



UNESCO

Ministry of Education of Mexico

National Institute for Adult Education (INEA)

UNESCO Regional Conferences in Support of Global  
Literacy

**Regional Literacy and CONFINTEA VI Preparatory  
Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean  
“From Literacy to Lifelong Learning: Towards the  
Challenges of the 21st Century”**

*10 – 13 September 2008*

*Mexico City, Mexico*

**Report of the Conference**

## **Key Partners**

Ministry of Education, Government of Mexico  
National Institute for Adult Education (INEA)  
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education for Latin America and the Caribbean  
(OREALC), Santiago de Chile, Chile  
UNESCO Office Mexico  
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UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Hamburg

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## **List of Acronyms**

CE	Continuing Education
CEEAL	El Consejo De Educación De Adultos De América Latina (The Council of Adult Education of Latin America)
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CONFINTEA	Conference Internationale Sur L'education Des Adultes (International Conference on Adult Education)
CREFAL	Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe (Regional Cooperation Centre for Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean)
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EFA	Education For All
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
LIFE	Literacy Initiative For Empowerment
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NFE	Non Formal Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OEI	Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos (Organisation of Ibero-American States)
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNLD	UN Literacy Decade

## **Part I: Synthesis**

### **1.1 Background**

The Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region is an area where many countries are still at risk of not being able to achieve the EFA adult literacy target by 2015. It is an area characterised by wide disparities among countries, with different problems confronting different parts of the region. For instance, while 90 percent of the total adult population is estimated to be able to read and write with understanding, literacy rates are still either at or below 80 percent in countries such as Belize, Jamaica, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Brazil alone accounted for about 40 percent of all adults denied the right to literacy in the region between 1995 and 2004. This translates into nearly 35 million illiterate adults in the area, with the challenge further accentuated by the fact that some 110 million young people do not complete primary school and consequently do not have sufficient literacy skills to participate fully in their societies. Further, the high literacy rates reported do not always indicate that adult populations in Latin America and the Caribbean have attained a literacy level sufficient to meet the demands of daily life and work, or that they are equipped with the skills required for emerging lifelong learning societies.

The region also shows significant sub-regional disparities; while the adult literacy rate for Latin America is 91 percent, it is 74 percent in the Caribbean. In addition, there is a strong gender disparity adverse to women in countries with significant indigenous populations such as Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru, and against young men in the Caribbean, largely due to the high levels of dropout from school by boys. The diverse socioeconomic, ethnic and cultural contexts in the LAC region present growing challenges that hinder literacy and other learning among youth and adults. Among other things, they present challenges related to unemployment, social exclusion, migration, violence, gender disparities, and poverty.

There is therefore a need for literacy and youth and adult education in the perspective of lifelong learning to figure more prominently on the policy agenda and receive a far higher level of political commitment in order to provide expanded access to adult learning opportunities. More than half the countries in the region spend less than 5 percent of their national income (GNP) on education in general, of which a very small proportion is dedicated to youth and adult literacy and education. And while innovative programmes certainly exist, inequitable access still leads to the exclusion of certain segments of the adult population.

It is in this background that UNESCO organised the joint Regional Literacy and CONFINTEA VI Preparatory Conference in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), in Mexico City from 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2008. The Conference was hosted by the Government of Mexico and organised in cooperation with the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA). It merged two major UNESCO initiatives, the Latin America and the Caribbean CONFINTEA VI Preparatory Conference, which is one of five regional UNESCO conferences that will take place in 2008 in preparation of the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), and the UNESCO

Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy for Latin America and the Caribbean, which is the sixth in the series of UNESCO Regional Literacy Conferences that have taken place over the 2007 and 2008 period.

CONFINTEA VI, to be hosted by Brazil from 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009, will generate advocacy, policy dialogue, commitment and a renewed course of action for literacy, youth and adult education and lifelong learning as essential elements for achieving the Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) agendas, and will create tools for the implementation of respective policy proposals. Overall preparation for this global conference is being coordinated by UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), the UNESCO resource centre in charge of adult learning, non-formal education and lifelong learning.

The Regional Literacy and CONFINTEA VI Preparatory Conference is also set within the context of the series of six UNESCO Regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy, which aim at addressing literacy challenges in each region, building partnerships, promoting innovative approaches and developing recommendations on the way forward as well as mobilising partners and resources for concrete follow-up interventions at country level. The objective is to trigger sustained global and country-level leadership for the promotion of literacy by renewing support to and encouraging investment in literacy for all and by integrating literacy programmes into a sector-wide education strategy. The Regional Conferences have been undertaken in the framework of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD, 2003-2012) and the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), and were organised as a follow up to the White House Conference on Global Literacy hosted by Mrs Laura Bush, Honorary Ambassador for the UNLD, in New York in September 2006. Previous UNESCO Regional Literacy Conferences have taken place in Qatar for the Arab States Region, in China for East Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific, in Mali for the African Region, in India for South, South West and Central Asia, and in Azerbaijan for Europe.

Participating countries in the Regional Literacy and CONFINTEA VI Preparatory Conference in Latin America and the Caribbean included the following: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay, plus the Associated Members in the Region, Aruba, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, and the Netherlands Antilles.

The overall objective of the joint Conference in Mexico was to consolidate a regional perspective on the key issues, challenges and proposed forward-looking strategies to renew policies and action in adult literacy, adult learning and education in preparation for the global CONFINTEA VI Conference. As elsewhere, the Conference also served as a forum to present and disseminate relevant effective practices and innovations in the region.

More specifically, the Conference also aimed at the following:

- Amend and validate the regional synthesis report prepared before the Conference on the basis of national reports from Member States, highlighting key issues, challenges and forward-looking strategies to be presented at CONFINTEA VI in May 2009;
- Discuss relevant key issues in youth and adult literacy, adult learning and education in the region and sub-regions (emerging from national reports, from research studies/findings, and/or deriving from concerns of partners);
- Identify key challenges in youth and adult literacy, adult learning and education in the region and sub-regions (to be discussed during the global CONFINTEA VI conference);
- Undertake strong advocacy for youth and adult literacy, adult learning and education in support of UNLD and in contribution to the EFA agenda;
- Build renewed commitment for youth and adult literacy, adult learning and education and respective commitment to investing into the field;
- Create coalitions of partners and stakeholders in the region;
- Present and disseminate good practices and innovations in youth and adult literacy, adult learning and education (as, for instance, derived from national reports); and,
- Develop recommendations on forward-looking strategies (possibly benchmarks) relevant for the region and sub-regions.

The Conference was structured in such a manner as to deal with these aims and issues through round table and panel discussions. These covered the following themes:

#### Roundtables

1. Policies, Strategies, Financing, Monitoring and Evaluation of Literacy and Youth and Adult Education
2. The Costs of Illiteracy
3. Assessment and Measurement of Literacy and Youth and Adult Education
4. Literacy and Youth and Adult Education in Multi-Cultural and Multi-Lingual Contexts

#### Panels

1. Learning for livelihoods and employability
2. Learning for good health
3. Learning through distance learning and ICTs
4. Family and intergenerational learning
5. Basic quality education for groups with special learning needs (e.g. minority groups, migrants, prisoners and others)
6. The ALADIN Network in LAC

## 1.2 Summary of the Deliberations of the Conference

The opening ceremony was addressed by H.E. Mr Miguel Székely Pardo, Vice-Minister of Secondary Education, Mexico, Mrs Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez, First Lady of the Dominican Republic (through her representative), Mr Alvaro Marchesi, Secretary-General of the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI), Mr Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director-General for Education of UNESCO, and H.E. Mrs Josefina Vázquez Mota, Minister of Education, Mexico. Participants heard testimony from an adult learner, Mrs. María Teresa de la Luz Aguilar, and viewed an INEA video on 'Results of a Decade of Youth and Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean', as well as a message from Mrs Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States and Honorary Ambassador for the United Nations Literacy Decade. The key note address was delivered by H. E. Mr Leonardo Garnier, Minister of Education, Costa Rica.

Speakers noted that there were 37 countries in the region, and that they faced a variety of challenges because of differing languages and culture. They pointed out that education for youth and adults had become mandatory in order to help overcome poverty, and stressed the importance of quality coverage for youth, to lead them to education and lifelong learning. It was stated that the development of programmes for learning *for* the job was another urgent area, and would be a key factor in activating national economies through creation of jobs.

Education was considered a tool for the development of human beings, allowing them to participate fully in social and economic life. Speakers held that it was a driver of social development, acting as a counterweight to exclusion and deprivation. Recalling Albert Einstein's view that "in times of crisis, only one thing is more important than knowledge, and that is imagination", they emphasised the need to innovate in the 21st century to ensure that citizens become a part of a progressive knowledge society. They noted that literacy strategies require political will, resources and most fundamentally, a vision of society that promotes inclusion, cultural diversity, social justice and respect of human rights.

Equally important, it was agreed that learning does not stop at a set point in time, but remains a continuum throughout human life. Globalisation and technology call for new competences, with individuals constantly needing to adapt, learn new skills, handle new technologies and critically assess and integrate knowledge. More than ever, lack of literacy skills and lack of opportunities to upgrade one's skills have become synonymous with marginalisation and exclusion.

In the context of the forthcoming international adult education conference CONFINTEA VI to be held in Brazil next year, speakers agreed on the need to set priorities that would enable them to better address the problems of literacy in the region and to develop firm recommendations for promoting adult education that could be discussed in the conference.

The views of the participants were underlined by testimony from Mrs. María Teresa de la Luz Aguilar, an adult learner herself, who shared how her life had changed after she had made the effort to acquire basic literacy skills. She expressed gratitude to all those who had helped her in this process and described the difference it had made to her self-assurance and confidence. She concluded by emphasising the need to help all the others like her who had never had the opportunity to go to school during their childhood.

The first working session of the Conference began with a presentation of the “Regional Synthesis Report on the State of the Art and Development of Literacy and Youth & Adult Education” by Ms Rosa Maria Torres. The report, supported by the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI) and by CREFAL, was based on field work and 20 reports from different countries of the region, and also drew upon sub-regional reports as well as reports from UNESCO. Stressing that it will not be possible to reach the EFA goals or even to achieve universal primary education without educating adults, Dr Torres reviewed the reports emerging from the region and pointed to several areas of concern, including the fact that progress made since CONFINTEA V appeared to be limited. She noted that the educational gap between the North and the South has been increasing, and asserted that education in this region, instead of contributing to the reduction of inequality, seems to be reinforcing it and making it perpetual; this clearly points to a need to question the system of education that is being developed. At the same time, there was enough evidence of encouraging practices and innovations in the region to provide hope for improvement over time.

According to the experts in the first roundtable on “Policies, Strategies and Financing of Literacy and Youth & Adult Education”, an analysis of literacy policies in the region shows the following common objectives: (a) bridging the divide between rural and urban areas by paying particular attention to access to literacy provision in rural areas; (b) targeting the social problems of youth which have not been addressed by the formal education system, and (c) promoting literacy as a means for empowering people for active participation in economic, cultural and political life of the society. At the same time, they pointed out that there appeared to be a gap between the discourse on these objectives and the concrete implementation of programmes, and that there was a need to reduce the distance between theory and practice. Experts stressed the importance of political and financial commitment to literacy, pointing out that formal and non-formal education must be equal parts of any policy for adult learning in the region. In particular, they referred to the importance of NFE in the perspective of lifelong learning, emphasising that it needs to be made more visible. It was also noted that literacy policies should be developed through a bottom-up approach, with active participation of civil society, rather than being thrust upon society through a top-down mechanism.

Referring to the Caribbean region, it was pointed out that although clubbed with Latin America, the region was in reality very different. The literacy rate for the Caribbean is estimated to be around 74 percent but this estimate treats the Caribbean as one homogenous region which is not really true; English speaking countries of the region report 80+ percent rates of literacy, but the literacy rate is very low in Haiti. There is no consistent definition of literacy in this region, with each policy statement providing

different views that ultimately reduce literacy to functional literacy. Strong support for formal education exists, with universal primary and secondary education being achieved in most countries. This cannot unfortunately be said of adult education; there is little reference to literacy in policy statements and plans, and most funds go to the formal sector, resulting in very little being spent on adult education and training of teachers for adults. Ironically, very often students who have failed in the formal system become teachers for adult literacy programmes.

It was also noted that interestingly enough, as progress is made in literacy, it becomes more difficult to reduce illiteracy. While this may sound contradictory, it is actually true; over a period of time, the learning needs of younger people are covered through a variety of interventions, leaving largely those who are above the age of 40, for whom greater effort is required. Thus finance by itself is not adequate, the removal of illiteracy requires other equally important ingredients.

The roundtable on “The Costs of Illiteracy” examined the long term impact of not investing in literacy. Speakers noted that these costs are not only financial, but also social and political and increasing over time. Referring to a study conducted on the consequences of illiteracy which used health, education, work and citizenship as parameters to analyse its impact, it was stated that this could be personal/emotional or cognitive, social and/or economic. Unable to participate fully in society, illiterate people are reminded of their limitations in each social and economic transaction. The cost of literacy thus becomes an investment that can be translated into real figures, and the effect of such investment can be seen in economic terms and in terms of productivity increases.

It was recalled that CONFINTEA V had referred to the need to provide 6 percent of GDP to education, with at least 3 percent devoted to the education of adults; however, this has yet to become reality in most countries. The fact is that if the income that a country loses because of illiteracy is so much higher than the cost of educating people, any economist would suggest that more investment should take place in education, yet this does not happen for many reasons. Speakers agreed that it was important to create more awareness about the importance of investing in literacy and the impact of not doing so. A significant point made by one of the discussants was that the question was not what it costs not to educate, but whether the incurring of such cost would lead to improved productivity; it was argued that if the latter were not the case, there would be no justification from the point of view of governments to invest in literacy.

The panel discussion on “Learning for Livelihoods and Employability” saw participants share information about different programmes aimed at offering not just school equivalency training but also a broader learning experience that equips learners to upgrade their skills and employability. Some of these programmes also provide occupational alternatives for young people who have dropped out of formal education and are unemployed, but are insufficiently qualified to find employment. Panellists agreed that it was important not only to provide literacy skills, but also to create self-employment and foster such personal values as leadership, self-esteem, knowledge of the environment, social skills, and others.

The presentations on the panel on “Learning for Good Health” showed that some of the most effective literacy programmes combine learning to read, write and calculate with instruction in health matters. Such programmes prove more motivating and, above all, more relevant and useful than those limited to the teaching of literacy skills. Pointing out that the approach to health and literacy may need to be different for men and women, panellists stressed the need to ensure that local language and cultures are kept in view while designing such programmes.

Panellists discussing programmes based on “Distance Learning and ICTs” agreed that the use of new learning technologies has provided significant opportunities for informal and continuing literacy learning in adult and youth basic education programmes. Distance learning and ICTs can facilitate skills development, stimulate increased awareness and motivate learners, but also help training literacy workers. At the same time, they cautioned against an excessive dependence on ICTs at the cost of human resources in the form of teachers and emphasised the need to maintain a connection between learners and their teachers.

The panel on “Family Literacy and Intergenerational Learning” discussed the importance of parental involvement with the learning of children and ways by which adults can be encouraged to build stronger links with schools and the community. Pointing out that intergenerational learning can take into account the different learning styles and needs of both adult and child learners, they stressed the importance of designing activities for parents and children that stimulate and motivate learning while offering the child valuable support.

The discussion during the panel on “Meeting Learning Needs Of Groups With Special Learning Needs (Minority Groups, Migrants, Prisoners And Others)” agreed that standard approaches to providing quality basic learning will not reach everyone. Each country has population groups with characteristics different from the mainstream population or whose circumstances are special, such as minorities, migrants, refugees, the disabled, prisoners, and others, and these groups need special attention. However, meeting their learning needs requires proportionately greater effort and investment in terms of funding, personnel and indeed, in terms of creativity and commitment.

The panel on the “ALADIN Network in Latin America and the Caribbean” discussed the 91-member network whose mission is to set up service networks for training and development and provide access to information on adult education across the world. Panelists described their experience with the ALADIN Network in their respective countries and brought out perceived advantages and shortcomings. They agreed that while the network was indeed most useful, there was a need to encourage more people to use it and to look for ways to make it more effective and available to all.

The third roundtable on “Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation of Literacy and Youth & Adult Education” pointed out that there were different ways of evaluating progress depending on context, and that while there was much experience of evaluation and

assessment in the region, this had not always been disseminated widely. Speakers stressed that assessment, monitoring and evaluation must be an integral part of any programme, looking not only at cognitive aspects but also at the impact on the larger social, cultural, economic and political system. While agreeing that there is a need for more data, the experts emphasised that it is also important to use existing data; many times existing data is not used and new tools are created, even though it may be more useful to work with existing data and to improve its quality.

In particular, speakers felt that there is a need to measure things better; measurement is essential and important since not measuring costs more in the long run. Programmes based on no or little evidence cannot truly be said to be successful. Referring to literacy as an expression of the desire to build a nation, experts pointed out that programme implementers should always try to evaluate the dialogue with those who are being educated, focusing on those who are being taught so that their requirements and needs are addressed. Literacy is the means to address exclusion but is not the reason for exclusion; the evaluation of literacy programmes should therefore take into account aspects like availability, accessibility and adaptability of the programme and the system.

The final roundtable on “Literacy and Youth & Adult Education in Multi-Cultural and Multi-Lingual Contexts” focused on the challenge of understanding and delivering literacy in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual situations. Noting that in most Latin American countries with indigenous populations the illiteracy rate among indigenous people is more than twice the mean illiteracy rate at national level and that gender disparity in literacy among indigenous populations is double the national average, speakers stressed the importance of linking policies for literacy for such indigenous people with the mainstream educational policy in order to make them more effective. Even though legal instruments and policies exist to protect indigenous education, there is often failure in implementation, and there is therefore a need for them to be accompanied by action plans that translate such instruments into reality.

Speakers also agreed that the complexity of multi-cultural education has to be addressed carefully; while legislation and the policies exist, the need is now to translate these into action on the ground. Strategies and approaches must be learner-centred, addressing a range of issues from technical to social, leading to removal of exclusion and stigma, ultimately functioning as unified forces for the eradication of poverty, injustice and social exclusion.

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## **Part II: Session-wise Details**

### **DAY 1: 10 September 2008**

#### **2.1 Opening Ceremony**

##### **Participants:**

**H. E. Mr Miguel Székely Pardo, Vice Minister of Secondary Education, Mexico**

**Mrs Maria Teresa de la Luz Aguilar, adult learner**

**Mr Alvaro Marchesi, Secretary General of the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI)**

**Mr Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director General, Education, UNESCO**

**H. E. Mrs Josefina Vazquez Mota, Minister of Education, Mexico**

**H. E. Mr Leonardo Garnier, Minister of Education, Costa Rica**

**Ms Wendy Briceño, Master of Ceremonies**

##### **Video film presented by INEA**

After introduction of the eminent personalities present on the dais, the Conference began with the viewing of a video film presented by INEA. The film described the large number of countries in the region and their variety of language and culture. With differing concepts of education, they face several challenges in the area of health and education. Referring to CONFINTEA V, the narrator described the development of new methods and policies to identify strategies for adult education to meet new social demands, and the challenge of providing basic knowledge and skills needed by each individual in a changing world. The role of the Ibero-American Organisation (OEI) in developing programmes for the region with the support of national governments was also described. The film stressed the need for increased awareness of the need to overcome any form of discrimination and called for a strong discussion on education, representing an opportunity to identify options, challenges and solutions, given that education for youth and adults is a mandatory option to overcome poverty.

##### **H. E. Mr Miguel Székely Pardo, Vice Minister of Secondary Education, Mexico**

Mr Pardo welcomed all to the Department of Public Education and to Mexico, stating that it was an honour for Mexico to host the Conference. He expressed his gratitude to UNESCO for the opportunity and hoped that the deliberations of the Conference would be useful and productive. Referring to his own country, he stated that education for youth and adults was an important subject in Mexico, and the Conference represented an opportunity to take up bilateral and multilateral cooperation and to arrive at a common outlook for CONFINTEA VI being hosted by Brazil in 2009. He expressed the belief that each country would have much to share, which would lead to identification of areas of opportunity for improving national policies.

##### **Video message from Mrs Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States of America, Honorary Ambassador for the United Nations Literacy Decade**

Participants then viewed a video message from Mrs Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States of America and Honorary Ambassador for the United Nations Literacy Decade.

Welcoming participants to the sixth and final Regional Literacy Conference, she described the objectives of LIFE and stated that the purpose of the initiative was to address the needs of 770 million illiterates worldwide. This requires commitment from all countries so that illiteracy can be minimised. She provided some background to the Regional Literacy Conferences, mentioning the White House Conference on Global Literacy that was held in New York in September 2006 and that began the process. She informed participants that a White House Symposium on Enhancing Literacy would be held on 22 September 2008 to review the outcomes of these Conferences and to consider next steps. Mrs Bush concluded by extending her best wishes to participants for the success of the Conference.

### **Video Message from Mrs Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez, First Lady of the Dominican Republic**

A second video message was received from Mrs Margarita Cedeño de Fernandez, First Lady of the Dominican Republic, who had intended to attend but was unable to do so because of the cyclonic storm in the region and its impact on her country. Thanking DG UNESCO for the opportunity to address the gathering, she stated that she was fully committed to the objectives of this meeting. She expressed the belief that human rights cannot be achieved without education, and emphasised the need to ponder upon ways to make our goal a reality, the goal of giving relevant, effective and efficient education to all in the 21st century.

Mrs Cedeño de Fernandez Education stated that education was a tool for the development of human beings, which allowed participation in social and economic life; it is a driver of social development, acting as a counterweight to exclusion and deprivation. She felt that there was a great need to help the Latin American and Caribbean population to allow them access to knowledge in the new world and to foster high quality content in all teaching programmes to make adults autonomous and to develop a sense of responsibility to themselves and others around them, thus fostering solidarity and peace. Referring to CONFINTEA V and the strategies agreed therein, she emphasised the need for adult education to receive a special place in CONFINTEA VI to allow for planning for lifelong learners.

The First Lady suggested the creation of an international network of trainers and experts for adult education and urged participants to remember that the training of future citizens depends upon the role played by education. She spoke of the need to guarantee an inclusive education system for all and to provide a responsive and flexible system of education. Describing the education system in the Dominican Republic and the role of private/public entities as well as ongoing initiatives, she said that she dreamt of transforming the lives of those who have not had the opportunity to enjoy the right to education, and who are therefore deprived of the right to informed choice. She quoted Albert Einstein who said “in times of crisis, only one thing is more important than knowledge, and that is imagination”, and emphasised the need to innovate in the 21st century to ensure that all citizens become a part of a progressive knowledge society. She concluded by extending her best wishes for the success of the Conference.

**Mrs Maria Teresa de la Luz Aguilar**

Mrs Maria Teresa de la Luz Aguilar, an adult learner herself who presently works with INEA, provided personal testimony of the importance of literacy. She spoke of her own efforts to become literate and described the steps she had taken in order to do so. Mrs Aguilar informed participants that she had concluded the first stage of education, and now was very self assured and proud, and that she hoped to some day conclude elementary school. She expressed her gratitude to her family and to all INEA staff for their support and assistance.

**Mr Alvaro Marchesi, Secretary General of the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI)**

Thanking UNESCO and INEA for support, Mr Marchesi expressed his gratitude to the Education Secretary for organising the meeting and for his devotion to the adult literacy project. He referred to Mrs Aguilar's testimony and said that it brought home the message that what we do has an impact on real people. He expressed his solidarity with the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Haiti, which had been affected by the recent cyclones, and suggested that there must be an effort to support reconstruction, especially of schools that have been damaged.

Illiteracy is a major injustice around the world, with nearly 30 million illiterates in this region, representing historical injustice and social inequality. Countries must accept responsible commitment to reducing the damage caused by this illiteracy and ensure that new groups of youth do not join this group. Mr Marchesi assured the gathering of the firm support of OEI to UNESCO and its partners and offered to share resources and experts, as well as help in managing projects. He said that it was not enough for young people to be able to read and write; there is a need to look at technology, civic education, demands of the labour market, and technical and vocational education that meets market needs. Given this context, it is essential to change strategies to meet these needs. Profound social mobilisation has to take place to undertake these efforts; it is not enough for only ministries of education to be involved.

**Mr Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO**

Mr Burnett conveyed greetings from Mr Koïchiro Maatsura, Director-General of UNESCO, who regretted not being able to participate. Expressing his gratitude to the Government of Mexico and National Institute of Adult Education (INEA), co-collaborators in the conference with UNESCO, he welcomed the Ministers of Education, representatives of UN, other agencies, Universities, private sector, experts and other guests. He said that literacy and adult education are vital for creating a more just, a more inclusive and a more sustainable world, all the more so in today's knowledge-driven societies, in which learning does not stop at a set point in time. Globalisation and technology call for new competences, and more than ever, lack of literacy skills and lack of opportunities to upgrade one's skills are synonymous with marginalisation and exclusion.

Mr Burnett referred to the Education for All Goals, which focus on reaching all learners, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, since societies cannot be built on

exclusion. He spoke of the Millennium Development Goals, which are about eradicating extreme poverty and improving the lives of the very large numbers still trapped in a cycle of disadvantage. Literacy and adult education are keys to this because they give the knowledge, skills and tools needed to engage more confidently with the world, and to play a role in changing and improving it. Mr Burnett emphasised that this relationship was readily understood in the Latin American and Caribbean region, which had been home to Paulo Freire, one of the most influential voices and thinkers on literacy.

In particular, Mr Burnett stressed the need to improve the quality of adult education, the need for governments to boldly expand literacy programmes for adults and youth, and the importance of policies addressing their learning needs, while remaining sensitive to cultural and social realities. He stated that societies and economies cannot prosper without literate, educated populations, and lack of literacy is a denial of rights, making individuals more vulnerable to ill-health, poverty and exploitation.

**H. E. Mrs Josefina Vazquez Mota, Minister of Education, Mexico**

Welcoming participants on behalf of the President, Mrs Mota said that it was an honour to host the Conference, which she saw as a proposal in favour of liberty, education, justice and inclusion. She appreciated the support and generosity of OEI and UNESCO in the organisation of the Conference. She was especially grateful for the presence of Brazil in the Conference, given the importance of CONFINTEA VI in 2009.

Calling illiterates victims of a battle that they were never aware of having fought, Mrs Mota said that there were over 770 million illiterates worldwide, with 35 million in the LAC region, most of whom were women, ethnic groups and persons in situations of poverty. Although each of the countries of the region had its own culture and history, they share the common objective of ensuring literacy because the cost of illiteracy is very high in the long run; these costs are not only economic, but are also social in nature and in terms of freedom and dignity of the individual. Literacy is only meaningful if it provides adults the capacities to learn more than merely reading and writing.

Illiteracy is opposed to democracy and human rights; it goes against social mobility, demands of the labour market, freedom of women and their ability to leave the circle of violence. The Minister referred to the needs of indigenous people and their requirements of literacy in their own language and culture. She mentioned Mexico's efforts in reading promotion and publishing and expressed her confidence that better public policies in this area could be drafted. She said that humanity's hope lays in acknowledging literacy as the best bet for freedom, justice, good governance and democratic systems, human rights and poverty eradication.

The Minister then formally opened the Conference.

**H. E. Mr Leonardo Garnier, Minister of Education, Costa Rica**

The key note address was delivered by H E Mr Leonardo Garnier, Minister of Education, Costa Rica, who began by thanking the Minister for Education, Mexico, his colleagues,

UNESCO, OEI and others for the opportunity to participate in the Conference. The Minister then made a presentation covering the most significant aspects of literacy.

The Minister stated that when speaking of literacy, the most important challenge was to be clear about what is being discussed. This implies that one must assess what is understood by literacy training in the 21st century. He stated that the idea of literacy must change with changes in technology, symbols and codes, as has been the case in the passage from primitive systems of communication to very complex ones today.

Mr Garnier said that globalisation is also changing our understanding of the concept of literacy. Never have so many doors been open to human beings before, but never have they faced so many risks either; the poor today are better off than at any time before, but the gap between rich and poor is also larger than ever before. Globalisation has also made us feel part of the same world, regardless of where people live. If we are all a part of the same world, the world must guarantee equal rights to all.

The Minister stressed the need to realise that even basic literacy skills have not been completed for all, but these must be completed while addressing the needs of others too. He said that the literacy effort is not one-time and has to be ongoing, using conventional and non-conventional means (paper and digital). He spoke of the challenge of mandatory literacy, enabling human beings to lifelong learning, allowing them to participate fully in economic, social and environmental life. In his view, literacy is a tool that is vital for critical thinking, practice of democracy and the defence of one's basic human rights. He concluded by stating that literacy is merely the first step; it must lead to a true education going beyond mere literacy, but one that would not exist without the latter.

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### **Presentation of Regional Synthesis Report**

The afternoon session saw a presentation of the regional synthesis report on the state of the art and development of youth and adult literacy and adult education by Ms Rosa Maria Torres who presented a regional study supported by OEI and CREFAL. The presentation summarised the results of 20 national reports and field work, drawing upon sub-regional reports as well as reports from UNESCO.

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## DAY 2: 11 September 2008

### **2.3 Roundtable 1: Policies, Strategies and Financing of Literacy and Youth & Adult Education**

#### **Participants:**

**Mr Jose Rivero Herrera, International independent consultant, Peru (moderator)**

**Ms Maria Clara di Pierro, Brazil**

**Mr Mariano Jabonero, OEI**

**Mr Raul Leis, CEAAL**

**Mr Joel Warrican, St Vincent and the Grenadines**

**Discussants:****H. E. Mr Miguel Székely Pardo, Vice Minister of Education, Mexico****H. E. Ms Susanna Montaldo, Vice Minister of Equity and Quality, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Argentina****Mr Jose Rivero Herrera, Peru**

Mr Herrera began by recalling the previous meetings of CONFINTEA V in Hamburg and the recommendations that it had made. He said that the situation in LAC countries was very varied, but that they all placed an equal emphasis on the education of young people and adults. He referred to the seven guidelines calling for state education policies and said that while some policies target literacy, others broaden their scope depending upon the response of the concerned State. Recalling Dakar, which was an opportunity for the world to be self-critical, he said that the goals of EFA have not been met. Mr Herrera said that literacy is more than just reading and writing; it is the skill necessary to identify, understand, apply and relate to knowledge and culture. A continuum of learning contributing to equality, to an equitable society, is what we must aim for when designing literacy policy.

**Ms Maria Clara di Pierro, Brazil**

Objectives of policies are defined in terms of guaranteeing the right of everyone to literacy and basic education, based on the Hamburg meeting (CONFINTEA V), to encourage economic and social participation of people and to foster citizen participation in public areas, taking into account gender, indigenous and other issues. These objectives are included in the laws of the region, even if they are often not implemented.

There is a gap between the discourse on objectives and the real world, which implies a need to reduce the distance between theory and practice. Teacher training is a critical bottleneck in the region, and is often overlooked. Training of teachers and facilitators is essential to ensure successful implementation of policies, and improvisation is not the right way to go about this. Stating that there are still serious problems of relevance and quality, Ms di Pierro hoped that CONFINTEA VI would lead to concrete benefits for learners and facilitators.

Speaking of the Brazilian experience she explained that the country has a highly decentralised system with states and municipalities responsible for providing education at primary and secondary levels. Increased participation of young people in literacy programmes has been observed in the last decade. This has been achieved in a period when education of adults was not a priority of the government, which was mostly focused on adolescents and children, and happened because of the role of municipalities, which participate to the extent of 90 percent of public spending. The total spent on basic education is 3 percent of GDP, while it is only 0.3 percent on adult education, or about 10 percent of the total outlay for education.

**Mr Mariano Jabonero, OEI**

Mr Jabonero referred to the mandate of the OEI drawn from the meeting of Heads of State in Montevideo which is based on lifelong learning and creating opportunities for shared learning. He said that social cohesion and development of citizens was important, which makes the legal framework important. There is a need to try and guarantee the right to education to every man and woman.

National policies need to be developed in each country by means of articulation of plans for universal education, especially for those who have remained unreached. It is now important to set up a new vision for education, including technology and social demands. This calls for consolidation of budgets, as efficiency is not possible without commitment, sensitivity among organisations, and national and international cooperation. We need to have a strategy to prevent dropouts, targeting young people and adults in the region. Formal and non-formal education must be important parts of this policy, working in the entire region, with appropriate political and financial commitment.

Financing literacy is one of the most complex topics; in the case of OEI there is a clear statement of support from governments. OEI has worked with governments to ensure that it can be concrete, committed and efficient, and has received financial support of USD 4.1 billion. There is a need to create a fund for technical support and other requirements to meet limitations in various countries. Expenditure must be focused on end-targets, making sure that funds are best utilised. The role of civil society in this process is critical.

**Mr Raul Leis, CEAAL**

Mr Leis began by introducing CEAAL which has 200 centres in 20 countries of LAC. He stated that access to education for adults and young people is a problem for the poor in LAC and that CEAAL was trying to transform citizenship by including education and literacy. Quoting Paulo Freire, he emphasised the need to change reality and said that making citizens active and first class from third class can bring about this change. The right to education is essential in the process of empowering citizens. It is also important to build capacity to enable people to live together.

It is also essential to increase financing since appropriate funding is important to achieve our objectives. At the same time, we need to improve the efficiency of use of budgets. Education needs to be placed as a priority in national development in order to receive appropriate funding.

Mr Leis pointed out that most of the countries of the region have active civil society participation, which is encouraging since education policy must be citizen-driven, not top-down. Social auditing is very important, and can only happen with the participation of citizens and civil society, which is not a homogeneous body and can be very varied. He also raised the issue of the importance of NFE in a lifelong learning perspective, referring to a recently presented report, which found that adult education is sometimes invisible as the focus tends to be on other areas. There is a need to make adult literacy visible and supported, which is a big challenge for the future. The space of NFE is the

space of freedom, liberty that is often not recognised by the formal system; greater interaction between the two systems leads to better quality and equality.

### **Mr Joel Warrican, St Vincent and the Grenadines**

In the Caribbean, which refers to 12 independent countries, plus Haiti and Surinam, the literacy rate is only 74 percent, compared to 90% for the whole region of Latin American and the Caribbean. This estimate of literacy treats the Caribbean as one homogenous region, but this is not true; English speaking countries of the region report 80+ rates of literacy but the low rate in Haiti brings down the rate overall.

Some countries measure literacy in terms of school attendance, which is not the most accurate indicator, as learning can take place outside the school. Self assessment of literacy during surveys also leads to differences in estimating rates; thus estimation of literacy remains a challenge. There is no consistent definition of literacy in the Caribbean; each policy statement has different views, and they in general often reduce literacy to functional literacy. There is strong support for formal education with universal primary and secondary education being achieved in most countries. This cannot be said of adult education however, and indeed there is little reference to literacy in policy statements and plans.

Most funds go to the formal education sector with very little spending on adult education and training of teachers for adults, or for male literacy issues, indigenous people and migration. Very often students who have failed the formal system become teachers for adult literacy programmes. There is a strong need for a Caribbean definition on what constitutes a literate individual which must go beyond the functional definition. More emphasis is needed on youth and adult education and problems of special groups, migratory populations, creole speakers, etc.

The Caribbean perspective has long been that if the formal sector is strong and successful, investment in the non-formal sector is not necessary. The emphasis therefore has been on education at the secondary level. Access is not a problem, but keeping children in school is crucial. Generally there is high enrolment in the English-speaking Caribbean and dropout is not a major issue in these countries as schooling is compulsory. In Haiti however, UNICEF has estimated that only 18 percent males enrol for secondary education with only about 2 percent completing. Male literacy is therefore a problem in this country.

In the English-speaking Caribbean, a sizable percentage of youth is leaving the education system unable to read and write despite of a considerable amount of the domestic budget spent on education (nearly 20 percent). There is therefore a need to question why this is so and to ensure quality education. Additionally, three immediate areas for work are teacher training, better quality programmes in the formal system and better monitoring systems. Improved linkage between the formal and non-formal education systems is also essential to improve this situation.

Another issue is that research is usually carried out in specific countries by NGOs themselves or the Ministry of Education and is not well disseminated, although the position is slightly better when undertaken by the universities. Research in gender issues in education in the Caribbean, i.e., tends to be more of a descriptive nature and not concrete, but indicates that girls and women are outdoing boys and men at every stage; clearly there is an issue here that begins at home, causing reverse gender discrimination. Young men are often not motivated enough as they do not see the monetary value of education, and hence they drop out and join the labour market. Education thus seems to be a gendered affair with the teaching profession dominated by women, leaving no male role models for male students. This is also seen in available reading material, which has most often female protagonists. In the NFE sector, since most teachers are women, men are often ashamed to come to the programmes. Motivating boys and men to join education programmes is therefore crucial in the region.

**H. E. Mr Miguel Székely Pardo, Vice Minister of Education, Mexico**

The Minister emphasised that while different points of view were welcome, one of the objectives of this Conference was also to identify common strategies and views for CONFINTEA VI in Brazil next year. The Latin America and the Caribbean region is a very varied area, with much inequality; different countries have different problems. Arriving at common ground may require the generalisation of certain issues. The added value of the present meeting lays in the diversity represented here.

The Minister stated that as progress was made in literacy, it becomes more difficult to reduce illiteracy. While this may sound contradictory, the fact is that more expenditure for instance, does not always mean more literacy. 75 percent of all illiterate adults are over the age of 40 years, but the tendency is to give priority to the 20-30 age group; there is a need for public policies that address the former target group. Given that it is much more difficult to teach someone over the age of 60 years, clearly there is no straightforward equation between financial resources and results. Thus finance by itself is not the only element, there are several other equally important ingredients.

The permanence of programmes is an issue; mere teaching is not enough, it is also necessary to follow up to ensure that there is no relapse into illiteracy. Specific targeting of urban, indigenous and other groups is also required to ensure that specific learning requirements are met properly. The Minister concluded by saying that political will is important and that literacy must become the highest priority for governments in the region.

**H. E. Ms Susanna Montaldo, Vice Minister of Equity and Quality, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Argentina**

The Vice Minister expressed her gratitude to UNESCO and the organisers of the Conference for having given her an opportunity to participate and share her views. She described the situation in Argentina, saying that in 2001, the country had a 2.6 percent illiteracy rate. In 2004, a literacy programme was created to cover those who had not had access to education, which is a fundamental right to ensure participation in national life. A new education law was passed in 2006, with a high level of participation from citizens.

Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a lifelong learning approach. Literacy is a gate that is opened to citizens and the government's aim of universalising secondary education in Argentina has opened another such door for them. Special programmes have been taken up to ensure universalisation of secondary education; for example, in the case of companies with employees who had not finished this stage of education, agreements have been signed with universities and NGOs so that education may happen at the work place.

The goal of the country is to celebrate 200 years of independence with fully educated citizens. For Argentina, access is no longer an issue, but retention at the secondary stage is still a problem. Given the very diverse nature of learners, teachers often require support to deal with their varied learning needs; it is important to remain careful so that we do not create second class citizens through parallel systems of education. The training of educators is thus critical and the country has found that the commitment of universities in this process is important to provide support and research. A national law for financing education is also a critical component; this law commits a portion of GDP each year to education, with the target of reaching 6 percent by 2010. The eventual aim is to reach universal secondary education by 2016.

The Vice Minister concluded by saying that democracy is not possible without education. She stated that when one dreams alone, it is a dream but if we can dream together, it becomes reality.

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## **2.4 Roundtable 2: The Costs of Illiteracy**

### **Participants:**

**Ms Maria Luisa Jauregui, Regional Specialist on Youth and Adult Education, UNESCO/OREALC (moderator)**

**Mr Rodrigo Fernandez, ECLAC**

**Mr Miguel Gutierrez Saxe, Costa Rica**

**Mr Rogelio Pla, OEI**

### **Discussants:**

**H. E. Mr Leonardo Garnier, Minister of Education, Costa Rica**

**H. E. Ms Ana Ordonez de Molina, Minister of Education, Guatemala**

### **Ms Maria Luisa Jauregui, UNESCO/OREALC**

Education is an essential human right and we must ensure that it is exercised properly; sadly, less than 1 percent of education budgets are allocated to literacy. We need to consider the cost of not teaching people, the cost of illiteracy in the long run. Apart from the context, it is also necessary to talk about the consequences of illiteracy.

### **Mr Rodrigo Fernandez, ECLAC**

The question to be considered is what are the elements of the cost of illiteracy. Apart from financial aspects, there are social and other costs. Referring to a recently conducted

study on the consequences of illiteracy, he said that health, education, work and citizenship were used as parameters to analyse the impact of illiteracy; there is a personal/emotional or cognitive impact, a social impact and an economic impact. Illiterate people are unable to participate fully in society and are aware of their limitations. In economic terms, illiteracy leads to higher operating costs, losses of production, lower productivity and income losses. Such a situation can push illiterate people into crime in order to meet financial needs, many times because they are unaware of the consequences of their actions.

The cost of literacy is thus an investment that can be translated into real figures. The impact of such investment can be seen in economic terms and in terms of productivity increases. The study provides estimates of the actual per person cost of illiteracy, ranging from USD 313 in Ecuador to USD 800 in Sao Paulo, Brazil in the case of those who have less than 4 years of education; this difference increases as the number of years of education decreases. Thus, if we help the illiterate, they are more than likely to self-finance the effort.

#### **Mr Miguel Gutierrez Saxe, Costa Rica**

The cost of illiteracy increases over time. The level of poverty incidence over age groups shows a direct correlation; as number of school years increases, poverty level starts to reduce. Mr Saxe referred to historical data to show that in countries of Central America, the rate of growth of GDP is correlated with the rate of increase in literacy levels. This correlation is a direct one that can be viewed directly and is not as difficult to measure as other terms such as social and political participation.

Studies in Guatemala and Nicaragua have shown that illiteracy has an impact on health, income and education of future generations; the cost of not teaching is thus taken forward to other generations. In Guatemala, 25 percent of the population 15 years old and above (almost 2 million people) are illiterate. In Nicaragua, 19 percent of the population over 14 years old is illiterate (617,076 people). The school level of the workforce in Guatemala is five years and in Nicaragua 6.5 years. The mortality and morbidity of children increases in cases of illiterate parents. The study shows that 850 lives of children per year could have been saved if their mothers had been literate and the risk of miscarriage and childhood disease increases with illiteracy. The cost of illiteracy in these countries is estimated to be USD 800 million (2 percent of GDP) per annum.

The study will include two more countries subsequently with a positive performance in education to benchmark and compare.

#### **Mr Rogelio Pla, OEI**

Logically every policy is related to financing and financing effort. In many of the debates that take place around literacy and education of adults, the issue of proportion of funds allocated to literacy becomes an issue. Efficiency and efficacy of the resources used must also be ensured. Adequate capacity to do so needs however to be ensured in the countries.

OEI expects to have such debates take place in meetings leading up to CONFINTEA VI so that its work and the work of NGOs may be facilitated. There is a need to create awareness about the real cost for each country of not investing in literacy and the education of adults and youth. This debate has taken place in 2005 in Caracas in a meeting on the costs of teaching young people. One of the strategic objectives of the Ibero-American Plan for Literacy Instruction and Primary Education for Young People and Adults (PIA) is to gain government commitment to supporting literacy and education of adults. The plan defines the target of 34 million people identified as not being able to read/write two years ago. To this must be added the number of those who have not completed primary education, which brings it to 110 million, or about 40 percent of the population in the region. The duration of the programmes being implemented is about three years.

The national or regional cost of these programmes can be defined on the basis of various components: facilitators (40 percent), training (20 percent), material (20 percent) and follow up activities (20 percent). The average cost is USD 40 per learner per year for countries of this region, but this needs to be reviewed. The Ibero-American Plan is focused on countries of the Latin American region, not the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean, and is based on a national estimation of the costs of illiteracy and calls for commitment from national governments. The plan is part of the 2005 strategy finalised in Salamanca which calls for country-specific plans.

Expenditure on education is not always broken down into appropriate components. It is worth mentioning that CONFINTEA V had referred to the need to provide 6 percent of GDP to education, with at least 3 percent devoted to the education of adults. Data in many countries is available only for central and district levels but not for civil society, NGOs or even more decentralised levels; often, it does not take into account efforts of denominational and non-denominational organisations which are not reflected in government estimates. OEI has committed USD 22.5 million to strengthening of national plans for countries of this region.

#### **H. E. Mr Leonardo Garnier, Minister of Education, Costa Rica**

How do we explain to ourselves our own failure in the area of literacy? If the income that a country loses because of illiteracy is so much higher than the cost of educating people, any economist would suggest that more investment should take place in education, yet this does not happen.

In the LAC region, labour is relatively cheap, with low productivity and hence low levels of technology; in turn this means that there is no need for citizens to be educated. So the question here is not what it costs not to educate, but whether incurring such costs lead to improved productivity. Otherwise there will continue to be many more such roundtables.

#### **H. E. Ms Ana Ordóñez de Molina, Minister of Education, Guatemala**

The Minister began by saying that it is profitable to invest in education. The economy of Guatemala should be growing at around 7 percent per annum, but it is between 4-5 percent, thus reproducing poverty; what gets distributed is poverty not income growth.

The social cost and implication of not investing in education must be considered, apart from the political and economic costs. This includes considering among other things, the nutrition of our children and the poorer level of care available to them.

Guatemala has 49 percent chronic malnutrition, which clearly means that even if children attend school, they may not learn very much. It is necessary to deal with educating mothers of children at the same time to address this situation. Conditional Cash Transfers are being used as a means to substitute loss of earning from child labour to encourage parents to send children to school; a comprehensive strategy is needed to address these kinds of issues. It is also essential to teach in the mother tongue so that children learn earlier and easier.

Education has to be seen from a non-partisan point of view, treating it as the agenda of the nation. International cooperation in sharing of best practices and programmes is essential to help countries address these issues. Guatemala has scarce resources, and therefore it needs to make the most optimal use of them to ensure efficiency.

The Minister said that she believed in the importance of working with the family to sustain learning, and spoke of a new programme, “My Family Learns”, launched last year by her government to deal with issues of health, nutrition and education. She said that it is essential to multiply strategic alliances as no government can do it alone. There is a need to involve as many stakeholders as is possible. In order to invest in education, everyone’s effort is needed; local governments, private businesses, NGOs, and so on. She concluded by saying that there has been enough diagnosis and that it was time for action now.

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## **2.5 Panel 1: Learning for Livelihoods and Employability**

### **Panellists:**

**Mr Erik Bloom, Economist for Latin America and the Caribbean, World Bank (moderator)**

**Ms Maria Jose Nascimento Moura Araujo, Brazil**

**Mr Edward Shakes, Jamaica**

**Ms Ximensa Eloisa Valle de Martinez, Guatemala**

**Ms Maria Aparecida Zanetti, Brazil**

### **Mr Erik Bloom, World Bank**

Welcoming the participants, Mr Bloom said that there was much discussion about the size of the problem in this region, and some interest in technical education, but little focus on adult education; however this does not imply that there is no interest in education *per se*. The question is how the idea of adult education can be better sold. Many times governments look for models that can solve all problems, but this approach does not always work.

The need to go on learning throughout life has never been more pressing—changes of circumstance, employment, technology or location all bring new learning needs. It is important to link literacy learning with the generic and technical/professional skills which enable learners to find their place in the economic and cultural life of the community and the wider society.

***The Zé Peão School Project***

***Federal University of Paraíba and the João Pessoa Branch of the Building Workers Trade Union (SINTRICOM)***

***Brazil***

***Presenter : Ms Maria Jose Nascimento Moura Araujo***

Ms Araujo described the Zé Peão School Project (PEZP), which is a literacy programme for building workers that has been running in the city of João Pessoa, Brazil, since 1991. The beneficiaries of the project are mainly young men, of rural origin, with low levels of formal schooling and low professional qualifications. The main concern of the programme is to offer learning opportunities to building workers, which lead to their emancipation and enable them to participate more effectively and function more independently in the workplace and in society. An innovative and very successful feature of the programme is the partnership between a university and a trade union. While the university ensures a high-quality interdisciplinary and multicultural curriculum, the trade union guarantees the mobilization of the building workers through information meetings in the building sites. The classes are set up in the building site itself and the programme is concerned with offering not just school equivalency training but also a broad learning experience which includes visits, discussions, debates, sports, library/reading and other activities.

***Enhancing National Productivity through Literacy***

***Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning***

***Jamaica***

***Presenter: Mr Edward Shakes***

Jamaica is a relatively small economy, but is considered a developed country. It is largely a service economy comprised of the services sector; agriculture contributes 5 percent to GDP but employs 15 percent of the workforce.

Up to 70 percent of the Jamaican workforce is not fully qualified for the jobs performed, being unable to apply literacy and numeracy skills at the requisite level to function effectively in the current globalised economy. This has consistently undermined national productivity. In response to this reality, the Jamaican Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) developed a Workplace Literacy Programme in 1997, engaging private sector partnerships. The programme targets low skill workers, restrained by their low levels of literacy and numeracy. The key objective of the programme is to help the beneficiaries to function more independently, to gain confidence and to be able to better cope with the new and changing requirements in their workplace.

The programme offers basic literacy and numeracy training from the primary level up to the regional (Caribbean) high school graduation level. The basic curriculum is customised to meet the learning needs of the workers enrolled, reflecting the vocabulary and concepts of the specific industry in which they work. The programme operates from a range of facilities across the island including those owned by client organisations, business hotels and twenty-nine Adult Learning Centres operated by the Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning. Successful completion of the programme is often tied to Human Resource Management inducements such as formal appointment to a post for temporary employees, and consideration for promotion for full time staff.

Employers believe in the value of an educated workforce and have started putting pressure on the education system to improve; there is consciousness that Jamaica is losing skilled workers to other countries in the developed world. This has led to increased productivity, reduced accidents and down time and is therefore highly supported by employers; there is a view among them that such initiatives are useful.

***Entrepreneurial Municipality Programme***

***Organization of Ibero American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI)***

***El Salvador and Guatemala***

***Presenter : Ms Ximensa Eloisa Valle de Martinez***

Ms de Martinez described a programme called “*Municipio Emprendedor*” (entrepreneurial municipality), which is a programme promoting entrepreneurial training, using municipalities as managers of their own development. It seeks to provide occupational alternatives for young people who are behind at school or have dropped out of formal education and are in unemployment situations, but are insufficiently qualified to find employment. The programme officially came into being at the 1992 Second Summit of Heads of State or Government, held in Madrid, which considered starting up an Education for Work programme to encourage the exchange of experiences on reforming technical and vocational education and facilitating cooperation in training projects for the new technologies and work organisation systems. The “*Municipio Emprendedor*” is based on innovatory methods that facilitate both vocational training and social integration and are readily adaptable to the actual situations of each territory. In particular, use is made of entrepreneurial training, understood not as any neoliberal form of training but as training with profound social content, in both its approach and its development, since it seeks not only to create self-employment but also to foster such personal values as leadership, self-esteem, knowledge of the environment, social skills, and others.

The programme also has to do with immigration; it works with municipalities on the basis of areas. The requirement of the labour market for qualified people was low, so most people wanted to migrate to the US. Entrepreneurial training was provided through this programme to increase personal abilities so that learners could go into the social and productive market. 160 hours of training were provided, and on completion of the

programme only 17 percent still wanted to migrate to the US. The programme works with groups of young people and local managers, taking them through everything from an understanding of businesses and manufacturing to materials management and storage. This is done in a fun manner so that people enjoy the programme and are motivated to continue.

***ProJovem Campo – Saberes da Terra***  
***Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity, Ministry of Education***  
***Brazil***  
***Presenter: Ms Maria Aparecida Zanetti***

Ms Zanetti described the “*ProJovem Campo—Saberes da Terra*” as an adult and youth education programme for young people in rural areas of Brazil, working in family agriculture. Data from 2006 reveals that 26 percent of the young people in rural areas have not concluded the first stage of primary education and a further 62 percent have not finished the second stage. The programme is based on an integrated curriculum which links three dimensions of training - basic education, vocational and social qualification. The training places particular emphasis on the local knowledge the learners bring into the training process. Aiming at a comprehensive understanding of sustainable family agriculture, the programme addresses themes such as the diversification of the production, income generation, a more independent insertion of family agriculture in the market and the empowerment of the farmers to participate in local political decision making. The project was originally developed in twelve states contracting trained teachers to work specifically for the programme. Classes are organised in rural areas, making use of schools and training centres where possible, but also other alternative spaces, and adapting the school calendar to that of the productive cycle of family agriculture.

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## 2.6 Panel 2: Learning for good health

### **Panellists:**

**Ms Ana Lucia D’Emilio, Regional Advisor for Education and Excluded Populations, UNICEF (moderator)**

**Mr Luis Javier Angulo Talavera, Peru**

**Mr Rolando Encinas Caballero, Bolivia**

**Mr Hector Gonzalo Fiorilo, Bolivia**

**Ms Elizabeth Helena Baptista Ramos, Brazil**

### **Ms Ana Lucia D’Emilio, UNICEF**

Some of the most effective literacy learning programmes combine the learning to read, write and calculate with instruction in health matters. Such programmes prove more motivating and more relevant and useful than those limited to the teaching of literacy skills. Literacy is always part of working for better health and both can be used to strengthen each other.

### ***Bi-literacy programme in reproductive health, gender and interculturality***

***National Literacy Programme of the Ministry of Education***

***Peru***

***Presenter: Mr Luis Javier Angulo Talavera***

In Peru, high illiteracy rates are to be found particularly among *campesino* and indigenous women and are mainly concentrated in the Andean and Amazon rural areas, closely associated with high rates of maternal and child sickness and mortality, and with high indices of poverty and extreme poverty. In these zones indigenous languages are in predominant use and Spanish is weak. This makes it difficult for the women concerned to enter and remain in school since basic bilingual education coverage is very limited. The Bi-Literacy Programme for reproductive health, gender and interculturality addresses this problem by means of sessions of literacy instruction in the mother tongue and in Spanish as the second language and language of national integration, affirming and reasserting the value of the learners’ ethnic and cultural identity. Literacy instruction targets indigenous women aged over 15 years in Andean and Amazon rural areas.

One feature of the Bi-Literacy Programme is reproductive health with respect to the family, the couple and the community as a topic for exchange, reflection, dialogue and fresh knowledge, on the basis of recognition and enhancement of one’s own knowledge. This approach helps pupils to become more self-confident, developing their capacities to take decisions that protect their health and enabling them to continue learning about their reproductive health rights. The programme also provides information on the role of parents, on child sex abuse, on the right to live without violence or ill-treatment, on the participation of women in community organizations, and on rights in general, among other matters.

***Quechua-Spanish Bi-Literacy Project in Reproductive Health with a Gender-based Approach and Interculturality***

***UNFPA Bolivia***

***Bolivia***

***Presenter: Mr Rolando Encinas Caballero***

Bolivia has high levels of illiteracy, maternal mortality and extreme poverty. Illiteracy puts people at a clear disadvantage socially and regarding work, as reflected in low self-esteem, little or no participation in decision-making, and ignorance of their rights, particularly sexual and reproductive rights. The Quechua-Spanish Bi-Literacy Project seeks to contribute to the recovery and strengthening of personal self-esteem and to participation in the country's social and political life. People who can read and write are more likely to break the generation-to-generation transmission of poverty because literate parents value education, know and exercise their rights, and discover and spread the importance of encouraging the training of their sons and daughters. This project is therefore concerned with educational schemes mainly for indigenous women in municipalities with high levels of illiteracy and of maternal and infant mortality.

The project follows a bilingual method that strengthens ethnic and cultural identity, raises self-esteem, contributes to health care with emphasis on maternal and infant health, makes people more attuned to gender equity and makes for productive initiatives that improve the participants' income. It is based on the principles of learning from experience, action-reflection-action, group learning and learning for change, and helps to raise awareness of the socioeconomic, cultural and historical reality of the participants, both men and women. Started in 1998, the programme covers more than 160,000 people in 32 municipalities.

***Alfalit***

***Government of Bolivia***

***Bolivia***

***Presenter: Mr Hector Gonzalo Fiorilo***

According to 2001 statistics, the illiteracy rate in Bolivia is 13.28 percent, although the functionally illiterate may amount to as much as 40 percent of the population. The Bolivian Government has been executing a national basic literacy project for the past two years, but much remains to be done, particularly with respect to adult education. Alfalit, with the support of USAID, is part of the National Literacy Programme (PNA) recently set up by the Government, and has initiated an eight-grade study plan equivalent to primary schooling in the regular education system.

The Alfalit method is basically a process of associating known forms and words before venturing into unknown themes. Most of the facilitators are rural teachers, or at least people who have completed their secondary education. They all receive proper training before beginning their work. The programme has considerable outreach, from remote

hamlets of indigenous ethnic groups in the tropics to Andean communities at altitudes of over 4,000 m.

Training for women, who represent 75 percent of pupils, builds on the awareness that responsibility for the health of families is often with the mothers. As they become literate, they turn into teachers of their children, of their family community and of their neighbours. Also noteworthy is their dedication to producing household remedies from plant species, with which they treat common children's illnesses like colds and diarrhoeas. In the last four years economic support has been secured of up to 64 percent from local institutions. Backing from national authorities goes as far as reduced sentences for prisoners passing an Alfalit course.

### *Alfabetizando Com Saúde*

*Curitiba City Council – Municipal Health Department*

*Brazil*

*Ms Elizabeth Helena Baptista Ramos*

The “Alfabetizando com Saúde” programme, developed by the Health Department of the Curitiba City Council, consists of integrated actions for promoting health and literacy in Curitiba through an effective network of social mobilisation. The programme is based on institutional policies that started in 2002 with the main purpose of promoting adult literacy. These policies reinforce inter-sectoral actions in the city among the Health sector (through the Centre for Health Education, CES), the Education sector (through the Agency for Education of Youths and Adults, EJA), and the local communities. The programme operates through volunteers and is coordinated by a joint committee of representatives of the municipal health and education departments. The beneficiaries of the training are users of the Public Health Service (SUS) who are often socially and economically disadvantaged and lack formal instruction.

The lessons link the learning of reading and writing closely with information about various basic health themes. All reading texts are dealing with health promotion, the prevention of diseases and nutrition. By linking the provision of basic literacy skills to health promotion, the programme aims at reducing infant mortality, misuse of medicines and at improving the health and living conditions of the beneficiaries.

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## **2.7 Panel 3: Distance Learning and ICTs**

### **Panellists:**

**Ms Maria Rosa Pin, Delegate of the Minister of Education, Ecuador (moderator)**

**Ms Patricia Ramos, Mexico**

**Ms Yole Boggino de Mojoli, Paraguay**

**Ms Esmirna Garcia, Honduras**

**Ms Reyna Virginia Alvarado, Honduras**

**Ms Maria Rosa Pin, Ecuador**

Distance learning and ICTs are very important in today's world. The examples of this panel demonstrate methods relevant to literacy. In addition to reading and writing, ICTs are used to facilitate the task of delivering literacy. The following two main questions will be addressed by the panel: 1) To what extent are the presented programmes innovative? and 2) What are the challenges and achievements of the programmes with regard to sustainability?

***Education for Mexican communities abroad***

***INEA***

***Mexico***

***Presenter: Ms Patricia Ramos***

There is a growing demand for further education of the Mexican and in general Latin American communities who have acquired basic education. Countries with similar major educational challenges in the world, especially in Latin America, have started to come together. This has led to a diversification, adaptation and a more focused approach of the education schemes of the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA), based on the existing syllabus and curricula for literacy instruction and primary and secondary education. This has resulted in a strategy known as "Plazas Comunitarias y Portales en Colaboración".

The programme is innovative because:

- 1) It supports Mexican projects abroad. The target population are Mexicans and Spanish-speaking people living in the USA and Canada. A tailored educational model is used in the country by the institute. These learners require tools to have access to other levels of the educational system in the US. They receive certificates. These have different presentations in different modules which are accessible on the webpage.
- 2) The programme establishes international cooperation by providing information to universities, schools, NGOs, other partners. The basic strategy, the Plaza Comunitaria, enables learners to access Spanish materials by educational TV, videos, guides, satellites.
- 3) A follow-up process operated by each affiliated organisation is also in place.

As regards sustainability, the programme uses distance resources to reach 24000 Mexican and Latin American students, who study online by means of a course management online. There is also a diverse use of resources, web pages and resources of organisations collaborating with us: youth, parents, teachers. Learners continue studying because they are interested. Each *plaza comunitaria* develops a space, even in the family. There are challenges in training and IT training. Many of the learners are people older than 40 not used to computers. Another challenge is that of access to computers and the Internet. The programme does not have total access everywhere; sometimes it is limited to printed material.

***Educatodos***  
***Ministry of Education of Honduras and USAID***  
***Honduras***  
***Presenter: Ms Esmirna Garcia***

EDUCATODOS is a programme designed for people who are excluded from the formal education system such as marginalised ethnic groups, socially and economically vulnerable populations, prisoners, as well as for groups in the workplace. The programme provides basic education in a shorter time than the traditional education system and uses interactive radio methods. The programme has been working for 13 years with international support from the US to the Ministry of Education. The target population is women in rural areas. Local radio stations and audio devices adapted to the working hours of women are used, making the programme more flexible.

To offer better access and reduce costs, new methodologies such as CDs and MP3 players and alternative power sources are used, such as solar panels and alkaline batteries in remote areas without power supply. Course content includes basic literacy subjects and topics like environment, health, democracy and population.

More than 1 million people have been made literate, 52 percent of whom are women. Services are offered to a variety of populations. Special logistics in the distribution of materials to reach remote populations have been adopted.

One of the challenges is to have the programme stably linked to the structure of the Ministry of Education and to maintain a neutral programme with no political participation. Another challenge is to change the vision of the local government to focus their funds on educational programs and not on infrastructure. Unfortunately, for them, it is easier to see visible infrastructure than impact in education.

***System of open and distance education “Sumando”***  
***NGO SUMANDO***  
***Paraguay***  
***Presenter : Ms Yole Boggino de Mojoli***

The Sumando project was created to address the specific needs of young people and adults, mainly in rural areas and marginal zones of urban centres, which remain outside of the formal school system. The main reasons of school dropout in these areas are the need to look for work, physical distances and, in the case of women, situations of early pregnancy. The distance learning method used by Sumando draws on the Spanish model of the National University of Distance Education (UNED) and is seen as a valid alternative for coping with the needs of this major population sector.

The programme targets an excluded population of 1.2 million people. It is important to create a syllabus that is adapted to the needs of the learners. With the support of the Continuous Education Department of the Distance University of Madrid and the Ministry

of Education, financing was found from the private sector. High school teachers were trained in collaboration with the Ministry. Self-learning materials (exercises, workbooks, CDs, videos, mobile phones, Internet) are used so that students develop responsibility and decision making capacities.

Sustainability remains a problem, maintaining the system is difficult. The programme tries to get scholarships for populations with no resources, including from companies as part of corporate social responsibility.

***Local Management for Literacy Teaching with “Yo sí Puedo”***

***Municipality of Puerto Cortés***

***Honduras***

***Presenter: Ms Reyna Virginia Alvarado***

The Local Management for Literacy Teaching Project addresses young people and adults who did not have access to basic education and provides literacy teaching from the City Council of Puerto Cortés, using the teaching method “Yo sí puedo”. The Programme identifies the beneficiaries by means of a socioeconomic analysis of the various urban and rural communities of the municipality. It sets out to teach 80 percent of their illiterate male and female populations over 10 years old to read and write in order to boost the development of local capacities. This is the first time that this has happened in the country, from municipal to country level.

The teaching method makes use of audiovisual techniques and links letters with numbers. The programme is very rapid, producing literate people in a very short time. Facilitators are drawn from the community. It is very important to have the involvement of government, civil societies, schools and other actors.

The biggest challenge is getting economic cooperation from the Ministry of Education. Education works best when there are the same people teaching in the municipality. If local people make this project their own, it sustains even if there is a change in government.

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**2.8 Panel 4: Family and Intergenerational Learning**

**Panellists:**

**Ms Benita Somerfield, Executive Director, Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy (moderator)**

**Mr Jorge Rudy Garcia Monterroso, Guatemala**

**Ms Paula Lucie-Smith, Trinidad and Tobago**

**Ms Ana Maria Siverio, Cuba**

**Mr Pablo Venegas Cancino, Chile**

### **Ms Benita Somerfield**

Parents have a huge impact on their children's learning. First, according to research, a literate parent is more likely to send her/his child to school, to keep her/him there and to support her/his progress through school. Second, a parent who encourages her/his children's literacy by reading with them lays a strong foundation for independent reading later. Where parents have not had the opportunity to become literate, an intergenerational approach involving parents and their children can offer an effective alternative. Sometimes known as family literacy, an intergenerational approach will take account of the different learning styles and needs of both adult and child learners. The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy has played a significant role in supporting such intergenerational learning initiatives across the world.

### ***Intra-family integral literacy education – CONALFA***

**CONALFA**

***Guatemala***

***Presenter: Mr Jorge Rudy Garcia Monterroso***

CONALFA is a family literacy programme with a teaching/learning strategy that takes place within the family unit. The purpose of this scheme is to give literacy instruction to those individuals in a family unit who are interested in learning but are, for some reason, not able to attend regular classes. In addition, the barriers of distance and cultural patterns are overcome since it is another family member who takes care of the instruction.

2.8.3 Facilitators are children and young pupils in the fourth to ninth grade of formal primary education (10-14 years of age) whose parents or close relatives wish to become literate. These facilitators have to receive training from CONALFA trainers, essentially covering such matters as methods of teaching reading and writing and elementary arithmetic, community research, and how to treat adults in the course of their learning. A special feature of this programme is that it encourages the child literacy instructors by means of grants or school supplies sought from cooperating non-governmental organisations. The literacy instruction they are giving to their parents or close relatives is rewarded by substantial savings in school supplies for the parents.

### ***Adult Literacy Tutors Association Programme***

**ALTA**

***Trinidad and Tobago***

***Presenter: Ms Paula Lucie-Smith***

Started in 1992, the Adult Literacy Tutors Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ALTA), provides literacy classes for those 16 and over who would like to improve their reading and writing. Instruction is free as ALTA students usually have low and irregular incomes. It is done by specially-trained volunteers. Every year, ALTA trains 100 new volunteers. ALTA makes sure the content of the teaching is relevant to the needs and interests of adults in Trinidad in order to make an impact on their everyday lives. The aim is to equip

students to function independently in society. The indigenous Creole English is used for teaching writing and Standard English.

While ALTA is not specifically a family literacy programme, feedback from ALTA learners shows the huge impact the newly literate adults have on their children's motivation to learn. Many mothers do come to ALTA classes to be able to help their children with school work. Some pass on the skills learnt to their children and start reading and learning together. It is not unusual for several family members to attend ALTA. Since inception, the programme has covered nearly 1500 learners each year.

***“Educa a tu hijo”***

***Ministry of Education***

***Cuba***

***Presenter: Ms Ana Maria Siverio***

The programme “Educa a tu hijo - Educate your Son” is a model that provides educational care to all children not attending educational institutions, from birth to their entry into primary or elementary school by implementing a national strategy that involves the family as actors, and other agents of the educational community and representatives of different sectors and social institutions, including the Ministry of Education, which coordinates the programme at different levels. The inclusion of the family as one of the pillars of the programme is a very innovative feature. It was based on recognition of the potential of the family in early childhood education, since very early the family has an influence on social, physical, intellectual and moral development of their children.

The other pillar of this programme is the community character of its actions. The community becomes the ideal space for conducting educational programmes. The very essence of community programmes for these age groups is that they are allowed to speak at the same time, be promoted, and an inter-sectoral approach, which assumes that the various educational agents and representatives from different sectors, agencies, organisations and civil society associations are grouped together and assume responsible work for a common interest and benefit, in this case, educational quality care for the welfare and development of the younger population.

***Synthesis of experience of the Programme to Improve Childhood Care (PMI)***

***Interdisciplinary Educational Research Programme (PIIE)/National Kindergarten Board (JUNJI)***

***Chile***

***Presenter: Mr Pablo Venegas Cancino***

The Programme to Improve Childhood Care (PMI) seeks to address the care and education needs of young children aged under six years and their families. The populations in focus are those living in conditions of poverty, who, because of their isolation or the lack of educational centres (kindergartens), are denied educational

opportunities. The Programme is based on research and action and on the joint development of local projects respecting local culture. Collective learning and analysis of practice are the most characteristic processes of work with adults.

With the children, personalised attention and the involvement of their mothers and other adults from the community are specific features. The programme promotes functional literacy among adults and in intergenerational education, for it is the mothers who organise themselves to see to the educational needs of their children. The training and educational action of the mothers, together with the local linkages they generate around the project, help in the development of social capital, the prevention of functional illiteracy, and the participation and empowerment of women in the communities concerned.

As regards the children, the development of language, socio-emotional development, and knowledge of the environment seem to be the most successful dimensions.

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## **2.9 Panel 5: Meeting Learning Needs Of Groups With Special Learning Needs (Minority Groups, Migrants, Prisoners And Others)**

### **Panellists:**

**Ms Luz Maria Castro, Director of Programmes, INEA, Mexico (moderator)**

**Mr Isidro Escobar Thompson, Nicaragua**

**Mr Hernando Lambuley, Latin American Network of Education in Contexts of Imprisonment (RedLECE)**

**Mr Felipe Machin, Uruguay**

**Ms Carolina Serrano, Colombia**

### ***Alternative Bilingual Miskito-Spanish Intercultural Literacy Education linked to the Exercise of Citizenship and Community Production***

***Nicaragua***

***Presenter: Mr Isidro Escobar Thompson***

Standard approaches to providing quality basic learning cannot reach everyone. In every country there are population groups with characteristics different from the mainstream population or whose circumstances are special. These groups include minorities, migrants, refugees, the disabled, prisoners, and others. Research has shown that the percentage of those without basic literacy and numeracy competencies and life skills is higher among such groups than among the rest of the population.

The Alternative Bilingual Intercultural Literacy Education project is carried out in five rural indigenous communities and eleven urban neighbourhoods of Bilwi (Puerto Cabezas) in the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) of Nicaragua. In this region, illiteracy is the result of poverty, historical social exclusion and the lack of any official or State programme of adult literacy education in the Miskito language. This constitutes a negation of the right to bilingual intercultural education of the young and

adult indigenous population and an obstacle to individual, social and regional development.

The project provides literacy classes for young people and adults in their mother tongue Miskito and in Spanish, and deals with intercultural themes of their world view, the environment and indigenous rights. In Nicaragua, this experiment is a unique and alternative model of literacy provision in Miskito, with a Miskito-Spanish bilingual intercultural curriculum of its own. The texts have been produced by authors from the Miskito ethnic group, with contents determined on the basis of a needs analysis and the identification of fundamental features of the Miskito world view.

***Latin American Network of Education in Contexts of Imprisonment (RedLECE)***  
***Presenter: Mr Hernando Lambuley***

RedLECE is a government forum specialised in the analysis, exchange and technical cooperation between Latin American countries in the area of education in prisons. The Network seeks to ensure that the theme of education in prisons is visible in the member countries and included in the agendas of educational and penal policies. It contributed to drawing up the regional map of education in prisons. Thematic meetings on education are held and general experiences shared on the basis of the specific work of education in prisons in the countries.

The Network implements and participates in forums, maintains permanent communication among the members and other networks in order to back the prison education activities of each country. It has also promoted inter-linkage between Ministries of Education and Ministries of Justice or their equivalents. Participating countries exchange good educational practices in prisons and penitentiaries and study visits are organised to allow the various actors involved to learn from the realities in prisons in Europe and Latin America.

***Programme of education for young people and adults***  
***National Administration of Public Education (ANEP)***  
***Uruguay***  
***Presenter: Mr Felipe Machin***

The education programme for young people and adults is designed for people excluded from the formal basic education system, such as the poor, prisoners, people with various disabilities and marginalised populations. Educational spaces have been set up in prisons for the purpose of guaranteeing that education contributes to the development of personal autonomy and a harmonious social reintegration. Non-formal education (NFE) is promoted alongside formal teaching. NFE is essential in prisons because it is flexible and offers greater options to prisoners (i.e. popular culture including carnival, workshops, theatre, music, chess, electricity, bookbinding, hairdressing and leatherworking).

The current programme has workshop instructors and teachers in all the country's penal establishments. From the institutional point of view, it has strengthened links with the organisations that are concerned with prison population to coordinate efforts, established the Support Commission for Education in Prisons (CAEC) and participated in the Eurosocial Project RedLECE. Its outcome has allowed prisoners to reconstruct their own identity and that of the group.

***Programme of literacy education, primary basic education and training for work of vulnerable young people and adults of the Pacific and central parts of Colombia  
Colombia***

***Presenter: Ms Carolina Serrano***

As a result of social and armed conflicts, a weak education system and lack of employment possibilities, some parts of Colombia are at present affected by a high rate of illiteracy, in some cases as much as 20%. Low academic standards often deprive people from employment opportunities. The Programme for Literacy and Education for Young People and Adults aims at benefiting the most vulnerable, displaced people, people of African descent, indigenous people, and women heading households. Loss of cultural ties, high unemployment, juvenile delinquency, early pregnancies and, in general, a low self esteem undermines their human dignity and security.

To help reduce illiteracy, this project sets out to raise the educational level and to build up working skills in the target population of the territories concerned. The curriculum, in addition to covering basic competencies like mathematics, communication and language, social sciences and preparation for the world of work, strengthens the awareness of values, the culture of peace, sustainable human development, and a better standard of living.

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## **2.10 Panel 6: The ALADIN Network in Latin America and the Caribbean**

**Panelists:**

**Ms Gloria Alberti, UNESCO Santiago Office (moderator)**

**Ms Piedad Caballero, Colombia**

**Ms Maria Teresa Espinosa Perea, Mexico**

**Ms Martha Eyzaguirre, Mexico**

**Mr Ricardo Reynoso Serralde, Mexico**

**Ms Claudette Wauchope, Jamaica**

**Ms Gloria Alberti, UNESCO Santiago Office**

Ms Alberti began by presenting ALADIN, a network of documentation and information centers in the area of adult learning, which has 91 members in 47 countries of the world. ALADIN's mission is to develop networking and capacity-development for documentation and information services in adult education. It seeks to be an intermediate between policy makers and practitioners and has developed several projects in Latin

America. ALADIN is available through UNESCO Santiago and Paris websites, and provides complete biographies and documentation of resources in adult education. Although most information is in English, efforts are being made to provide information in Spanish now and Portuguese later. Given the potential of the network, Ms Alberti stressed the need to encourage as many people as possible to join and use ALADIN.

***REDUC. Latin American Network of information and documentation in education  
Pedagogical National University in Colombia, and 18 national centers associated with  
the network***

***Colombia***

***Presenter: Ms Piedad Caballero***

The Latin American Network of Information and Documentation in Education (REDUC) was created in Chile in 1978. Its mission is to foster linkages and cooperation between educational research and its users, i.e. university academics, policy makers, teachers, students. The network's database has 20,000 references and is targeted at the production and dissemination of relevant information to contribute to qualitative improvement and equity in education systems. Originally a strategy to promote non-formal education in Latin America, the main objectives of the programme were to:

- (i) Connect knowledge in education with action and decision-making processes in order to help improve the quality and efficiency of education in countries of the region.
- (ii) Contribute to the development of informed discussions about education in the region aimed at producing new knowledge to meet major educational problems in each country.

The network brings together research centres and documentation centers. Each national partner collects and summarises the documentation for its country, is the moderator of meetings between investigators at the national level, and, if necessary, the coordinator the respective national network.

***Information system INEA-CONEVyT***

***National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) and National Council of Education for Life and Work (CONEVyT).***

***Mexico***

***Presenter: Ms Maria Teresa Espinosa Perea***

With a view to enriching the current educational supply, significant efforts are being made to provide Mexican youths and adults with more literacy-oriented environments that make available relevant, easy to access and updated information whenever it is required.

CONEVyT's Digital Library, the "Paulo Freire" Documentation Centre and the multi-media libraries, strive to meet the information needs of all actors involved in the field of education: young and adult users of the system; education advisors; technical, academic,

and executive staff; as well as all other stakeholders. Mexican learners can access this information locally and abroad through United States' Plazas Comunitarias, thus contributing to consolidate and broaden each participant's actions and knowledge base. These efforts promote free and equal access to information and to the knowledge accumulated by mankind so that all citizens can assume their proper role and participate actively in today's society.

**Ms Martha Eyzaguirre, Mexico**

Representing CREFAL, an institution with more than 57 years of experience in working in the region, Ms Eyzaguirre spoke about a comprehensive webpage on youth and adult education recently developed by the organisation to provide up-to-date information on various themes related to education, such as information on human rights, educational legislation, rights of indigenous people, and the like, with different formats for different subjects. Links have been provided to other institutes related to education of youth and adults. The eventual proposal is to have different applications in different countries.

***CREFAL Digital Library***

***Mexico***

***Presenter: Mr Ricardo Reynoso Serralde***

The CREFAL Digital Library program has an operative structure designed to continue creating specialized computerized resources on Adult and Youth Education, to meet research needs and to respond to issues defined by international agencies and conferences. Its proposals include the development of an interactive process with informational networks which facilitate sharing digital resources, in addition to the development of strategies for conducting exchanges of specialized information.

CREFAL considers the ALADIN Network to be one of the most important connections for interaction and information sharing that meets the individual resource capabilities of each member. However, the primary proposal for facilitating access to a specialized data base that avoids links or to connect from one place to another is the following: to develop a data base that utilizes its own informational retrieval resources, comprising of the digital publications each member institution has published for creating a common data base accessible through the ALADIN Network web page.

***The Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) Masters Programme in Adult Education in Jamaica***

***Jamaican Council for Adult Education (JACAE) and Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL)***

***Jamaica***

***Presenter: Ms Claudette Wauchope***

Jamaica's low literacy rate extends across all sectors of the society. This coupled with the lack of adequate resources to address the problems stemming from the lack of literacy and numeracy skills results in the high rate of crime and violence which currently exists.

Efforts by JACAE and JFLL to tackle the problems generated by lack of proper education have been hampered by the lack of trained personnel to impart the knowledge and information necessary to alleviate the economic, social and environmental conditions which perpetuate crime and violence.

In 1998 JACAE and JFLL collaborated with Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Canada and formally launched the MSVU Programme in Adult Education.

Through a practicum, which is mandatory, the students interact with persons at grass roots level in the various areas of specialization. A wide range of persons from agriculture, health, education, industry, business as well as unemployed persons from the inner cities has been impacted.

Graduates from this programme now work in tertiary institutions training persons to teach in various institutions of learning, some have entered into workplace education, human resource development, agriculture, health and environmental development, social and economic development.

They not only seek to improve literacy and numeracy skills but they have also initiated change in values, ethics and attitudes.

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### DAY 3: 12 September 2008

#### **2.11 Roundtable 3: Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation of Literacy and Youth & Adult Education**

##### **Participants:**

**Ms Maria Isabel Infante, National Coordinator for Adult Education, Chile (moderator)**

**Ms Maria Eugenia Letelier Galvez, Chile**

**Ms Maria Gertrudis Alcaraz, Mexico**

**Mr Cesar Guadalupe, UNESCO/UIS**

**Mr Joao Pedro Azevedo, World Bank**

##### **Discussants:**

**Mr Andre Lazaro, Secretary of Continuous Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD), Brazil**

**Ms Maria Isabel Infante, National Coordinator for Adult Education, Chile**

The absence of reliable and timely data on literacy levels of the population leads to difficulties in planning and implementation. The success of any programme depends critically upon the establishment of appropriate systems of monitoring and evaluation. While there are different ways of evaluating learner progress depending on the context, the focus in this discussion would be on the evaluation of literacy levels, evaluation of learning within educational process, evaluation of programmes, and monitoring. There is much experience of evaluation and assessment in this region, but it is not always disseminated; international agencies like UNESCO can play a crucial role in supporting

and encouraging this dissemination since evaluation plays a significant role in ensuring high quality lifelong learning.

**Ms Maria Eugenia Letelier Galvez, Chile**

Several experiences in the last decade of the last century have been helpful; pilot projects of evaluation have been undertaken in the region, with technical teams from each country which conceptualised and put in place instruments used in quantitative and qualitative areas and documents. A clear strategy on how to approach people and how they approach the literate world is useful in designing monitoring systems. Significant progress has been made in measuring progress in literacy in countries of this region. However, whenever we speak of evaluation, it should be remembered that it is closely linked to competencies achieved by people.

Programmes are often not well evaluated; there is a lack of clarity about what to evaluate so there is often little understanding later of what has actually been measured. Learning is associated with certification and curriculum; actions are often driven by one particular need but the ultimate aim must be that of enabling adults to learn. Many countries have flexible learning programmes, but these are often difficult to evaluate; prior learning must also be recognised. The huge diversity in different educational offerings makes it difficult to obtain reliable information.

For certification, it is necessary to have a reliable system that is robust and can support requirements. Capacity-development is needed in the design of appropriate evaluation systems.

**Ms Maria Gertrudis Alcaraz, Mexico**

Ms Alcaraz described a study undertaken by her institute, providing information about the tools used. She said that Mexico has 4 million people who lack basic education skills, with 64 million over the age of 15 who have not completed secondary education. INEA was therefore created in 1964 to promote basic education for adults, with the government taking up programmes in 27 states to improve learning levels.

INEA standardises and coordinates adult education on a national level; although not an operating organisation, it coordinates and certifies. 706,000 adults were helped to complete secondary education in 2008. Examinations were conducted at province level to measure adult learning through zone offices and micro-regions. 70,000 advisors were used to support educational programmes, 104,000 venues were registered as examination centres for students, with 40,000 people involved in the examination process.

Before teaching the student, during the teaching process and after the evaluation, INEA interacts with the students and tries to determine their interests. Diagnostic exams (233 questions) are conducted to evaluate elementary, intermediate and secondary levels, and accreditation is granted on the basis of knowledge already held. The student and advisor can view progress throughout the process to determine readiness to take exams.

The examination is continuously modified on the basis of feedback received. At INEA, there are two instruments that provide technological support for evaluation and follow-up purposes. Online examinations have been introduced, based on work begun in 2003. An e-learning platform with adequate tools has also been developed and is used to provide some of the features required for exams. The bank of instruments contains 9000 items and helps to generate random exams which are different for different learners. Some 75000 learners had taken on line exams as of September 2008.

**Mr Cesar Guadalupe, UNESCO/UIS**

Mr Guadalupe described the Literacy Assessment and Measurement Programme (LAMP), a methodology and a set of instruments that allow countries to measure literacy levels of youth and adults over 15. Through LAMP, UNESCO is trying to develop more complex statistical tools that can measure levels of learning and can be adapted to national needs for evaluation and to different languages of investigation.

The cost of not measuring literacy are higher in the long run than those of establishing appropriate systems of measurement. Programmes based on no or little evidence cannot be successful. UNESCO can play a significant role in disseminating information and ensuring that strategies developed are made available to each country needing them.

**Mr Joao Pedro Azevedo, World Bank**

The Bank has been working on crystallising the idea that literacy is a right; however, the fundamental issue is that having a right does not guarantee the quality of service received. Monitoring and evaluation are important to ensure improved and sustained quality. Mr Azevedo referred to the experience of the major governmental literacy programme in Brazil, where a multi-disciplinary team has been working on the project.

The region has certain experiences and it is useful to exchange these to avoid costs involved in duplication of similar efforts/tools. One needs to know exactly what happens in educational programmes, and hence it is essential to have suitable evaluation systems. In the case of Brazil, the cost of the evaluation programmes for the literacy project was 0.3 percent of the total cost, which is minor in comparison to the benefits derived. During three years of evaluation, the design of the programme changed from year to year based on knowledge gathered from the programme, which was very rich learning for both sides. Four books have been published by UNESCO (in Portuguese), which are available for download, and provide the methodology, tools, cognitive tests and some results.

Quality of service provided and the durability of any programme is impacted by evaluation. Evaluating and evaluating right can help to ensure programme continuity; it is much easier to discontinue programmes that have not been evaluated. Evaluation must be an integral part of any programme, looking not only at cognitive aspects but also at the impact on the larger social, cultural, economic and political system.

**Mr Andre Lazaro, Secretary of Continuous Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD), Brazil**

Literacy and education is a political project; it is an expression of the desire to build a nation. This means inviting those who are excluded to participate. Constantly evaluating progress in educational programmes through close contact with the learners is therefore very important.

The evaluation of literacy programmes should take into account aspects like availability, accessibility and adaptability of the programme and the system. Teachers must understand how to use evaluation methods in order to plan their classes and meet expectations of students. Mr Lazaro agreed with the speakers that there is a need to use more cognitive tests and evaluation methods to ensure that literacy programmes are having the desired impact.

It is also important to remember that the knowledge gathered from these tests helps to locate the learners on learning scales throughout the programme. The Brazilian government is trying to move such programmes into regular educational policy. The evaluation culture in Brazil is not very well established, and the exercise is carried out only irregularly. However, there has been some improvement now, which will hopefully be sustained in the future, with suitable quality parameters being developed to help in the process of evaluation. Restructuring of educational programmes is taking place, with several courses being closed if they do not meet minimum quality standards.

Mr Lazaro expressed some concern about certification systems for youth and adults; since programmes range from short to long term, it is difficult to establish the equivalence of certification. When children fail, they have to deal with the stigma of doing so and may often drop out; this makes it necessary to work with them to overcome this barrier.

## **2.12 Roundtable 4: Literacy and Youth & Adult Education in Multicultural and Multilingual Contexts**

### **Participants:**

**Mr Luis Enrique Lopez, Programme Coordinator PACE/GTZ, Peru/Guatemala (moderator)**

**Mr Guillermo McLean Herrera, Nicaragua**

**Mr Lynn Mario Menezes de Souza, Brazil**

**Ms Sylvia Schmelkes del Valle, Mexico**

**Ms Madeleine Zuniga, Peru**

### **Discussants:**

**H. E. Ms Franka Alexis-Bernardine, Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, Grenada**

**Ms Iris Villegas, Ministerial Advisor, Ministry of Education, Bolivia**

### **Mr Luis Enrique Lopez, Peru/Guatemala**

The Latin American and Caribbean region is home to a great diversity of peoples and indigenous groups (more than 700) speaking many different languages. The ways of life are also different, so cultural differences also exist.

Under the project “Literacy Instruction in Multilingual Contexts”, studies have been conducted in seven Latin American countries—Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru—to analyse the policies and practices of literacy instruction and education of young people and adults in bilingual or multilingual contexts and, at the same time, to identify successful practices of programmes that work with intercultural and bilingual or multilingual approaches. In most Latin American countries with indigenous populations (approximately 50 million speaking some 400 different languages), the illiteracy rate among indigenous peoples is more than twice the average illiteracy rate at national level. In addition, gender disparity in literacy among indigenous populations is double the national average. The question then is how to plan literacy in multiethnic and multilingual situations and to link policies for literacy for these people with mainstream educational policy.

### **Mr Guillermo McLean Herrera, Nicaragua**

Mr Herrera described the Garifuna in Nicaragua, which count only about 4000 people who came originally from Honduras as refugees. Recovering their heritage has been a challenging task, and there is now a growing demand for becoming literate in their own language. He described the programme implemented to support the people. Since the same language is spoken in Honduras and Belize, it was possible to obtain support to recover the language and the culture. Support was provided for the creation of own learning material based on cultural context, using a participatory process aimed at achieving quality education with equity.

Some work has also been done in decentralisation of administration and resources to facilitate development at the local level. The processes of education must contribute to

solving the problems of racism, discrimination and exclusion. How to incorporate the rights of citizens and create awareness remains a major challenge.

**Mr Lynn Mario Menezes de Souza, Brazil**

Where does literacy begin and education end? We take education for granted, but what does it mean? How is it relevant to the life situation of the learner? Literacy means different things to different people, and it is important therefore to understand the complexity of literacy. Not all cultures see education as the acquisition of knowledge using the written word; there may be oral or pictorial representation that substitutes for the written word.

Education and literacy are also political and must be understood in that context. Internally, there are conceptual and intellectual contradictions within these policies, as for example, the contradiction between universalisation of education and the need to provide protection to indigenous languages and cultures. Addressing the complexity of multi-cultural education is important; once legislation and a policy framework are there, these need to be translated into action on ground.

Administrators and academics are also as much a part of the problem; they need to learn and re-learn and avoid the trap of monolingual education.

**Ms Sylvia Schmelkes del Valle, Mexico**

It is necessary not only to provide literacy classes, but also to create literate societies. There are very few indigenous languages in Latin America in which literacy provision is assured and which have a considerable body of literature. Programmes that support literacy in indigenous languages also support cultural preservation and continuity.

There are some who believe that teaching should not take place in indigenous languages as they do not have written scripts whereas others the right to education for everybody, regardless of the ethnic or cultural background. Behind this debate is the myth that indigenous people cannot learn or that adults cannot be taught and that it is best to leave such people alone in order to preserve their culture. However, teaching indigenous languages helps these people to become literate as well as to become active parts of the wider society; and once a person learns one language, the acquisition of another becomes much easier. While earlier there was a desire to homogenise countries to avoid the risk of diversity and as part of nation building, this attitude has now changed to allow for strengthening cultural diversity, with such rights being protected by law and the Constitution. Three major demands related to indigenous peoples are (i) the demand for access to culturally and linguistically pertinent education; (ii) inter-cultural education for the whole population (inclusion in national curricula), and (iii) the request of the indigenous populations to plan, manage and evaluate their own educational systems.

Literacy is a social practice, and there are two major matters of importance to be considered: creation of a literate environment through production of material in indigenous languages, and second, use of indigenous languages in public domains, such

as public media and education. We must always recall that literacy is the introduction to a literate culture, and must happen in the context of intercultural education for all.

**Ms Madeleine Zuniga, Peru**

The rates of illiteracy in this region are the highest among indigenous populations. Literacy provision in indigenous languages coupled with a bilingual approach is important in this context. Even though legal instruments and policies exist for the provision of indigenous bilingual education, there is often failure in implementation. These instruments must therefore be accompanied by action plans that translate them into reality. Indigenous groups need to be involved in decisions on the languages to choose for bilingual education and appropriate teacher training for bilingual education is also crucial. There is furthermore a need to provide opportunities to those who want to go beyond indigenous education and enter mainstream education programmes. Literacy must be viewed as part of inter-sectoral policies of development for all. The process of empowerment begins with literacy but must not stop with it.

**H. E. Ms Franka Alexis-Bernardine, Minister for Education and Human Resource Development, Grenada**

Adult education has been a matter of concern for Grenada for some time, resulting in programmes implemented with varying degrees of success. The government is fully committed to the view that education for all is essential to enable citizens to participate fully in democratic life. The link between education and poverty is well established; there is therefore no choice. Adult education programmes must be taken up as strategies to eliminate poverty.

The issue of multicultural and multilingual education is a complex one, but perhaps not as relevant to the Caribbean as to Latin America. The use of bilingual approaches to education has not featured significantly in the Caribbean. Areas of comparison exist in the approaches to adult education of the Caribbean countries and the Latin American ones, including diversity and incorporation of ethnic culture. Schools are not always able to deal with diversity and may need additional support. Similarly, it is agreed that educational content must be based on the reality of the learners and be prepared in a community-based approach. The incorporation of skills, capacity building and personality development skills in adult education programmes is also crucial.

It is a matter of some concern to note that indigenous peoples continue to be deprived of literacy even after all these years of effort, and that governments are often reluctant to buy in to bilingual or multilingual literacy programmes that address the needs of indigenous peoples. Non-formal youth and adult education programmes must have inter-linkages with the formal education system.

Successful adult education initiatives of the Latin American region can be customised for the Caribbean, and therefore sharing of experiences across the region is important. Networking between various countries and organisations would be useful for all concerned and should be encouraged. Strategies and approaches must be learner-centred and address a range of issues from technical to social, leading to the removal of exclusion

and stigma, ultimately functioning as unified forces for eradication of poverty, injustice and social exclusion.

**Ms Iris Villegas, Ministerial Advisor, Ministry of Education, Bolivia**

When we talk about promoting literacy in multicultural and multilingual frameworks we acknowledge and reaffirm those cultures and languages themselves. It is necessary to acknowledge that in all educational planning there is a need to start from existing knowledge in cultures and peoples.

Literacy practices must be geared to reducing exclusion and inequality, which are faced by many indigenous peoples. The solution to this problem goes beyond mere literacy policies; governments and civil society must deal with these issues in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

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