

Unit 1:

Preparing For

The World Of

Work

Activity 1.1: How To Be Professional



Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

**Objectives:**

* Discuss what it means to have professional behavior.
* Understand why it is important to act professionally.

**Materials:**

* Flipchart and markers

**Facilitation Steps:**

1. Ask the trainees what it means to have professional behavior. Write the trainees’ responses on the flipchart.
2. Ask the girls why they think having professional behavior is important. Ask them to discuss this with a partner and come up with at least two answers. Invite the girls to share their answers with the class.
3. Explain to the participants that maintaining a job or business in Liberia is not easy. They will have to be honest, communicate, have discipline, and do their very best every day. They must practice professional behavior if they want to succeed.
4. Guide the girls to follow these 10 tips. For each one, write the tip on the flipchart and facilitate a discussion about why it is important. Ask the girls for examples about when they did or did not follow the tip in their own lives. You may need to define some of the big words for the girls.
5. **Be punctual.**

Always show up for work early. Being on time is the first key to success. Rainy season is not an excuse to be late. Know how to manage your time. Respect time.

1. **Be respectful.**

Demonstrate respect to your employer, supervisor, co-workers, and customers. People without respect will never make it as a professional.

1. **Have a positive attitude.**

The power of a positive attitude is strong. Always have a positive attitude with your job or business—it will carry you far!

1. **Demonstrate honesty & integrity.**

Never lie or steal. Be someone your boss, co-workers, and customers can TRUST. Be the best person you can be. Be a woman of substance!

1. **Always communicate.**

If you don’t understand something, ask questions. If you need to talk about something with your boss or co-workers, do it. If you are going to be late or something happens, call you boss immediately—don’t wait.

1. **Have discipline.**

Work hard to accomplish your job. Follow the rules and don’t make excuses. Be responsible—be someone your boss and co-workers can depend on. Pay attention to detail and quality. Hold yourself to the highest standards.

1. **Be proactive.**

Always move on to the next task to make yourself helpful. If you see something that needs to be done, do it. Don’t just sit there, do something positive! Make the most of your work.

1. **Be a team player.**

Whether on the job or in your business, always remember: United we stand, divided we fall. Work together with your co-workers to solve problems and do the best job.

1. **Find the balance.**

Balancing your home responsibilities with your work responsibilities is not easy. You need to make a plan for this with your partner, family, and friends.

1. **Plan ahead.**

Professional people are organized people. They plan weeks, months, and even years ahead. Make your professional plans and stick to them!

1. Now, move on to make three more important points about being a professional:
2. Maintaining professionalism in the workplace is very important.

* As a woman in the world of work, it is important to know how to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in the workplace.
* You must never engage in sexual activities with co-workers, bosses, bosses’ family members, etc. It is important to avoid these situations and report them back to EPAG if they arise.

**Facilitator’s note:**

There is more about preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in EPAG Facilitator’s Tip Guide and Unit 5 in this manual.

DEFINITIONS:

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION is exchanging money, shelter, food, or other goods for sex or sexual favors with someone in a less powerful position.

SEXUAL ABUSE is threatening or forcing someone to have sex or provide sexual favors under unequal conditions.

SEA is when any person in a position of power gets sex or sexual favors in exchange for something the less powerful person needs. SEA is often called “something for something” in Liberia.

* For men and women, even getting involved in a consensual sexual relationship (a relationship with equal power relations) in the workplace is never a good idea. It can lead to problems down the line.

**WARNING:**

**Sex and work do not mix!**

Sex and work do not mix.

* For women in non-traditional areas, such as house painting, there will be times when people will not want to hire you simply because you are a woman. They will say that it is a “man’s job.” You will need to have courage and demonstrate to them that you can do the job very professionally—even better than a man!

(TIP: Provide references for past jobs.)

1. Maintain workplace ethics—never steal.

* Youth in Liberia today have a bad reputation. Employers do not like to hire young people because they think they will surely steal.
* As a young woman representing the EPAG project, you must NEVER steal from your employer. It will spoil the reputation of the whole program.

**Stealing today will hurt you tomorrow.**

* Remember this: Stealing today will hurt you tomorrow. You might get away with it in the short-term, but eventually you will get caught; you will get fired; and you will not be able to find a new job. This is a guarantee. Save yourself the trouble: Don’t steal.

1. Professional networking.

In Liberia, most people get jobs based on who they know. It can be hard to find work unless you know a lot of big people. Professional networking is a method of making connections with people in the professional world. Networking is a very important skill for young professionals.

A lot of the things EPAG will organize for you will help you build your professional networks. When you meet people from various companies, be sure to introduce yourself and make a good impression. You never know when you might find yourself back with that person looking for a job!

1. In closing, wrap up the session by encouraging the girls to start practicing their professional behavior right away. For example:

* Always show up for session on time (be early!)
* “De rain” is not an excuse to be late. Plan ahead.
* Communicate with your trainer to ask permission to miss session.

What are some other ways we can practice our professional behavior in the EPAG training day-to-day?

Activity 1.2: Hygiene And Dress: Preparing My Image[[1]](#footnote-1)\*



Time: 1 hour

**Objectives:**

* Discuss the importance of hygiene and dress.
* Describe specific tips for practicing good hygiene.
* Understand how hygiene and dress create your professional image.

**Materials:**

* Flipchart and markers

**Facilitation Steps:**

1. Explain to the trainees that hygiene is keeping one’s body clean and appearance neat. Practicing personal hygiene helps keep germs away from the body and plays an important role in healthy living. To be a professional person, it is important to be clean and neat.

**Facilitator’s note:**

There is more on personal hygiene in the “Sexual And Reproductive Health” and “Healthy Living” units in this manual.

1. Ask the girls to name examples of personal hygiene. Write the trainees’ responses on the flipchart. Also list the following examples (it is best to prepare this flipchart ahead of session):
   * Wash hands regularly with soap and clean water, especially after using the toilet, and before and after eating (wash between fingers, under your fingernails, and the backs of your hands, too!).
   * Brush / clean teeth after every meal, at least twice per day.
   * Keep hair clean, brushed, or braided
   * Keep nails clean. Grow nails only if you can keep them clean. Clip nails short, along their shape.
   * Take bath at least once per day with soap and clean water—be sure to always clean private parts and underarms.
   * Personal hygiene is especially important while menstruating (during your period or “time”). During this time, it is even more important to wash and keep clean.

**SMELLING GOOD**:

If you don’t have deodorant / spray, don’t worry! You can use lime, deodorant soap, special oils, or baby powder.

* + Smell good—use deodorant /spray under your arms.
  + Wash clothes regularly.
  + Wear clean clothes daily, especially clean underwear**.**

1. Explain to the participants that proper hygiene also involves how we dress. Clothes should always be clean when attending class, church, mosque, going to job, attending special events, etc. When clothes are dirty it can make us look sloppy, unorganized, and unprofessional. Make the point that dressing appropriately is not about being rich, it’s about taking care of your appearance.

Ask the girls to think of someone wearing clean clothes and someone wearing messy clothes. What do they think about each person?

1. Open a discussion with the trainees about their personal image. How do they present themselves? What messages does this communicate?

Explain to the trainees that EPAG girls are PROFESSIONALS. This means no junction, no flashing, no beeping (showing your buttocks, lower back, or cleavage). Let’s prepare our image to be appropriate, neat, modest, and professional.

1. Conclude the activity by stating that proper hygiene and dress will help keep the girls healthy and happy.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS!

Activity 1.3: Let’s Be Realistic: Managing Expectations



Time: 45 minutes

**Objectives:**

* Discuss the reality of the Liberian labor market.
* Encourage girls to be realistic about their professional expectations.

**Materials:**

* None

**Facilitation Steps:**

1. Open a discussion with the trainees about the difficulty of finding work in Liberia. Ask the girls, “Even if you have a Master’s degree in Liberia, is it easy to find a job?” Guide the discussion to realizing that the Liberian labor market is limited.

**SUCCESS IS LIMITED**:

Start with realistic expectations from the beginning. You will have to work your way up the ladder of success.

1. Explain to the trainees that EPAG is a great opportunity, but they need to manage their expectations. Their business or job will start small—at the bottom—and they will have to work their way up over time. Remember: Every big person starts somewhere small. Tell the girls, “You will start your business or job making small money, but over time you will be able to earn bigger money.”
2. Ask the girls to get into groups and share stories about business or career women in their community who started small but are successful today. Invite the trainees to share these stories with the class.

You can tell the story of a market woman, a doctor, or a Minister. Tell the girls, “Even if you start your small willah business selling groundpeas, if you work hard and have patience, ten years from now you could own four houses and run a wholesale business!”

1. Conclude the session by summarizing: “Let’s be realistic: Success does not happen overnight. You must have patience and fortitude. Work your way up over time, be professional, send yourself back to school, make long-term plans!”

Activity 1.4: The Importance Of Respecting Time[[2]](#footnote-2)\*



Time: 45 minutes

**Objectives:**

* Discuss why being punctual is important.
* Understand what time management is and identify some ways to practice good time management.

**Materials**

* Flipchart and markers

**Facilitation Steps:**

1. Ask the trainees if they think it is important to respect time. Why do they think it is important? Write the trainees’ responses on the flipchart. Teach the girls the word “punctual.” Write it on the flipchart and write the definition: “Being punctual means being on time.” Say the word “punctual” and have the girls repeat the word after you. Punctuality is the key to success.
2. Ask the girls what “time management” means to them. Write the trainees’ responses on the flipchart. Now, offer this definition: “Time management is about how you prioritize and organize your time.” Find similarities with the definitions the girls provided.
3. Ask the trainees to give an example of when they have practiced good time management in their lives (at school, at work, at church, etc.).
4. Explain that bad time management can lead to last-minute rushes to meet deadlines, causing stress and poor performance. This may lead to problems with your class, job, or business. It can even result in your boss putting you down / firing you. Don’t play with time. RESPECT TIME. Time is money.
5. Ask the girls to get into groups and come up with three ways to practice good time management in their day-to-day lives. Invite the groups to share their answers with the class.

Activity 1.5: Self-Confidence: I Can Do It![[3]](#footnote-3)\*



Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

**Objectives:**

* Understand the meaning of self-confidence.
* Discuss why self-confidence is important in your job or business.

**Materials:**

* Flipchart and markers

**Facilitation Steps:**

1. Explain to the class that a self-confident person is someone who is empowered and motivated to do well and accomplishes her goals. She believes in her abilities.
2. Ask the girls, “What is a self-confident person like?” Invite one or two volunteers to do a short role-play portraying a self-confident person.

**Facilitator’s note:**

BE CAREFUL: The facilitator must guide this role-play to portray positive traits, such as: head held high, smile on face, firm handshake, confident voice. Don’t let it become about wearing expensive clothes or jewelry. That is superficial. Self-confidence comes from the inside and shows on the outside!

**Self-confidence comes from the inside and shows on the outside!**

1. Ask the group to discuss the following questions:

* How does a self-confident person walk? Talk?
* What kind of expression does the person have on his or her face?
* How does the person interact with others?
* What are some of the feelings the person may have?

1. Raise these discussion points:

* A self-confident person feels she can accomplish her goals (although she can still experience doubts and ask for assistance).
* She is confident of her abilities and isn’t afraid to meet new people or try new things.
* A self-confident person is also confident enough to ask for help when she needs it.

1. Ask the participants if they think it is important to have self-confidence in their job or business. Why do they think it is important? Write the trainees’ responses on the flipchart.
2. Explain to the girls that when the EPAG team meets with the private sector (entrepreneurs, business people, employers), they always tell EPAG to teach the girls to be SELF-CONFIDENT. There are three key things they always say:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **#** | **SELF-CONFIDENT PEOPLE DO THESE THREE THINGS:** |
| **1** | **MAKE A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION**  Firm handshake. Clear speaking. Professional attitude. |
| **2** | **SPEAK DIRECTLY**  Speak with confidence. Make eye-contact. Pronounce your words clearly and audibly / loud enough. |
| **3** | **ASK QUESTIONS TO CLARIFY THE SITUATIONS OR TASK**  When you don’t know something, ask! In Liberia, often times employees are too shy to ask their employer questions when they don’t know something. This can cost you your job. When you don’t know—ask! It’s always a better strategy. |

1. Ask the girls to get into groups and do a role-play on self-confidence in their job or business. Go around to each group and help them with their scenario. Invite some or all of the groups to perform their role-play in front of the class.

Activity 1.6: Goal Setting: Making It Happen[[4]](#footnote-4)\*



Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

**Objectives:**

* Define the meaning of the word “goal.”
* Discuss future long-term and short-term goals.
* Understand why goals are important in life.

**Materials:**

* Flipchart and markers
* Goals worksheet handout

**Facilitation Steps:**

1. Ask the participants if they know what the word “goal” means. Write the trainees’ responses on the flipchart.
2. Write the following definition on the flipchart: “A goal is something good a person works to achieve.” Find similarities with the definitions the girls provided.
3. Explain to the girls that professional people set goals in their personal and professional lives. People who accomplish their goals usually define what it is that they want and pursue it in a realistic way. Goals can be divided into the following two types:
   * **Long-term goals:**

Long-term goals are goals that can only be accomplished over a longer period of time, such as five years or ten years. Examples include going to college, getting married and having two children, becoming an international business woman, etc.

* + **Short-term goals:**

Short-term goals are goals that can be accomplished in within six months, such as keeping the house clean, saving ten dollars, registering my business, going to the clinic and getting tested, etc.

1. Next, let the participants know that the best goals are “**S M A R T**.” This means they are:

(Write this on the flipchart. Have it prepared ahead of session. Take time to explain the big words to make sure everyone understands.)

**S**pecific – You should know exactly what you want to accomplish.

**M**easurable – You should be able to gauge progress towards goals.

**A**chievable – The goal should be something you can achieve.

**R**ealistic – You should be able to achieve the goal within the timeframe.

**T**ime bound – You should set time limits to reach the goal.

1. Explain to the girls that goal setting is important because it:
   * Gives meaning and direction to one’s activities
   * Serves as a guide for decision making
   * Increases one’s self-esteem if goals are attained
   * Provides motivation, especially when things are difficult
2. Next, distribute copies of the “Goals Worksheet” handout to each participant. Ask that they not fill them in at this point. Tell the girls that you will review it together first.

Use a sample goal to guide you, go through each section of the worksheet, explain the heading, and provide examples.

**Facilitator’s note:**

Be sure to practice this ahead of time. Come up with at least three or four good examples of long-term and short-term goals.

1. Make sure that the participants understand the use of the Goals Worksheet. Then, ask the girls to think about one important short-term goal and one important long-term goal. The goals can be personal goals, career goals, or both!
2. Give the girls time to fill in their worksheets. Offer help to girls who are stuck. If some of the girls have trouble reading or writing, you should put them into groups so their friends can help them fill in the worksheet. Invite the girls to share their goals with the whole class.

**G O A L S W O R K S H E E T**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Short-term goal** | **Long-term goal** |
| Benefits in reaching my goal | Benefits in reaching my goal |
| What might stand in my way? | What might stand in my way? |
| What do I need to learn or do? | What do I need to learn or do? |
| Who will encourage me? | Who will encourage me? |
| Plan of action: Steps I will take | Plan of action: Steps I will take |
| Completion date | Completion date |

Activity 1.7: Where Will I Be Ten Years From Now?[[5]](#footnote-5)\*



Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

**Objectives:**

**GUEST SPEAKERS!**

Throughout the six month classroom training, be sure to have different professional women serve as inspirational guest speakers.

* List the future jobs or careers the girls would like to have.
* Brainstorm ways to communicate future career goals with their families.

**Materials:**

* Flipchart and markers

**Facilitation Steps:**

1. Ask the girls if they know the difference between a job and a career. After they provide answers, explain that a “job” can be something a person does to earn money over a short or long period of time.

A “career,” however, is a chosen profession, usually performed over several years. A career often requires that a person become educated and /or gain experience in a particular subject. For example, a woman might have a career in medicine. The woman might have worked as a nurse, a community health education, and then as a hospital administrator. Thus, a person can find many “jobs” within the same “career.”

1. Ask each girl to think of two jobs or careers she might like to have ten years from now. You can give them some examples: International Business Woman; Wholesale Business Woman; Nurse; Agriculturalist; Bus Driver; Engineer; Restaurant Owner; etc. Write the trainees’ responses on the flipchart.
2. Ask the participants what skills and education they think are necessary for a particular job or career. Write the responses next to the jobs listed on the flipchart.
3. Ask the girls how they will reach their goal in ten years. Give some examples:

**For example:**

I will start with a small business selling coal. I will save my money and go back to school. I will finish high school. I will grow my business bigger and register my business. I will open a store where I sell wholesale goods at competitive prices. I will become an International Business Woman.

**For example:**

I will work as a waitress. I will save my money to go to college. I will study engineering so I can learn how to build roads and bridges. I will get a job at a road building company to get experience. Later, I will start a construction company and help build up Liberia.

1. Ask the girls the following questions and facilitate an interactive discussion:

* Have you discussed your future plans and career goals with your family?
* Why is it important to discuss these plans with your family?
* What future do they see for you? Is it different from your own?
* If so, how might you let them know about future plans and career goals?

1. Give the girls a chance to discuss these questions and brainstorm ways to communicate their future plans and career goals with their family. Write their responses on the flipchart.
2. Ask the girls to get into groups and create role-plays in which a girl discusses her future with her family. (Be sure to portray positive examples!) Invite some or all of the groups to present their role-play to the class. Take this opportunity to highlight effective ways to communicate with the family.

**Facilitator’s note:**

Guide the girls to portray positive examples of interacting with their families to talk about career goals. For example, sometimes an auntie, uncle, community leader, or pastor might be part of the role-play to help talk to the parents, husband, etc.

1. \* Activity adapted from “Youth Education for Life Skills (YES) Liberia, Module III – Keeping Healthy,” LTI 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. \* Activity adapted from “Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth” (CESLY) Work Readiness Module, Level 1 draft 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. \* Activity adapted from USAID’s 2008 “Ambassador Girls Scholarship Program: Girls’ Mentoring Resource Guide” (LINK: <http://agsp.worlded.org>). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. \* Activity adapted from USAID’s 2008 “Ambassador Girls Scholarship Program: Girls’ Mentoring Resource Guide” (LINK: <http://agsp.worlded.org>) and Peace Corps’s “Life Skills Manual,” 2001: Publication No. M0063 (LINK: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/library/M0063_lifeskillscomplete.pdf>). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. \* Activity adapted from USAID’s 2008 “Ambassador Girls Scholarship Program: Girls’ Mentoring Resource Guide” (LINK: <http://agsp.worlded.org>). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)