping the trainees to understand and analyze real life situations.



A trainer responds to outcome evaluation questionnaire

- Several trainers reported that the literacy strengthening activities challenged and encouraged trainees to go back to formal school. The trainees now feel inspired to improve. According to the trainers, some trainees have already started taking night school classes in their communities.
- The trainers also said that the literacy activities helped bring about another change in the attitude of their trainees. The confidence inspired by their newly acquired literacy skills encouraged the girls to do independent work and take initiative in the classroom. It helped to increase their self-esteem.

#### e. NAEAL's overall perspective on the evaluations

The evaluations of the literacy strengthening program were very necessary and provided the opportunity for NAEAL to gather information of the program at several levels: the trainees, the trainers, and the partners. In this section, we will share our thoughts on the following:

- ✓ Differences between communities
- ✓ NAEAL's recommendations for EPAG and literacy / numeracy strengthening
- ✓ Challenges faced

#### Differences between communities

The literacy support activities took place in three locations: Greater Monrovia, Bentol, and Kakata. Each of the locations has its own characteristics that are unique to the girls who were engaged.

In Greater Monrovia, the literacy level of the girls was generally higher and they were better prepared. From the pre assessment result, we had more girls in level B and C in Greater Monrovia. In Kakata, it was a little bit different. The girls in Kakata were mixed in their literacy levels—although the vast majority were on the lower end of the spectrum. The pre assessment result shows girl with high, immediate, low, and no literacy skills. In Bentol, the situation was also unique; the literacy level of the girls was very low. Even after three and half months of engagement in the mini literacy / numeracy courses in Bentol and Kakata, of the 250 girls, many (60) needed additional attention and took part in the extra literacy training sessions.

Although the girls in Bentol had the lowest literacy level among the three locations, they exhibited the highest level of interest. They had the best attendance records and were always willing to do additional work. Besides that, the 60 girls with very low literacy who attended the extra literacy sessions in both Bentol and Kakata showed similar interest.

#### NAEAL's recommendations for EPAG and literacy / numeracy strengthening

- Just how life skills is a cross-cutting activity for the EPAG business and job skills trainings, literacy should be given similar consideration in future planning for the project. A designated trainer should be responsible for the delivery of the literacy activities and a budget line should be established to support literacy activities by each service provider.
- This program demonstrates that a little teaching and coaching can go a long way. At the time of the pre assessment, many of the girls lacked confidence in their reading and writing abilities. They may have had some schooling, but were so out of practice they considered themselves unlettered. As it turns out, getting the girls to practice a little at a time revives latent skills and enables them to make rapid progress in progressing through Levels A through C.
- In all future EPAG activities, literacy assessments of the trainee should be the next activity after the recruitment process. This will give a clear picture of the girls' literacy levels and how the partners can strategize to help address their literacy needs.

#### **Challenges faced**

- The issue of low literacy will be a challenge for EPAG in more rural areas across Liberia. If the program has to reach those vulnerable girls in these communities, literacy strengthening activities such as the one done in Bentol and Kakata should be the gateway.
- The issue of reading for girls in Monrovia with so called "high literacy levels" is a challenge—they easily look down on such activities. Therefore, for these girls using Sonie's Stories and worksheets with real life situations for the girls to work with is key. This keeps their interest high and meets them at their level.

#### 4. NAEAL's experiences

#### a. Staffing Part II

In our strategy for the staffing of Part II of the literacy strengthening program, NAEAL implemented the following:

NAEAL maintained the Project Coordinator with her assigned duties of planning, coordinating, and training. The Executive Director and Program Manager of NAEAL formed a supporting team to provide all other technical services in terms of material development and trainings. Two of the Part I staff were hired to provide training support to the two extra literacy support activities in Bentol and Kakata. With this arrangement, the program implementation was successfully carried out.

The below staff played the following roles during Part II program implementation:

**Mr. Roye B. Bloh Jr.**: Under this program, led the process in the development of all of the learning materials. He participated in the ToT training for service provider staff and paid periodic field visits to the centers. He also provided oversight to the NAEAL team members.

**Joseph Yoko:** Supported the project coordinator in supervising the program at the field level. He participated in training and coaching of the trainers and functioned as a trainer on many occasions.

**Desterlyn Allen:** She supervised the entire program and was the direct contact person from NAEAL to the service providers. She served as a trainer and supported the two trainers during the extra literacy activities in Bentol and Kakata. She attended coordination meetings and provided updates on the literacy strengthening program.

Olive Dolo and Comfort Clarke: These are two of the trainers who worked with the trainees in Bentol and Kakata during Part I of the program activities. They were hired to facilitate eleven sessions under the extra literacy activities in Bentol and Kakata during Part II.

#### b. New learning for NAEAL

With NAEAL's involvement in the EPAG literacy / numeracy strengthening component, the program specific learning outcomes were clearly outlined in the terms of reference. Therefore our focus was on achieving these outcomes. We did not realize that our involvement was going to result in creating another approach to support literacy activities for low level adolescents in Liberia.

In our regular approach to literacy support activities for donors and partners, we use the literacy materials that were developed to support NAEAL's Literacy Program. This program was launched by the Ministry of Education and is currently being used by cross-section of institutions, donors, and Government entities to support their literacy activities across Liberia. NAEAL' typical approach involves training of volunteer community facilitators; providing the learning materials, which include a workbook and facilitator manual; directly implementing the program activities for three months; and providing technical and monitoring support for six months.

Our involvement in this project with EPAG has created an opportunity for NAEAL to have all of the necessary tools to develop a literacy program specifically for adolescent girls and young people. We will immediately commence the development process. We call on the EPAG team to provide continuing technical support in helping NAEAL achieve this goal. It will as serve as outcome of the EPAG program in Liberia. It may even be strategic for EPAG to support the formation of such a program, with additional funding, to partner with future rounds of the EPAG project.

#### 5. Lessons learned

These are overall lessons learned, based on our experience with EPAG compared to other projects:

- In our experience, NAEAL has observed that low attendance rates undermine the achievement of literacy skills by trainees. Unless the trainees are largely encouraged by other motivating factors, their ability to improve their literacy skills may end at the close of the program. Therefore attaching additional values to program of such nature will serve as added factors to empower girls with low literacy skills. We have experienced this in past literacy programs that targeted young people. The focus of these programs was to improve the literacy skills of young and leave them to find their own solutions to those expectations that came with to the program. As a result, the attendance rates dropped, the interest of program decreased, and those few that were interested in continuing the program got discouraged. The EPAG approach was quite different from what we experienced in the past. The learners were promised enrollment into the business and job skills training if they completed their literacy training. This served as a major factor that contributed to the high attendance rates we experienced.
- In Liberia, donor attention to organizational and financing issues is crucial, but not sufficient to help trainees acquire basic literacy skills or improve their reading and writing skills. Attention to instructional and applicable materials as demonstrated during the implementation of this program is also necessary. While it is true that thousands of dollars was provided to support the literacy activities, the focus of the EPAG team was not only about organizational and financial issues that evolved from reports. The EPAG program support team was concerned about the quality of the learning materials for the training, the process of delivering these materials, and the type of learning that was taking place in the classrooms. These steps served as factors for NAEAL to be more focused and provide all of the necessary support to ensure the achievement of the

program objectives. If this approach is adapted by other donors and programs in Liberia, this will help national organizations develop better learning approaches based on Liberian experiences and develop better, higher quality programs to help young Liberians with low literacy skills.

- Generally speaking, literacy activities are usually considered to be a low cost program in Liberia and are therefore structured around this perception. These low cost programs require volunteers who may not be reliable or qualified for the work. Therefore programs considering literacy intervention should take into consideration staff that will deliver the program at a higher quality standard. If those staff selected to deliver the program are unqualified or unprepared, the objectives and desired results will not be achieved. The EPAG literacy strengthening program in the very beginning set the standard high in its call for proposals. The trainers were high caliber and fairly compensated. The result of this approach is that the expected results were achieved. 1,300 girls' literacy skills were strengthened and the skills are currently enhancing the business and job skills activities. In short, you get what you pay for.
- Intensive training and supervision of NGO staff who intend to incorporate literacy into their program is important. Although some NGOs can carry out quality business, job, and life skills programs, they may need a lot of support and monitoring if they are to incorporate literacy into their core activities. From our experience in EPAG, at first the literacy support program was considered as a responsibility of NAEAL. The service providers did not consider it to be a core part of Round Two. After months of engagement, this changed and the whole team saw that the literacy activities were a key factor to help the trainees develop their business and job skills. It the end of the process, the literacy activities were no longer considered as extra burden for the EPAG trainers.

#### 6. Conclusion

Overall, the program achieved it objectives by contributing toward the 1,300 Round Two trainees improving their literacy / numeracy skills. From the evaluation review exercises conducted, the findings are encouraging and inspiring. It shows that the literacy strengthening program was worthwhile and can be transformed into a program to support adolescent girls with low or no literacy skills acquire some basic reading and writing skills that will make them functional in their communities. The evaluations show that achievements were made at three levels (A, B, C) and across all nine EPAG communities.

The service providers and partners also directly benefitted as some have expressed their willingness to adopt NAEAL's literacy approach with other programs they are running. For example, IRC has expressed interest in adapting the approach to support its skills training program in Nimba County for the Ivorian refugees.

# 7. Appendices

# A: Post assessment results chart

		SUMM	MARY OF LEV	/ELS PER PA	RTNER						
SP	ID.	same levels but w		Progressive stages of trainees from one level to another  Trainees remaining in same levels but with improved scores		same levels but with		same levels but with		- Total	
25	IP	From Level A to B	From Level A to C	From Level B to C	Level A	Level B	Level C	lotai			
	NAEAL										
ARC		40	36	14	90	4	4	188			
7 (0	CESP										
		9	30	28	30	15	35	147			
	CAP										
IRC		12	2	8	60	11	18	111			
	EDUCARE	16	15	26	37	10	54	158			
	LEED	30	42	40	48	17	39	216			
	CEP	23	16	13	33	14	12	111			
7	TOTAL	∠ა 130	141	129	298	71	162	931			
<u> </u>		130	171	143	230	/ 1	102	301			

## **B**: Trainee and trainer evaluation questions

#### Trainees' questions

#### Methodology:

Speak to a random selection of EPAG Round Two trainees (at least 5 girls from a center). Ask the following questions and take careful notes on responses.

- 1. In your own opinion, how well can you read, write, and do small arithmetic activities?
- **2.** Are there things you know now that you did not know before you started your literacy / numeracy strengthening activities? If yes, please give examples.
- **3.** Are there any skills you can boast about now that you did not have before the literacy / numeracy activities?
- **4.** What kind of materials are you now reading with your improved literacy skills? (For example, signboard, pamphlet, newspaper?)
- **5.** How comfortable are you taking part in literacy / numeracy activities at your training center? Please describe in detail.
- **6.** With your present literacy skills, can you write a list, read an article in the newspaper, or fill in an application form on your own?
- **7.** What are your ideas for improving the literacy / numeracy strengthening activities in the future?

#### **Trainers' questions**

#### Methodology:

Speak to a random selection of EPAG Round Two trainers (at least 2 trainers from a center). Ask the following questions and take careful notes on responses.

- **1.** Have the literacy / numeracy strengthening activities enhanced your trainees' performance in EPAG's regular business, job, and life skills training? If yes, please describe in what ways.
- 2. Since the girls started the literacy / numeracy activities, are there any changes you have observed in them? If yes, give some examples.

#### 3. IN BENTOL AND KAKATA ONLY:

Would it have been possible to run the regular EPAG training with these specific Round Two girls **without** the extra literacy / numeracy support? Why or why not?

- **4.** Based on your own informal estimate, how many trainees moved up a level during the classroom training? Moved from A to B? B to C?
- 5. Based on their recent literacy / numeracy experiences, are any of your low literacy girls planning to resume education, enroll in night school, etc?
- **6.** What were some of the challenges faced during the literacy / numeracy strengthening activities?
- **7.** What are your ideas for improving the literacy / numeracy strengthening activities in the future?

In your opinion, is it worth including literacy / numeracy in the future of the EPAG project? Why or why not?

**8.** Is there any special thing you observed about the literacy / numeracy program that you would like to share with us?

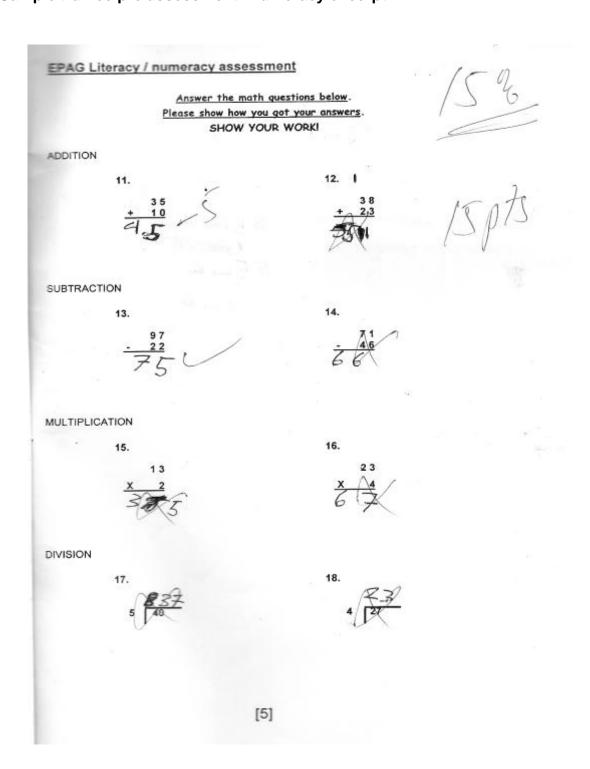
# C: Scanned sample copies of trainees pre and post assessment papers

The pre assessment of trainee that moved from Level A to  $\ensuremath{\mathsf{C}}$ 

## Sample trainee pre assessment: Literacy excerpt

S Literacy / numeracy assessment	
and the story and answer the questions.	
Try to write sentences if you can.	
27 A. J. A. Lind <sup>®</sup>	
"Fatu's List"	
was unhappy. She had a bad day. She was unable to fall asleep. She tossed and it. She kept thinking of all the bad things that happened.	
ould stand it no longer. Finally, she sat up. She found a piece of paper and a personal pot her flashlight. She said to herself, "I will write a list of all the things that happened pot her flashlight. She said to herself, "I will write a list of all the things will be on the paper, not in my head. I will be able to fall asleep."	
Then the bad tillings will be a state of the	
wrote a long list. When she finished, her filling to the list. When she finished, her filling the list.	
DB RNIGAL.	
STIONS:	
. What do we know about Fatu?	
A /	
9. Do you think she is a careful person? Why or why not?	
9. Do you think she is a careful person	
2 1000	
10. What do you think of Fatu's strategy? Is it a good idea? Why or why	
not?	
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[4]	

#### Sample trainee pre assessment: Numeracy excerpt

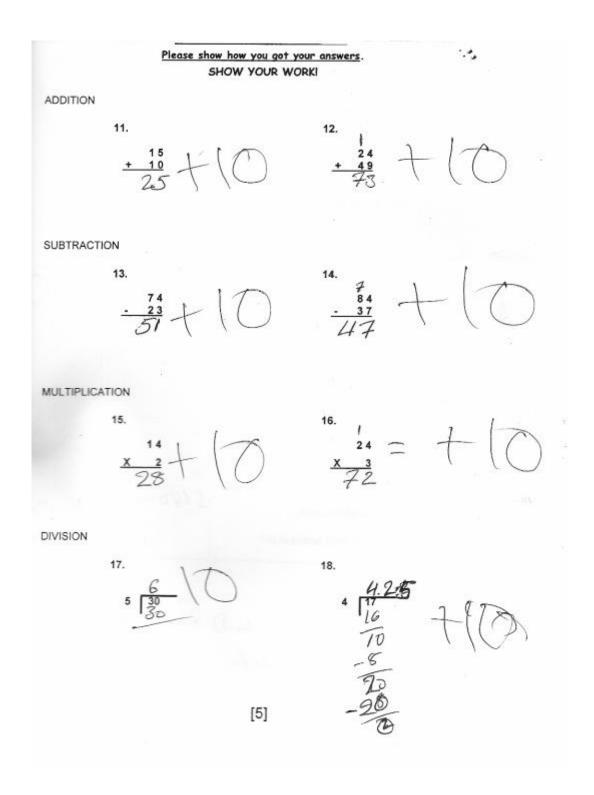


#### Same trainee post assessment: Literacy excerpt

# EPAG Literacy / numeracy assessment Read the story and answer the questions. Try to write sentences if you can. "Comfort's New Job" Comfort completed her training program and never missed a session. Today she is talking to her friend. She is feeling very happy. She is starting her new job tomorrow. She is mending her skirt. She is shining her shoes. She is thinking about her first day of work. Comfort plans to wake up soon tomorrow morning to get ready. She will make sure she arrives early to her first day on the job. QUESTIONS: 8. Why is Comfort happy? A is happy because the is talking to he triend. as also Startingher new job tomorrow 9. What did Comfort do to get ready for her job? 10. What advice would you give Comfort to help her start her job? MY advice to comfort is that she must a known ys be on time to her Job Side every day.

[4]

#### Same trainee post assessment: Numeracy excerpt



# A trainee who remains in low Level A but shows improvement:

Pre assessment: Literacy excerpt

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## Post assessment: Literacy excerpt

NAME:	MAKCABEA	H KAMARAH	
COMMUNITY:			-
CLASS:		(4	-
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