

PN ACA-364

SD Publication Series
Office of Sustainable Development
Bureau of Africa
U.S. Agency for International Development

Planning for Community Participation in Education

ABEL Technical Product No. 1



USAID's Advancing Basic Education and Literacy (ABEL) Project prepared this product with funding and guidance from USAID's Bureau for Africa. The work was performed by the Academy for Educational Development and Creative Associates International, Inc. Potomac Interactive Corporation provided technical production services.

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ABEL Project number 936-5832
Contract numbers HNE-5832-C-00-4075-00 (core)
and HNE-5832-Q-4076-00 (requirements)

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Planning for Community Participation in Education

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February 1997

Prepared for the Office of Sustainable Development
Bureau for Africa
U.S. Agency for International Development

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How to Use This Manual

Minimum System Requirements

386 IBM-compatible personal computer
8 MB of RAM
8 MB of free hard drive space
Windows 3.1, Windows for Workgroups 3.11, Windows NT 3.51, Windows NT 4.0, or Windows 95.

If your computer meets these specifications and you are having trouble either running or installing the software, check to be sure that you are not running nor have recently run any other software that might be conflicting with this software. To do this, reboot your computer and run the software prior to running any other applications.

Installation

Windows 3.1 and 3.51 Users: From Program Manager, select "File" menu and choose "Run." Then type "a:setup" and press "Enter."

Windows NT 4.0 and 95 Users: From the "Start" menu, choose "Run." Then type "a:setup" and press "Enter."

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Preface

In the late 1980s, USAID's Africa Bureau mobilized to meet a congressional earmark for basic education. This earmark challenged the Bureau to develop African capacity to deliver, on a sustained basis, quality and equitable education to the majority of children in Africa. It also encouraged the Bureau to target countries without ongoing or previous USAID education programs and provided financial resources that allowed the Bureau to participate in reform on a large scale.

This product forms part of a growing body of results achieved and lessons learned by USAID in its decade-long experience in managing the basic education earmark. We believe that the Agency's efforts are bearing fruit in achieving the goal of equitable and high-quality education for all Africans.

Julie Owen-Rea
Office of Sustainable Development
Division of Human Resources and
Democracy

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Acknowledgments

Many people contributed their thoughts about community involvement in education to the early stages of conceptualizing this planning tool. Mark Bray, Ash Hartwell, and Manish Jain all donated time and energy to assessing what is and is not known about community participation and how that information could be shared. Don Grage dealt with dozens of large and small problems in order to construct the software to hold that information. Cynthia Prather both wrote the summary case studies and edited the entire text. My thanks and appreciation to all of them.

Joyce Wolf
Project Director

Planning for Community Participation in Education

“Planning for Community Participation in Education” is a computer software program that will help you to get a better understanding of how communities can become more active partners in the education of children. Perhaps you are a policy maker, project designer, educational analyst, contractor, consultant, or senior educator. You may be working for government, an international donor, or an NGO. Whatever your role, this tool will help you to consider your country’s educational goals and to make more informed choices about options that you and the community can pursue together. You will be able to draw on the experience of others by learning what has worked (and not worked) in other places. Of course, other people’s solutions won’t necessarily work for you. This planning tool will help you to reflect on some important issues before trying a particular option.

Some Development Issues

In recent years, there has been a lot of emphasis on community involvement and participation. This is not a "fad," but rather a logical outgrowth of several trends in development over the past two decades.

By the 1970s, several facts about development were becoming all too clear. First, supply-side economic inputs and technology transfer alone were not creating economic and social development. A more holistic approach had to be taken--the environment, the economy, politics, and social factors are all interrelated, and all have to be taken into account in working toward practical, meaningful change.

Not only that, all the **voices** have to be taken into account. Each of the partners in development has a unique perspective to contribute. The views of donors, national governments, development workers, technical experts, and researchers have always been recognized. But various project failures around the world have made it clear that the

participation and perspective of local people are as essential as any other "expert" contribution.

We also have learned that change is a complex process. Development practitioners have been told for years that "A" produces "B"--and perhaps it did, maybe in somebody else's country, or maybe twenty years ago. We know now that there are no universal answers to development issues. Donors, experts, and governments all have their own "pet" ideas that may or may not work. Our task is to see whether these ideas help to further goals that are appropriate to our own situation, and then try to work out whether they will work in our context. This tool is one way of helping you to do that.

Community Participation

In recent years, the words "community involvement" and "participation" are heard wherever development is discussed. The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (Arusha Declaration

1990) supports “the role of people’s participation in Africa’s recovery and development efforts.” We hear statements such as, “We must involve the whole community in the education of our children,” and “Community members are the real expert on their own situation.” These are good, indeed noble, ideas, but how practical are they? What is the community? What does “participation” mean? Does community participation work?

Does Community Participation Work?

Let’s take the last first. Does community participation work? Increasingly, research is showing that projects that draw upon community involvement have a number of strengths, such as

- **increased project effectiveness:** the use of local knowledge, skills, and resources can improve project design and implementation;
- **improved project efficiency:** community involvement can lead to better use of external and

local resources, including materials and labor;

- **self-reliance and empowerment:** community involvement can help to reduce the mentality of dependence;
- **extended coverage:** community involvement can produce a more equitable distribution of benefits to people who are often overlooked, such as women and girls, the poorer, the less powerful, minorities, people in more distant places, refugees, etc.; and
- **sustainability:** community involvement can help to insure that the project continues to function properly.

There is a lot of research that shows that community involvement works. For example, studies show that taking “people” factors into account in development projects has led to greater cost-effectiveness of projects. In World Bank-financed projects that successfully involve the public in planning, participation has enhanced project effectiveness. And there is also a lot of research that shows that **not** drawing upon

community involvement and local insights is a mistake: a study of 2,000 World Bank projects showed that a major factor in poor project performance was inadequate understanding of the local culture and informal institutions (World Bank 1990; Kottak 1991).

What Is “Participation?”

What form does this involvement, or participation, take? Often, people who use the term “community participation” really mean “cheap labor”—the agenda, the issues, the options, and the decisions are made elsewhere, and the community simply builds the school, cooks the lunches, or sweeps the yard.

Participation has many meanings. At a minimum, it means that people simply use a service. At a middle level, it means that decision makers consult the community or the people involved, and take their views into account; that people contribute labor, skills, material, or funds; and/or that they get involved in delivering a service. Finally, full participation means that communities identify their own

problems, assess their options, make decisions, and carry them out.

Participation may be a means or an end, but in reality it is usually both. Involving people in order to increase awareness, empower, build capacity, or expand rights and duties may be an end in itself, but it may also function as an instrumental means for accomplishing a specific task. Similarly, working with people to accomplish a specific task may enable them to expand their confidence and ability to address other issues in their lives. But it's important to understand that frivolously involving communities simply for the **sake** of involvement can be dangerous: when people become involved, they are contributing time, money, ideas, trust, and goodwill. Their expectations are raised, and follow-through is essential. Understandings with communities should be clear, and if promises are made, they should be kept.

Community participation is not the same as "social marketing," "sensitization," social mobilization, or "decentralization," although each of these can be important as part of a national or regional plan for

community involvement. In social marketing or sensitization, people are being made aware of something that someone (perhaps but not necessarily the community) has decided is good for them. In social mobilization, people are organized to do something that may or may not have been decided upon by the community--sometimes it has been decreed by a central body and is simply "participation from the top down." Decentralization may lead to a sharing of power and responsibility, but this does not necessarily extend to the community level. When it does, it often simply means that the community shares costs, but the power remains at a higher level. While not substitutes for community participation, each of these processes can help to support the overall process.

The kinds of goals and options that are explored in this tool may require, in varying degrees, all these forms of participation. Generally, they require regional, state, or central governments working with donors, NGOs, local organizations, and community members to create more relevant, effective, efficient, and timely interventions for children's education. The goal of this planning

tool is to show how community involvement can be incorporated into this cooperative process. This leads us to the next question:

What Is a Community?

Every community has at least several of the following in common:

- a network of shared interests and concerns (although the members may hold opposing views about them and have different investments, roles, and responsibilities in relation to them);
- a common symbolic or physical base--a meeting place, a village, a zone within a town, a town itself, or an area served by a school;
- extension beyond the nuclear or extended family (It is possible that everyone may be related in some way, but the rules that govern the family, e.g., sharing, authority, etc., are not the same ones that govern the larger groups);
- members recruited primarily through birth and marriage (For

example, a trade union or religious “community” would not qualify, nor would the “aid community.” These are not communities in the sense used here, although such groups may indeed have a legitimate role as stakeholder groups in the educational process); and

- something that distinguishes itself from other similar groups.

But there are problems with worrying too much about what constitutes a community. For one thing, a “community” may expand or contract, depending on the issue. Imagine this situation--an area has villages, which in turn form districts, which in turn form divisions. Let’s say that the issue is which of two neighboring villages gets a school, which both want. People might then see their own village as the community, and the people in the other village as the opposition. But if the issue is which district gets a secondary boarding school, people in the two villages may see themselves as united against villages in the other contending district. And if the issue is which division gets a technical college, all the districts in one division may see

themselves as having a common interest, and in some sense, being a community.

Also, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking of “community” as a homogenous group of people with a common voice and a shared set of views. We are most likely to make this mistake when we are outsiders looking in. For example, we might visit a community to see how the school is functioning. The people have more in common with each other than they do with us, so we see a unity that may be deceptive. We are more likely to hear certain voices--elders, men, elites, professionals like ourselves--people who are comfortable speaking for the group and with whom we are comfortable. We don't hear from women, the poor, nonparticipant, marginal groups, etc., so we assume that there is greater agreement than there actually is. One of the reasons why the term “stakeholder” has entered the language is that these people whose voices were missing are now seen as legitimate participants in activities that concern them.

The “community” therefore consists of people who meet most of the

criteria listed above but who can sometimes hold as many different perspectives and voices as there are members. This is the challenge of community involvement--identifying those voices and helping people to bring their different concerns and options to bear on a common end.

What Do You Need for Community Participation?

To achieve effective community involvement, we have to go beyond rhetoric. Simply saying that a process, a program, or a project should be "participatory" or should draw on "community involvement" accomplishes little or nothing. It is often assumed that decision makers need only give the word, and the floodgates of community involvement will open. If this has happened anywhere, it is not on record. To get real participation, bureaucratic structures and processes need to be changed, decision makers have to rethink their roles, community institutions need to be strengthened, and community

members need to be assisted and supported.

What Facilitates Community Participation?

Certain strategies can help:

- **sharing responsibility**, through decentralization or other appropriate mechanisms, among government, local organizations, and community members;
- **flexibility**
 - of bureaucratic structures: government and/or NGO institutions and organizations,
 - of budgeting,
 - across sectoral lines (education and water provision, for example), and
 - of design, planning, and implementation.
- **trust and investment in local people by**

- strengthening local institutions,
- building on local foundations, and
- sharing information.

What Are Some Common Obstacles to Community Participation?

Some of the obstacles are already obvious from this discussion. People, both decision makers and local people, need to be reeducated in order to work in a participatory mode. Structures may have to be changed to become more flexible. New processes may be required.

In addition, participation can involve more time, effort, and expense than the conventional "top down" approach. For example, just identifying all the partners--their issues, concerns, and resources--adds a new step to the process and takes time. Even with goodwill, there are two situations in which community involvement can easily drop by the wayside because of time pressures--in large projects, and

when there is pressure to “move money.”

However, in the end, **nonparticipation** takes even more time and can be far more costly. Think of all the failed programs around the world that foundered because they were irrelevant, misunderstood, or unsustainable. Introducing change from the top down by “decree” may be a time and money saver, but only at the beginning.

But time and money aren't the only obstacles: you can encounter other problems when using a participatory approach. For example, scattered local efforts can lead to short-term, short-sighted solutions. Elites may use a superficial version of participation as a cover to increase their own power. Local people may fear reprisals if they voice their views or take action. Or they may not have enough information to make useful decisions, or the problem may fall outside the realm of issues that they can be expected to address. Perhaps most complicated of all, “the community” is rarely a single unit with a single voice. Before starting on a project, local research is essential.

Community Participation in Education

Of course, our real concern here is not just community participation but community participation in education. The idea of community involvement in education is not new. In fact, much of the general literature on participation draws from the philosophical ideas developed a quarter of a century ago by educators such as Freire, Illich, and Faure.

The term participation is not new. Few words convey so powerfully the idea of an individual's aspirations to be a partner in decision making, of the unwillingness to accept unduly limited roles and of the desire to live more fully. Few terms suggest so forcefully people's claim to influence both local and global decisions that shape their environment and their lives....(UNESCO 1972).

Community participation in education provides a way of building

upon these aspirations by encouraging

- greater equity and democracy;
- greater “ownership” of and responsiveness toward the school; and
- increasing recognition of the value of education and the value of education for all.

But the most immediate and practical advantage of community involvement in education is that it is likely to improve the school’s success. In addition, other practical advantages include

- more resources for the school;
- greater relevance of the school, in terms of culture, curriculum, and schedules, for the child and for the community;
- reduction of the work burden of teachers and principals; and
- perhaps most important, the addition of another, often very well-informed voice.

Communities that are closely involved with their schools think of the school as belonging to them and make it part of their lives. For example, parents participating in the Community Support Program (CSP)

in Pakistan refer to CSP schools as “our schools” and the others as “government schools.” When vandalism damaged a boys’ “government” school, parents said, “The same will not happen in our school because the committee looks after the school.”

Community involvement can be organized in a number of ways. While the Parent Teachers’ Association might be the most familiar, there are many other kinds of groups that can be involved: School Development Societies, such as in Sri Lanka, which allow other members of the community and alumni to be involved; the elected Community Education Associations in El Salvador; or the Village Education Committees in Pakistan, which are formed according to regulations designed to minimize problems of bias (no blood relatives of the teacher, no two members of one family, etc.). Other preexisting civic groups, as well as special-purpose groups such as women’s savings clubs, can be drawn upon.

What Can a Community and a School Do Together?

Communities have been involved in every aspect of school life. At the level of greatest involvement, parents have assumed teaching responsibilities. Examples are the Vietnam Parents' Association and the Philippines Parent-Learning Support System. They also may participate directly in operations, such as hiring teachers and managing schools--this occurs in El Salvador. But often parental involvement is more restricted--they simply contribute money, materials, land, or labor. In between these two levels of involvement is a range of other possibilities: parents may monitor attendance of teachers and pupils, participate in decision making, monitor home study, provide apprenticeships or work opportunities, and help to evaluate children's learning.

Of course, involvement is a two-way process: schools can assist communities as well. Escuela Nueva is one example: the school and teacher become the center of community development activities,

and the school's program includes collecting information about the community's culture and reinforcing the local heritage. People living in communities that have Escuela Nueva schools also are more active in nonschool activities—for example, they have a higher rate of participation in civic affairs, voluntary associations, and sporting activities. In other places, such as PROPEL programs in India, the school functions as a base for adult education programs. A study of Sri Lankan schools shows that nearly 60 percent of all schools provide some sort of support to their communities—assistance with religious, cultural, or recreational events, for example, and learning assistance to early school-leavers.

The planning tool will show you many examples of what schools and communities have accomplished together in almost every area of education. These examples are organized according to a simple plan:

- looking at possible **Goals**;
- becoming more familiar with useful **Strategies**; and
- considering your local **Context**.

Let's look next at the thinking on which the planning tool is based.

Working from Problems to Goals, Strategies, and Context

Working from Problems to Goals

People who are concerned with education have a variety of goals--to increase access, to increase demand, to increase performance, to make education more relevant, to cut costs, to make systems more effective and efficient, and many others. Some of these are more easily achieved with the help of communities. Others, such as standardizing examination or assessment systems, can be addressed better at the national level. This tool looks at goals that involve community participation. Before looking at specific goals, however, we need to look at how we go about determining which ones are appropriate to our situation.

The approaches that many people use to solve problems in their daily lives and those that they use in their professional lives are often very different.

In our private lives, we might say, "My garden looks terrible. Too many people are taking a shortcut across it. I would like it to look respectable." Then we decide what strategy or strategies will best address the problem--perhaps putting up a fence, hiring a guard, or holding a neighborhood meeting to plead for cooperation. We have followed a logical sequence--identifying a problem (the garden looks terrible), identifying the cause (people are using it as a shortcut), determining our goal (making the garden look respectable), and identifying possible strategies (a fence, a guard, a meeting).

In our professional lives, we often do things the other way around--we **select strategies first**, without proper consideration of what the problem is, what the causes are, and what our goals should be. We have the answer--decentralization, or social marketing or family life education--but often we have forgotten to establish what the

problem is. We move schools closer to home because we think parents don't like sending children out of the community. Later, after a lot of expense, and no change, we look at the old enrollment figures (which we should have done first if we were problem-oriented) and discover that children drop out, on average, at the age of twelve. Obviously, if parents were worried about sending children away, they would be more concerned about younger than older ones. So we have selected a solution to a problem that doesn't exist. We are people with a bridge, looking for a river.

Working from Goals to Strategies

When we are working professionally, why do we depart so quickly from the good sense we use at home? There are two basic reasons. First, most of us are trained in professional disciplines that break the world up into neat compartments. If you are a hydrologist, you are more likely to see water-related solutions as the answers to people's problems. If you are trained in primary health care, you may see preventive medicine as

making the biggest difference in people's lives. And the more specialized we become in our disciplines, the more restricted we are likely to be in our outlook--education is the answer, and not only education but primary education, and not only primary education, but interactive radio tapes for primary education--that's the answer! Of course, it's not surprising that we look to our own disciplines for guidance--why did we spend so much time training in them, otherwise?

The second reason why this happens is that donors and practitioners "market" solutions--if an agency has had some success with a strategy, such as stipends or special materials, a glossy brochure may be sent around the world, articles may appear in professional journals, and the people who worked on it may be promoted into positions of power in their organizations. The "success" may have occurred only in one village, or may have cost millions, or may only work in a certain kind of setting, but we may never hear about that. A government or an NGO may find itself in a situation where a donor may give a loan or provide technical

assistance only if this particular strategy is accepted.

The focus of this tool is to help you to step back from this “strategy-trap.” Instead, it suggests that you consider three things:

- what your goal is (the blue “**Goals**” symbols on the computer screen);
- what strategies might help to meet that goal (the red “**Strategies**” symbols); and
- what you need to know about your specific environment to help you decide (the yellow “**Context**” symbols).

You’ll notice, when you select a “Strategy” symbol such as “Teacher pay,” that a number of possible strategies will be presented for involving communities in paying teachers. Each is presented in summary form. It’s important to remember that in most cases, the strategy that you are reading about is part of a larger project, and that to understand how it really works, you need to read about the whole project. You’ll find a green symbol for **Case Studies** on the screen. When you identify a possible strategy, it is a good idea to go to

the **Case Studies** symbol and read about the rest of the project. It's possible, for example, that the part of the strategy that interests you won't work without putting some of the other project elements into place as well. For example, there have been many efforts to take only some aspects of the integrated Escuela Nueva program that has worked so well in Colombia, and apply them piecemeal elsewhere. In most cases, this "a la carte" approach has failed. So it's important to look at the entire program and see how it is structured.

Placing Your Ideas in the Local Context

If you live in a developing country, you could probably write this section of the tool yourself. How often have you seen a program that worked wonderfully in one place and failed miserably in another, even though in each case it was the same well-designed, well-implemented program? The answer is usually influenced by "context"—the program was taken from one environment and placed in another where different conditions prevailed.

For example, increasing the number of female teachers is an important strategy in providing role models for girls and increasing their security in schools. Many successful programs that you might be considering have adopted such a plan. However, if the local community does not want single women from “outside,” if there are no local women with enough education to teach, and if girls willing to be trained as teachers cannot attend training programs outside the community, you will soon learn the definition of “context” and the need for innovative thinking to adapt plans to meet local concerns. Laying the groundwork for greater community involvement is more difficult in a country that has no tradition of decentralization, little trust of government, and strong local elites. Rationalizing school placement is more difficult when local communities will not send their children outside, and even worse, when neighboring communities won’t welcome them. Working with communities that include several language groups presents different problems from those that are linguistically homogenous. The needs of scattered, isolated populations cannot be met with the

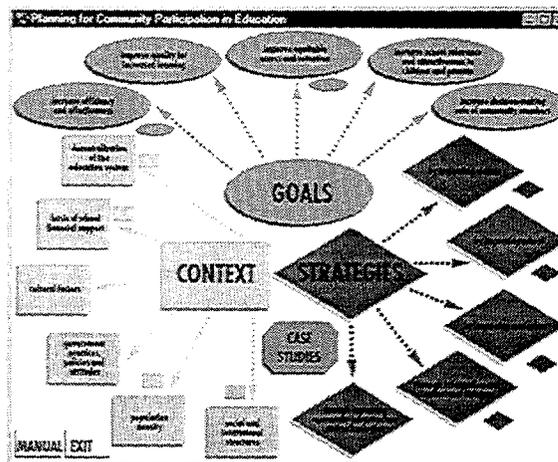
same approaches as those of high density populations.

When looking at a strategy, you should ask yourself, "Would it work here, under these conditions? If no, why not? " Look at the symbols that address context and see if any of them can help you to adapt the strategy to the situation that applies in your country or area.

How to Use Planning for Community Participation in Education

The Main Screen

When you open the software, you will see the main screen, which has four types of symbols. There are blue symbols for **Goals**, red symbols for **Strategies**, yellow symbols for **Context**, and one green symbol for **Case Studies**. These are our "parent" symbols. Notice that some of the symbols have "children" and "grandchildren"--these are the smaller symbols nearby. The

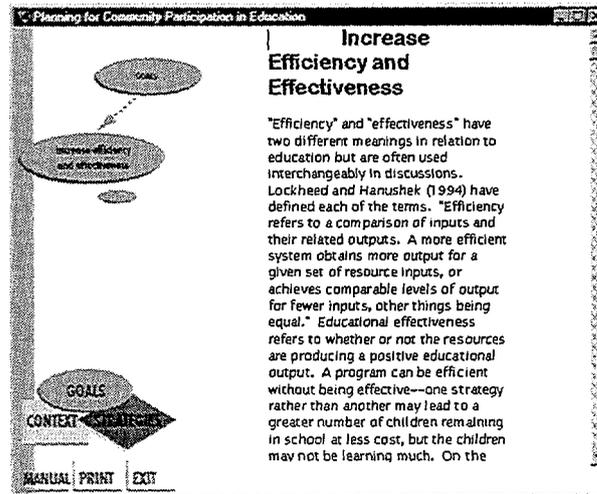


children have names. The grandchildren have no names. By clicking on any symbol--a parent, a child, or a grandchild--you will be able to read about that topic or subtopic.

The Text

Let's begin by clicking on **Goals**. Text will appear, explaining how people set goals. To the upper left of the text, you see the balloon for **Goals**, and a smaller blank balloon with no title. This blank balloon tells you that Goals has subtopics. If you click on this smaller blank balloon, a set of subtopic balloons will appear. You can click on any one of these

and read the text that appears. For example, if you click on "Increase efficiency and effectiveness," you will be able to read definitions and a general discussion (see illustration below). Notice that this topic has a blank balloon beneath it. Click on it and you will get two more choices--"in cost-sharing" and "in local management." By clicking on either of these, you can read about them. The symbols in the upper left corner have an additional purpose--by



looking at them, you can always tell where you are in the software.

Moving Back to the Main Screen

At the bottom left of any text screen, you will see three symbols--**Goals**, **Strategies**, and **Context**. Clicking on any one of them will take you back to the main screen. On the main screen, look at the "**Context**" box. Scan its five "children." (Notice that four of the five children have children of their own--grandchildren--the blank symbols.) Let's click on "**cultural factors**." The text will tell us something about how cultural factors can affect the success of a particular strategy. You will be able to read about several examples from Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, and Thailand. Now scroll to the end of the text. Notice that under "See," some blue text appears. By clicking on the blue text, you can go directly to that topic. Clicking on * will give you some information on *. Any time you see blue text, you can click on it to reach that topic and read about it. Not every symbol has this feature--we have included it wherever we think it would be useful to direct you to further reading.

Now try moving through the tool yourself. The main thing to

remember is that clicking on any symbol will send you to the text on that subject. Clicking on blue text will send you to the subject as well.

When you are finished, exit the program by clicking on "EXIT" on any screen--the main screen or any text screen.

How to Print Text

On any text screen, you can print the text by clicking on "PRINT."

How to View the Manual

On any screen, you can see the manual by clicking on "MANUAL."

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