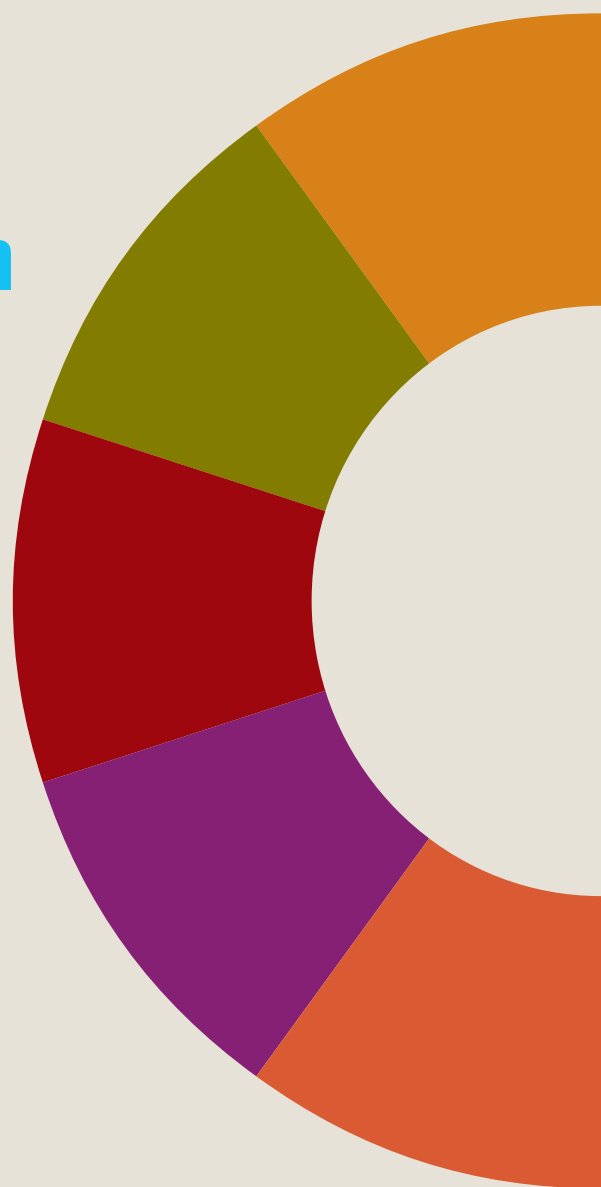


CONFINTEA VI

MID-TERM REVIEW 2017

Progress, challenges and opportunities: The status of adult learning and education

 **SUMMARY
OF THE REGIONAL REPORTS**



Progress, challenges and opportunities: The status of adult learning and education

SUMMARY OF THE REGIONAL REPORTS

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning



PUBLISHED IN 2017 BY

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Feldbrunnenstrasse 58
20148 Hamburg
Germany

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Layout and design by Teresa Boese

ISBN: 978-92-820-1223-9

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review represents an opportunity to assess the achievements and challenges in securing the rights of young people and adults to lifelong learning and education since the last International Conference on Adult Education in 2009, when 144 countries adopted the Belém Framework for Action.

Five regional reports were commissioned for the Mid-Term Review conference, in Suwon, Korea, in October 2017, each documenting, for a particular region, the outcomes and results of the CONFINTEA VI recommendations, that is, the implementation of the Belém Framework for Action in the region, particularly as expressed in regional or country action plans and their achievements. This report collects the summaries of each regional report, presenting them in a useful and easy-to-digest way.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning would like to thank the authors for preparing the five regional reports and the associated summaries: John Aitchison (Sub-Saharan Africa), Sami Nassar (Arab States), Rangachar Govinda (Asia and the Pacific), Aleksandra Kozyra, Ricarda Motschilnig and Gina Ebner (Europe and North America), Nélide Elcira Céspedes Rossel and Timothy Ireland (Latin America and the Caribbean).

We also wish to express our gratitude to Alec McAulay, who copy-edited the reports, and Teresa Boese, who designed them.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

THE CONTEXT

This report documents, for sub-Saharan Africa, the outcomes and results of the CONFINTEA VI recommendations, that is, the implementation of the Belém Framework for Action in the region, particularly as expressed in regional or country action plans and their achievements.

Sub-Saharan Africa and the world of adult learning and education

Sub-Saharan Africa has been through a period of severe financial austerity because of the crisis in the world financial systems, made worse by continuing instability in some sub-regions. On the whole, Africa remains a poor continent, further challenged by a rapid growth in population, severe environmental issues, political instability, and with weak or very modest educational outputs. Although there have been dramatic developments in access to universal primary education, the growth in enrolments often compromises quality and creates the need for second-chance education to remedy that lack of quality. Illiteracy levels have shown a promising decline, but for many countries literacy (*alphabétisation*) and adult basic education programmes remain needed as the key adult learning and education (ALE) provision. In this region, the full continuum of lifelong and lifewide learning remains somewhat underdeveloped. Illiteracy and low levels of education correlate with low productivity, lower incomes and poorer health (and susceptibility to HIV/AIDS), as well as acting as barriers to continuing education and training.

SCOPE, SOURCES AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS REPORT

This report relies heavily on questionnaires completed by Member States to provide information for the compiling of the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)* in 2016. Not all countries submitted the questionnaires and there remains a lack of data in some key areas.

WHAT WAS THE FOLLOW-UP TO CONFINTEA VI?

A follow-up Regional Expert Meeting with the theme of 'Increasing the participation of youth and adults in learning and education' was held in November 2012 in Praia,

Cabo Verde. One objective of that meeting was to develop effective regional action points for implementing the Belém Framework for Action.

New international declarations that will influence ALE before CONFINTEA VII

Three major international declarations of 2015 will influence both the context and activities of ALE in the foreseeable future: (1) The United Nations-approved *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Transforming the World*; (2) The World Education Forum's *Incheon Declaration: Education 2030. Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All*; and (3) the companion *Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4*. These declarations are complemented by UNESCO's *2015 Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE)*.

POLICY

How do country policies define adult learning and education?

Most countries have attempted the difficult task of defining ALE in their context, a few with broad definitions and others with more narrow ones that focus on literacy and adult basic education. Few countries have revised definitions since 2009. There is clearly room for further definitional clarity in the use of ALE terminology and for more comprehensive definitions (in line with *RALE*).

Are there new post-CONFINTEA VI policies?

A majority of countries (58 per cent of respondents) have new post 2009 policies in place, though few were comprehensive. There was little sign of a special focus on youth in ALE policies.

The importance of literacy and basic skills in African policies

Literacy, adult basic education, and basic skills (sometimes given recognition as being equivalent to conventional schooling) remain top ALE priorities and are targeted at adults with low levels of literacy, and those not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Literacy policies are sometimes accompanied by partnerships between state and civil society, and in West Africa *faire-faire* decentralization and outsourcing strategies. Follow-up post-literacy

and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) provision did not match the potential need.

Are there policy frameworks for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning?

A minority of countries have policies for the recognition of prior learning.

Do policies reflect a political commitment to ALE?

A large majority of countries believe that there has been progress in political commitment to ALE, at least in the form of literacy and basic education.

Were action plans formulated after CONFINTEA VI?

A small majority of countries had comprehensive post-CONFINTEA VI action plans that covered areas of policy, literacy, governance, financing, participation and quality.

Was there collaboration in the development of programmes?

There has been a positive, if modest, increase in consultation with all stakeholders.

GOVERNANCE

Does legislation exist (and complement ALE policies)?

Some countries have explicit ALE legislation, but there are few new developments in information management or accreditation and certification.

Do state institutions and strategies exist for ALE?

Most countries have some form of state governance of ALE, most commonly a department or unit or agency within a ministry of education. It is difficult to determine significant changes since 2009, as some new developments may simply be a renaming or restructuring of previous ministries or directorates or new iterations of development plans.

Developments in ALE governance

There is a positive assessment that governance has improved greatly since 2009 – in terms of stakeholder participation, inter-ministerial cooperation, decentralized arrangements, coordination, capacity-building, and in monitoring and evaluation.

FINANCING

Public investment in ALE

Most countries spent less than 2 per cent of the national education budget on ALE. Several countries reported a modest increase in ALE spending and most spoke of plans to increase spending. In real terms, however, given the severe depreciation of many African currencies, it is more likely to have been a decrease. Nearly a quarter of the countries did not have information on the scale of public investment in ALE.

Significant innovations in ALE financing since 2009

Nearly half the countries reported significant innovations in ALE financing since 2009, though most of these seemed to be related to cost-sharing with civil society partners. Several countries, notably Senegal and Nigeria, received new funding from international bodies.

PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Access to and participation in ALE programmes

Learner participation increased in a majority of countries, though little detail was given and a quarter were unable to provide participation data at all.

Differences in participation by men and women

An imbalance in participation remains large. Women predominate in adult education as a whole, in non-formal education and in literacy. Men predominate in general education and massively so in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). With the growth of universal primary education with equal participation by males and females, low levels of literacy may well become primarily a male problem in the future.

Changes in participation rates

Growth in participation was low among hard-to-reach groups – migrants, refugees, the disabled, the elderly, prisoners, and the long-term unemployed.

Innovations in access and participation since 2009

Few innovations were reported.

QUALITY

Is information on the quality of ALE systematically collected?

About a third of the countries collect information on completion rates, but for the remainder information on quality outcomes was absent. Togo collected comprehensive data.

Teaching quality: Are there initial, pre-service education and training programmes for ALE educators?

ALE educators and trainers were receiving pre-service training in 84 per cent of the countries. Pre-service qualifications were increasingly required in 91 per cent of countries (though only 44 per cent of countries required them for all programmes).

Are there continuing, in-service programmes for adult educators?

There was growth in in-service and continuing education and training for practitioners, though 61 per cent of countries had inadequate capacity.

Quality improvement and innovation since 2009

A majority of countries claimed quality improvements since 2009. Notable interventions were the assessment process in the Kha Ri Gude literacy programme in South Africa and annual literacy tests in Kenya.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Responses to international declarations and policy influences

Responses to international declarations and policy influences have been positive (most obviously so to that of the Dakar 2000 Framework for Action, Education for All with its literacy and other targets).

Regional frameworks for capacity-building

There have been positive developments, particularly with the Action Research: Measuring Literacy Programme Participants' Learning Outcomes (RAMAA) programmes in West Africa and the Zankey Faba youth development network, which was an outcome of the 2012 Cabo Verde meeting.

Funding cooperation and research and technical support

There have been some good examples that have been supported by UNESCO, Capacity Development for Education for all (CAPEFA) (now Capacity Development

for Education [CAPED]), DVV International, the Commonwealth of Learning and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL).

THE IMPACT OF ALE ON HEALTH, WORK AND SOCIETY

Do policy-makers and practitioners see the social and economic benefits of ALE?

Policy-makers and practitioners do increasingly recognize the social and economic benefits of ALE, though their understanding of the nature of its impact is varied.

What exactly does ALE policy and practice related to health mean?

Over two-thirds of the countries saw positive evidence that ALE impacted in a general way upon health.

What are the barriers to effective ALE for health and well-being?

Illiteracy was seen as the main barrier to a healthy life, followed by inadequate or misdirected health funding and poor inter-departmental collaboration. Less than 40 per cent of countries had inter-departmental coordinating mechanisms for health.

How do ALE policy-makers perceive the effects of ALE provision on productivity and employment?

There was insufficient evidence on this point, and at best claims for benefit are modest. In most countries ALE was thought to have an impact on both productivity and employment, though it was a much more powerful factor impacting productivity.

Society and community

Most countries accept that ALE has a positive impact on an individual's participation in social, civic and political activities, on general social cohesion and on social trust and tolerance of diversity. Most literacy and basic skills programmes deal with social and cultural development issues.

THE WAY AHEAD: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Have countries made progress on ALE since 2009?

The overwhelming impression from the responses to the *GRALE III* research was one of progress since 2009, though that progress was extremely modest, something not unexpected in the financial climate of this period.

Monitoring ALE and strengthening the knowledge base

The Belém Framework for Action's encouragement for making use of common benchmarks and indicators measuring the progress, achievements, quality, limitations and gaps in provision, and the capacitation of educators and trainers, has not been achieved, except in a few countries. Capacitation at national level is still strongly needed here. Recommendations are made about this. Data collection has to be established as a necessary, integral component of all adult learning and education systems. Recommendations are made about this.

Building and institutionalizing research capacity

ALE research capacity needs to be revitalized and, when baseline research is done, capitalized on and updated. Recommendations are made about this.

ALE and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

There is evidence that international targets such as the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All were taken seriously and became useful tools in energizing ALE activity. This encourages the hope that the three new statements: the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the *Incheon Declaration – Education 2030* and the *Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education* will also influence ALE. Work will need to be done to make this happen and to more fully achieve the promise of the Belém Framework for Action.

ARAB STATES

THE ARAB CONTEXT

A REGION IN TRANSITION

Over the last five years, the Arab States have witnessed tremendous changes in all aspects of life, mainly because of political events and conflicts that have turned to civil war in some countries in the region. The causes of recent instability in the Arab world are numerous and complex, but have been exacerbated by the region's underlying demographics. The population will reach 467 million by 2025, with an annual growth rate of 1.8 per cent.

Demographic trends, including rapid growth in the region's youth population, have exacerbated the challenges to governments, particularly regarding unemployment, underemployment and job creation. The large number of refugees and internally displaced persons resulting from turmoil and civil war in Arab countries is one of the most intractable challenges facing the region today. Millions of Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni and Libyan refugees and displaced people need security, food, shelter, education and work. In this respect, the Arab States are facing a great many difficulties that hinder most of them from making significant progress in adult learning and education (ALE) with reference to the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) areas: policy, governance, financing, participation and quality.

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB STATES

Literacy and basic skills are a major concern in the Arab States and represent an essential component in policies, legislation and definitions of ALE. However, a small general improvement in adult literacy rates is manifested in a slight decrease in the number of illiterates.

The picture remains rather gloomy if we take into consideration the latest projections made in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* for 2015, which reports the total number of illiterates slightly reduced from 51.77 million in 2005–2012 to 51.43 million or more in 2015, with the percentage of females unchanged at 67 per cent. This shows the extent to which the literacy challenge is becoming urgent and large-scale. It seems that the narrow perspective of literacy adopted in the Arab States,

historically limited to the 'three Rs' (reading, writing, arithmetic) because of the relative large numbers of illiterates, makes it very difficult to include a range of target groups with a variety of different needs.

MONITORING ALE PROGRESS IN THE ARAB STATES SINCE 2009

POLICY

Definition of ALE

Three-quarters of the Arab countries that responded to the third *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE III)* monitoring survey stated that they have an official definition of ALE. These definitions generally correspond to the definitions of adult education adopted by UNESCO Member States, especially the 2015 *Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE)*.

The Arab States vary in respect of the scope and content of ALE. Some countries, such as Morocco and Oman, adopted a narrow concept restricted to adult literacy; other countries, such as Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have a rather broad concept of ALE. Some definitions emphasize the relations between ALE and work, such as in Algeria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

Responses to the survey show that only Sudan and UAE have changed their official definition of ALE since 2009. The definition was only slightly changed in Sudan, but completely changed in UAE to be relevant to the lifelong learning policy adopted by the government. Yet, nine Arab States (Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and UAE) stated that they give top priority to literacy and basic skills for ALE programmes. This is apparent also in the responses of the Arab States where adults with low levels of literacy or basic skills top the list of potential ALE target groups. Some countries have determined the extent of their policy framework to literacy and basic skills.

Covering different areas of BFA in CONFINTEA VI action plans

Four Arab States have enacted CONFINTEA VI action plans following BFA: Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia and

UAE. Only Saudi and UAE have covered all five BFA areas in their action plans.

Countries with a policy for RVA of non-formal and informal learning

Seven Arab States stated they had policy frameworks for recognition, validation and accreditation before 2009: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and UAE. Syria is the only country which has enacted a new policy for RVA since 2009. Three countries (Lebanon, Oman and Tunisia) have stated that they do not have such a policy.

Overall progress achieved in the Arab States since 2009

Eight Arab States said they have achieved significant progress in ALE policy since 2009: Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and UAE, while Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia said there has been no change in their ALE policy since 2009.

Potential ALE target groups

Ten of the respondent countries identified adults with low levels of literacy or basic skills as the most important target group for ALE. The second-most important target group of potential learners was young people not in education, employment or training (reported by 67 per cent of respondents). Few countries identify more specific target groups, such as refugees, who represent a problem to some Arab States, especially Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. The low performance in the field of ALE policy may be explained in terms of the political, economic and social problems arising from the conflicts in the Arab region, which have changed the priorities of development plans in some countries.

GOVERNANCE

Despite slight improvements, governance in the majority of Arab States is not effective in supporting development efforts, especially in education. Historically, their centralized education systems are the cause of poor governance in education in general and in ALE in particular.

Responses from the Arab States to the *GRALE III* survey showed the following. Seven Arab states reported that participation of stakeholders has increased since 2009: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and UAE. Eight states reported that they have developed more effective monitoring and evaluation systems: Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. Also, nine states said that they

have introduced better arrangements for coordinating ALE activities: Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and UAE. Only seven countries have an entity that is responsible for adult education. Some countries have coordination units that are often located in a sub-structure of the ministry of education (e.g. in Jordan, Palestine and Yemen).

Nine Arab States confirmed that they strengthened capacity-building: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

Although decentralization and inter-ministerial cooperation are important mechanisms of governance for reaching potential groups of adult learners previously excluded or marginalized, the responses reflect a poor record of achievement, only five countries for either mechanism.

FINANCING

In the Arab States, ALE still receives only a small proportion of public funding, as the *GRALE III* survey demonstrated.

Six countries spend less than 1 per cent of their public education budgets on ALE: Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan and UAE. Only Oman and Saudi Arabia spend more than 4 per cent.

Only 13 per cent of the respondent Arab States spent at least 6 per cent of their gross national product on education in general.

Seven states confirmed that they have plans in place to increase public spending on ALE, as it is imperative to create quality learning opportunities for adults. These states are: Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and UAE. Bahrain, Oman and Tunisia also indicated that they intend to increase public spending on ALE.

Only four states (Algeria, Lebanon, Sudan and UAE) from 12 have introduced innovations in the financing of ALE since 2009.

PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Only five of the Arab States responding to the *GRALE III* survey have witnessed development in overall participation in ALE since 2009: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco and Sudan; in three countries participation has decreased: Lebanon, Syria and UAE.

Gender equity in participation

The responses show that the gender gap has narrowed. Five states reported that women participate more than men – Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Syria – while three countries, Bahrain, Morocco and UAE, reported equal participation between men and women. Only two countries, Egypt and Lebanon, reported that men participate more.

Gender equity in participation in general education is reported by five of the seven Arab States that elected to answer this question: Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Oman and Saudi Arabia. Only UAE reported participation by more women than men, and only Jordan reported that men participate more than women.

Participation in different types of ALE programmes

All Arab States that took part in the *GRALE III* survey reported that women participated more than men in literacy programmes. This is due to the higher rate of illiteracy among women and girls in the Arab States.

Also, women's participation in non-formal education was reported to be higher than men's in six of the respondent Arab States: Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

Refugees' participation in ALE

Due to political conflicts, seven countries reported that the participation of refugees from other countries has increased since 2009: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and UAE.

Innovation in ALE

Six countries, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria and UAE, report significant innovation in ALE to improve access and participation since 2009.

QUALITY

The *GRALE III* survey had five areas for monitoring quality in the provision of ALE. The responses of the Arab States in these areas are as follows.

Systematic collection of information about the outcomes of ALE

Poor responses are reported concerning the collection of information about labour market and social outcomes, which are very important measures of the quality of ALE programmes.

Much more attention is paid to collecting data about certificates or qualifications and completion rates.

Pre-service training of ALE teachers and facilitators

Pre-service education and training programmes, as well as initial qualifications for ALE teachers and facilitators, are reported by 11 Arab States.

Continuing in-service education and training programmes for ALE teachers and facilitators

Yet, there is a lack of continuing in-service education and training programmes for adult learning teachers and facilitators: only five of the respondent states confirmed that they have continuing in-service education and training programmes for adult education teachers/facilitators with sufficient capacity: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Oman and Saudi Arabia; whereas five countries reported that they have this kind of training but with inadequate capacity: Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan and UAE.

Requirement for initial qualifications for teaching in ALE

Eleven of the respondent states reported that they require initial qualifications for teaching in ALE programmes.

Research produced on specialized topics for ALE

Substantial analysis and research was reported by a majority of states on four topics: learning outcomes, quality criteria for teaching and learning, impact of new technologies, and barriers to ALE participation; a minority reported research carried out on diversity of providers and equity issues.

LESSONS LEARNED: THE IMPACT OF ALE

IMPLEMENTING BFA

Widening ALE

Literacy continues to be a main concern and challenge to the Arab States.

Adults with low-level literacy or basic skills are top of the list of potential ALE target groups, and some countries have limited the extent of their policy framework to literacy and basic skills. A majority of Arab States are still working to a traditional concept of ALE, restricted to literacy in terms of the 3Rs. A new Arab concept of literacy is needed – one that corresponds to the broader model of literacy in *RALE*, not limited to the basic skills of

reading and writing, but including many competences; a concept that 'allows citizens to engage in lifelong learning and participate fully in community, workplace and wider society' (RALE, p. 2).

Developing new policies for ALE matters

Only two-thirds of the Arab States that reported stated that they have achieved significant progress in ALE policy since 2009; the rest had not experienced any progress. Also, the majority of the Arab States have not adopted all five areas of BFA in their ALE work. This means that more efforts are needed in the Arab States to adopt ALE policies aligned to BFA, to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 – 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' – by 2030.

Good governance matters

Ineffective governance is considered one of the main problems that hinder development efforts, especially in education in the Arab States. Weak decentralization and a lack of inter-ministerial cooperation have a negative impact on building partnerships and hinder the engagement of potential groups of adult learners, such as previously excluded or marginalized groups. Good governance is required for the development of ALE, and achieving it depends largely on the state of democracy, moving towards more decentralization, building partnerships with stakeholders and allowing civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) more space.

Gender equity in education and work matters

Good progress in GPI (Gender Parity Index) in general education is reported by most of the respondent Arab States. UAE reported more participation by women in ALE, but more attention should be paid to achieving gender equity in work opportunities for educated young women. ALE can play an important role in the economic empowerment of women.

Capacity-building matters

Ineffective capacity-building is one of the most important issues needing to be addressed by a majority of the Arab States in qualifying personnel in different ALE areas and activities, especially the teaching staff required for programmes of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Furthermore, the professionalization of adult education as a discipline in Arab universities needs more effort to generate knowledge and to train researchers and specialists in ALE.

ALE IMPACT ON HEALTH, WELL-BEING, EMPLOYABILITY AND COMMUNITY LIFE

Reorienting literacy programmes matters

Illiteracy comes at the top of the list of factors that prevent ALE from having an impact on improving health conditions, followed by income inequalities and lack of access to information on ALE programmes. So, literacy programmes need to be reoriented to be more effective and more relevant to the basic needs of marginalized groups, especially in the domains of health, economics and social and cultural life.

Recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal education matter

The Arab States have high expectations of ALE in terms of labour market outcomes. Most of them agreed that the benefits of ALE for the labour market and employment have been increasingly noted since 2009. This makes ALE types and programmes very important, especially for the following categories:

- Youth with low-levels of literacy or basic skills.
- Young persons who are not in education.
- Individuals who are seeking jobs and training.
- Workers in low-skill, low-wage or precarious positions.

All these categories need recognition for their prior learning (especially non-formally and informally acquired). Legislation should be adopted for recognition, validation and accreditation to facilitate mobility of workers among various vocations and professions.

Distance education and online learning strategies matter

ICT should be utilized to provide all categories of adult learners with a range of learning and training opportunities to increase their employability and productivity and increase access to ALE programmes.

A new role for ALE in citizenship education matters

The benefits of ALE in social, civic and community life are not widely acknowledged in the Arab States. It is apparent, however, that political instability is considered by some an important reason for giving ALE a vital role in maintaining social stability and coherence, promoting political participation, achieving active citizenship, involvement in democratic and social life, facilitating social interaction and living in tolerant and diversified societies.

A new paradigm for ALE in the Arab States

According to the outcomes and lesson learned from the

BFA monitoring and the fields of learning identified in *RALE*, there is a need for a new paradigm for ALE in the Arab States to attain the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. This paradigm implies these fields of activity:

- Literacy: a new perspective and different approaches.
- Continuing training and professional development.
- Peace culture and active citizenship.
- Digital transformation of ALE.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 2017–2021

In respect to the challenges and changes occurring in the Arab region today, there is a growing need for an effective ALE approach that contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and establishes peaceful coexistence and democratic life, active citizenship and social cohesion, as well as enhancing economic development. In the coming four years, Arab States need to develop their ALE programmes according to the five BFA areas.

POLICY

To transform ALE policies and orientate them better towards BFA areas of action Arab States have to:

- Issue legislation in accordance with the developments of the concept and scope of adult learning and education as described in *RALE* and other international declarations, as well as reflect on the demographic, political, social and economic changes in the Arab region to justify adopting lifelong learning as their philosophy of education. Further, declare this philosophy in statements and policy documents to be a political commitment.
- Create a critical mass of ALE professional and senior cadres who are highly skilled and fully orientated towards international efforts, declarations and trends in ALE.
- Facilitate the development of Arab references or standards that integrate the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, and, based on the Arab context, establish an Arab Qualifications Framework.
- Establish an RVA observatory for collecting and disseminating best practices at different stages in the development of RVA systems.

GOVERNANCE

Good governance is essential for Arab States in ALE programmes to build trust and partnerships of all stakeholders, and to ensure inclusion and participation of all target groups. In this respect, it is recommended that the Arab States should:

- Promote coordination between development agencies, NGOs, national stakeholders and external assistance programmes to include capacity-building to promote transparent, accountable and inclusive management systems by local community agents for ALE programmes.
- Develop inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral coordination and cooperation to reach potential groups of learners especially youth, women and the previously excluded or marginalized.
- Enhance the role of universities in ALE in respect of research, and develop online programmes for youth to continue their higher and university education.
- Support the three regional centres to continue their role as hubs for capacity-building at the regional level.

FINANCING

ALE in the Arab States is generally funded through the government budget; expenditure is very small and does not exceed 1 per cent in most countries. These funds are mainly channelled through the budget of ministries of education, and are expected to decrease in the coming decades due to political circumstances that require allocating more money for reconstruction. If we add to this the financial crisis resulting from the low price of oil, and the limited contribution of civil society in allocating direct investment to ALE programmes, it will be difficult to guarantee sufficient funding for ALE. To improve financing ALE programmes, the Arab States should:

- Align finance with sustainable development requirements. While domestic public finance remains the central resource, all sources, including foreign direct investment, remittances and public-private partnerships, need to be mobilized to bridge the gap in financing ALE programmes.
- Enhance the private sector, especially industrial institutions, to provide investment in vocational training and continuing education, as well as investing in developing the infrastructure of educational institutions and training centres.

- Establish an Arab Special Fund, under the auspices of the Arab Monetary Fund, to finance ALE projects with a focus on:
 - post conflict-affected countries;
 - countries with high rates of illiteracy;
 - women's empowerment;
 - people with low literacy skills in rural and remote areas;
 - experimental and pilot ALE projects;
 - TVET.
- Enhance capacity-building of ALE data-collection personnel and activists, so as to align ALE programmes and activities with the growing needs of learners, especially youth and women, to improve their participation in the economic, political and social activities of their communities.
- Develop initial and continuing professional development programmes for ALE personnel through cooperation between universities and the three regional centres (in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE).
- Professionalize adult education as a discipline in Arab universities, and devote more effort to generating knowledge that meets current challenges and to training researchers and specialists in ALE.

PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

There are many indicators on achieving progress in gender parity in ALE and on innovations in some Arab States to improve access and participation. In this respect the Arab States should:

- Encourage online and other strategies of open learning, as well as home schooling, community schooling and family education, to provide choices to meet different needs.
- Diversify learning opportunities and programmes that enable women and youth to develop competencies relevant to the changing demands of the labour market.
- Enhance women's education programmes, in formal and non-formal education, to improve GPI.

QUALITY

Quality in education in general is becoming a preoccupation among policy-makers, planners and educators in the Arab States. In ALE, the issue is no longer merely access to programmes; ALE must enable learners to acquire up-to-date knowledge and skills required for health and well-being, employability and social life. To improve the quality of ALE programmes the Arab States should:

- Support universities, research and training centres in the region working in the areas of ALE, and create a network that will generate knowledge to help governments make informed policy decisions based on reliable information to improve the quality of education at the regional and national levels.
- Establish databases at the national level to provide the necessary information required for planning, monitoring, evaluation and decision-making.
- Develop an Arab regional quality assurance body to be responsible for developing indicators to assess and monitor ALE progress in the Arab region.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

THE CONTEXT

Asia and the Pacific is home to more than half of the world's population, including nearly 900 million of the world's poor. Demographic shifts in recent years, accompanied by what is often called the demographic dividend, is a major issue that is shaping formal as well as non-formal education, its contents and processes in the region, shifting the focus more effectively to the educational needs of youth and the working age population.

Education in the region, as elsewhere in the world, is opening new vistas through non-institutional and non-formal means as information and communication technologies have enormously enhanced people's capacity to access knowledge for personal development. This will compel states to adapt their policies and practices to constantly evolving digital technologies in the years to come.

Around 16 million children of primary-school age and around 34 million adolescents of lower-secondary age are still out of school in the Asia-Pacific region, and two-thirds of these are in South Asia. Out-of-school children are an important concern since they are likely to remain non-literate as they grow into adulthood unless there are special interventions. Particular attention is to be paid to inequity within education arising out of geographical location, poverty and social and ethnic affiliations. Quality of education, formal as well as non-formal, continues to be a major concern in all countries of the region.

PROGRESS OF ALE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: MAIN OBSERVATIONS

This report is an attempt to present an overview of the progress made in the Asia-Pacific region in implementing the various elements of the Belém Framework of Action adopted at CONFINTEA VI in 2009. The report largely uses data from *GRALE III* and the database of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). Another major source consists of National Education for All (EFA) 2015 reviews of selected countries retrieved from UNESCO archives.

BASIC LITERACY: UNEVEN PROGRESS

1. **Adult literacy:** According to UIS estimates, there are still around 758 million adult illiterates in the world, with nearly 63 per cent of them living in Asia – 11 per cent in East and Southeast Asia and around 52 per cent in South Asia. In absolute numbers, there has been some reduction, but more than six out of ten illiterates in the world are from Asia. The number in South Asia alone is 390 million adults. However, the situation is not uniform across the continent. Ten countries have a female literacy rate below the world average of 82.6 per cent. Of these, six – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan – are in South Asia, accounting for more than 50 per cent of the world's illiterates.
2. **Youth literacy:** It is estimated that around 102 million youth in the world lack basic skills of literacy. This means that one out of every seven of the 750 million adult illiterates is likely to be a young person who ought to have been in school or college or in early productive work life. Of this youth illiterate population, the Asia-Pacific region accounts for a large proportion (46 per cent). Within the region, South Asia also continues to lag behind on this indicator: around 45 per cent of the illiterate youth belong to this sub-region.
3. **Reduction of illiteracy among women:** The Asia-Pacific region has witnessed a substantial reduction in the number of females who are illiterate. It is observed that Central Asia and East Asia and the Pacific succeeded in reducing the size of the female illiterate population by 51 per cent and 31 per cent respectively between 2000 and 2012. Despite this progress, there were still 147 million more women unable to read or write than men in the Asia-Pacific region in 2012.
4. **Gender parity:** Progress towards gender parity is quite different among the sub-regions. Central Asia has already achieved gender parity for adult literacy rates with a gender parity index (GPI) of 1.00. East Asia and the Pacific had a GPI of 0.96 in 2012. In contrast, the GPI of adult literacy in South and West Asia was very low in 2012, at only 0.70, which slightly improved to 0.76, according to 2015 estimates. Two countries where gender disparity continues to remain high even among the youth population are Afghanistan and Pakistan.

5. **Measurement of literacy as a continuum:** Not much progress appears to have been made in this regard. However, there are increasing efforts at national levels to conduct literacy surveys involving direct measurement (testing) of literacy skills. These are innovative exercises, often supported by external resources as well as expertise; it is unlikely that countries in the region will embrace this as the standard practice for fixing national literacy rates.

POLICY INITIATIVES: IN A TRANSFORMATIVE FLUX

1. **Official ALE policy:** Adult education programmes are an integral part of the education system in almost all countries in the region, and most countries have an officially stated policy on ALE. Continuing emphasis on reducing adult illiteracy is an important component of ALE policies across most countries of the region. A second common policy component is the emphasis on linking ALE with income-generation activities, employment and entrepreneurship skills and poverty-reduction strategies. Imparting productive skills linked to expanding demands of the market economy is another trend characterizing the policy in several countries, particularly focused on addressing the educational needs of the growing population of youth.
2. **Recognition of ALE outcomes:** Most of the countries in the region have a policy framework for officially recognizing outcomes of ALE programmes by establishing equivalence between curricula of ALE programmes with those of specified grades in formal schools and colleges. Several countries in the region have developed a national-level skill/qualification framework for establishing equivalence between non-formal education (NFE) and formal programmes of learning.
3. **ALE and lifelong learning:** Lifelong learning is gradually emerging, in principle, as the overall policy paradigm in education. Policy documents in most countries allude to lifelong learning. However, reflection of this perspective in terms of governance mechanisms, curricular programmes, assessment of outcomes and monitoring framework is yet to materialize. In practice, ALE still remains largely isolated from mainstream efforts in the education sector.

GOVERNANCE OF ALE: TOWARDS CONVERGENCE AND COORDINATION

1. **Convergence efforts:** With the adoption of a lifelong learning framework, countries are gradually moving towards a more stable programmatic approach. This requires reorienting personnel with new capacities and attitudinal shifts. Convergence efforts across ministries have also to become a standard feature and many countries are making serious efforts in this direction.
2. **Stakeholder consultation:** Sixty-five per cent of countries in the region reported that the government has consulted stakeholders and civil society about the formulation, implementation and evaluation of ALE policies since 2009. This is important, as field implementation of ALE programmes in the Asia-Pacific region mainly happens either through local government institutions, through local NGOs, or through a collaborative arrangement between them.
3. **Recognition of prior learning and certification of equivalence:** There is a persistent demand for recognizing prior learning and acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and establishing their equivalence with formal school qualifications. Several countries have now established procedures for issue of equivalence certificates and developing a national qualifications framework (NQF). Official recognition and granting equivalence with formal school certification is particularly valuable in seeking employment and avoiding discrimination.
4. **Improving governance:** There is increased recognition that ALE governance systems have to be revamped if they are to effectively complement the formal educational mechanisms within the overarching framework of lifelong learning. But while some changes have come in policy formulation, coordinated planning for implementation in ALE remains a slow process. As an important step in this direction, attention is being paid to creating a systematic information base on programmes and participants. Even though only a few countries in the region have prepared an action plan for implementing the recommendations of the BFA, most of them report increased attention to policy-making in ALE and strengthening of governance and coordination mechanisms as well as organization of capacity-building activities, post-2009.

PARTICIPATION IN ALE: FOCUS ON INCLUSION AND EQUITY

1. **Responding to diversity:** ALE spans a wide range of age groups and target populations. In countries where secondary education has been universalized, as, for instance, in Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Japan, ALE programmes are linked to higher/tertiary education initiatives. At the other end of the spectrum are countries, particularly in South Asia, with a large non-literate adult population, which continue to attach high priority to imparting basic literacy and numeracy skills. Some emerging economies are engaged in building skills to meet the demands of the changing market, particularly imparting digital processing skills.
2. **Prioritizing programmes and responding to demographic changes:** Meeting the educational needs of illiterate adults is the top priority: 81 per cent of countries indicate this as an important group to be addressed. This is followed by meeting the learning needs of young unemployed persons. While Asia as a whole has a large youth population, there are diverse demographic patterns. ALE programmes in countries with expanding youth populations, such as India and Philippines, have begun to focus more on persons in the limited age range of 15 to 35 or 45 years. On the other hand, countries with a relatively larger older-age population, such as China, Japan, Republic of Korea and Thailand, have begun special programmes for senior citizens.
3. **Focus on rural areas and vulnerable sections:** Recognizing the relative difficulty of access to educational resources in rural areas and the specific skill requirements, ALE programmes in most countries give special attention to rural areas. The major focus is on providing people living in rural areas, particularly women, with productive skills for self-employment through income-generation activities in agriculture and allied areas. While global comparisons show that extreme poverty in the region has been reduced considerably, people working in vulnerable conditions continue to be a major concern. In 2013, 63 per cent of women and 56 per cent of men in the region were in vulnerable employment; they were either self-employed or contributing family workers. ALE programmes for such working populations are not new, but they have remained sporadic and need to be streamlined as part of lifelong workplace-based education.
4. **Overall participation levels:** Compared to overall participation in ALE across different regions, the Asia-Pacific region witnessed only modest increase, with a mere 56 per cent of countries in the region reporting any increase. With the available information, it is difficult to pinpoint factors that have hindered participation of adults in the region. In fact, around 40 per cent of countries revealed that they do not know if there has been an increase in participation, indicating poor monitoring and maintenance of data on participation. However, most countries reported lack of resources, despite increasing demand, as the biggest challenge for expansion of ALE activities.
5. **Improving participation of women:** Increasing the participation level of women is critical both for addressing concerns of gender equity and for overall progress in ALE, as gender differentials in the region's literacy levels remain high and significant gender-specific variations are found in participation in different programmes. Participation of women in technical and vocational training programmes is very low, with around 80 per cent of countries reporting high levels of participation for men. In contrast, participation of women is higher in literacy programmes. Even though this could be due to relatively low literacy levels among women, it is important to examine critically the arrangements for delivery of technical and vocational training to ensure that these are not biased in favour of men and are not acting as barriers for participation of women.
6. **ALE and information and communication technology:** Use of ICT is emerging as a major pivot for transforming ALE programmes, both in content and in the mode of delivery, with significant impact on participation levels in many countries of the region. Some of these are structured efforts by the government in the form of development projects, while many operate on flexible informal platforms. In several instances, ICT is embedded and subsumed into larger programmes.
7. **Strengthening institutions of delivery:** The Belém Framework called for 'creating multi-purpose community learning spaces and centres and improving access to and participation in the full range of adult learning and education programmes for women, taking account of the particular demands of the gender-specific life-course.' This, indeed, was a recognition of the effectiveness of a large region-wide initiative already under way in several countries under the banner of community learning

centres (CLCs). *GRALE II* observed that CLCs have been rapidly expanding in 24 countries, and the programme has continued to grow across the region.

MEETING QUALITY CONCERNS

1. **Curriculum and teaching in ALE – local relevance and national standards:** Most countries in the region consider local relevance of the curriculum to be a critical characteristic that makes ALE meaningful for adult learners. In line with this, decentralization has been encouraged in many countries. In general, while a national core curriculum is devised, local agencies/authorities are encouraged to adopt local content for a proportion of the curriculum, ranging from 20 per cent to 40 per cent. With the profile of participants becoming increasingly diverse, making ALE content locally relevant is not a straightforward task. It is a challenge for the ALE sector to strike a balance between the demands of quality and standardization of curriculum and learning material, on the one hand, and local relevance and changing livelihood concerns of the poor, on the other.
2. **Standardization through national qualifications frameworks:** Many countries had already adopted a national qualifications framework before 2009, and several more adopted a policy for creation of such a framework and linked ALE after that date. While the creation of such competence-based qualification frameworks is generally viewed as a positive step, 'competence' should not be used in a narrow technicist sense to refer only to measurable skills to the exclusion of intangible social learning which has been integral to ALE programmes and processes.
3. **Equivalency programmes:** Among different kinds of ALE programmes, equivalency programmes are reasonably well defined in terms of duration of instruction and the contents and outcomes expected. The evaluation system is also largely standardized and linked to the methods adopted in formal school settings. This resembles the situation of skill-building which is, by and large, aligned to the national qualification frameworks being developed in many countries of the region.
4. **Professionalization of adult educators:** The skills, knowledge and competence required by literacy teachers include an understanding of pedagogical issues, an appreciation of the nature of literacy and its relationship to vocational education and training, and gender sensitivity. To ensure the quality of literacy teacher programmes, some countries (e.g. Indonesia and Nepal) have developed a standard curriculum for adult educators that can be adapted to local needs. In other countries, such as New Zealand and Australia, universities and other educational research institutions are engaged in professional training and development of adult educators. However, in countries with high illiteracy rates it is not unusual for community members with low educational levels to take over the task of teaching their peers. Considering that a number of NGOs are involved in delivering ALE programmes, the prescribing of one set of entry qualifications for all programmes and all contexts may not be realistic. It demands innovative approaches that meet the requirements of quality and equity.
5. **Professional development opportunities and employment conditions:** Pre-service and continuing education programmes largely take the form of short courses, work-based learning, induction programmes and in-service training. In some countries, national standards have been adopted for competences required of an adult educator. However, capacity to provide opportunities for professional development remains inadequate. The reasons for this lie in the way the sector is structured and made functional, as in many countries ALE continues to be viewed as a limited-time project. In some countries, such as Thailand, field functionaries in ALE constitute a relatively stable cadre; in countries like India, they work largely on a voluntary basis with nominal financial support; in some others, they are essentially employed by NGOs implementing ALE programmes. Consequently, the status, conditions of employment and remuneration of adult education staff are invariably below those of personnel in other education sectors.
6. **Innovations for quality enhancement:** There is a clear realization that mere expansion of the programme will not improve the status of ALE. Further, quality improvement demands simultaneous action for improvement on multiple fronts. Several countries have begun to move in this direction and have initiated special innovative measures to enhance the quality of ALE.
7. **Focus on outcomes:** Considerable progress can be seen in developing monitoring mechanisms in many countries. However, objective assessment of ALE outcomes in a nationally comparable form may be difficult in many countries, as the programmes are

delivered by multiple providers and with largely non-standardized academic resources, both human and material.

8. **Poor research support:** Finally, quality of ALE cannot be enhanced merely by limited review of specific programmes and assessment of outcomes. Development of quality ALE demands constant engagement with the theoretical as well as empirical aspects of ALE through substantial research. But the situation does not seem to be encouraging. Barring exploring the barriers to participation, very few countries seem to invest in substantial research into adult education.

FINANCING OF ALE: THE NEED TO ARREST THE DECLINE

1. **Wide variation in financing of education:** The Asia-Pacific region ranks low among world regions in terms of share of gross domestic product (GDP) spent on education, with an average value of around 4.3 per cent, which is lower than even that of sub-Saharan Africa, where an average of 4.7 per cent of GDP is spent on education. *GRALE III* reported that only 26 per cent of the countries in the region spent 6 per cent or more of their GDP on education. Within the Asia-Pacific region, ASEAN countries clearly outperform South Asian countries. Among South Asian countries, the progress of Bhutan is commendable as it has shown a consistently increasing trend, almost reaching the benchmark of 6 per cent.
2. **Investment in ALE:** Public spending on ALE is too diverse to generalize, ranging from 0.4 per cent of the total public expenditure on education to 4 per cent or more. The low level of spending on ALE in some countries in South Asia, with a substantial backlog of illiteracy and a large expanding youth population, is a matter of serious concern. The figures clearly show that the countries of East Asia are investing in ALE at a much higher level than others in the region.
3. **Integrating ALE with mainstream budget:** Many countries faced with competing claims for limited resources and an unfinished agenda of providing primary education for all may find it difficult to allocate additional funds to the education of adults. Further, in several countries, ALE continues to be seen as a temporary project and does not find a place in the regular national budget, leaving the sub-sector to depend essentially on extra-budgetary resources from NGOs and development partners. In addition, the creation of a separate allocation of ALE funding

in the national budget is essential for integrating ALE into financial strategies across government departments and creating an integrated ALE strategy, as committed to under BFA.

4. **Alternative means of financing:** Raising resources in the midst of increasing financial stringency requires creative approaches to the influencing of national leadership involved in financial planning. A common trend reported is to join with NGOs and the private corporate sector in raising resources. Even though these have been reported as innovative measures for financing ALE, most of them only involve restructuring government funding and do not bring about enhancement in allocations for ALE. Also, increased dependence on funding through fees and private sources may eventually lead to decreased government financing.
5. **Competing for resources from decreasing external support:** Disbursements from multilateral agencies amounted to only 34 per cent of total official development assistance (ODA) for education in 2012–2014, compared to 60 per cent for health. Among multilateral donors, education has witnessed a decline from 10 per cent to 7 per cent of total aid over the past decade, while support for infrastructure has increased from 30 per cent to 38 per cent. In fact, the data for the period from 2010–11 to 2013–14 show that the share of support to education from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) declined from 13 per cent to 8 per cent, while it increased for infrastructure from 42 per cent to 58 per cent. As for domestic funding, in terms of international aid ALE has to compete with the demands from other sectors even within education. The Asia-Pacific region has several low-income countries which depend heavily on external resources to cover a major part of their education expenditure.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: MOVING TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM

1. **The role of UNESCO and the lateral infusion of innovative ideas:** Regional and international co-operative endeavours involving sovereign nations evolve over a long period. Sustained support and cooperation in the field of ALE in the Asia-Pacific region has come mainly from UNESCO. Over the last three decades, the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) interventions of UNESCO Bangkok have had enormous influence on

the nature and trajectory of development of ALE in the region. In particular, UNESCO has made unique contributions in promoting 'lateral infusion of innovative ideas' through advocacy, dissemination and technical support.

2. **The expanding role of regional development blocs:** Regional and sub-regional development blocs, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which engage in development cooperation, have also contributed to regional and sub-regional cooperation in education. The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) has been playing a central role in capacity-building, and promotion and dissemination of innovations in the sub-region. The establishment of the SEAMEO Centre for Lifelong Learning in Viet Nam in 2013 has further strengthened this role. Unfortunately, such an effort is missing in South Asia.
3. **Non-governmental actors:** The Asia-Pacific region has a vibrant set of civil society organizations (CSOs), especially in the field of ALE, operating individually or through multiple coalitions within and across the countries. Special mention has to be made here of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) which has, over the years, offered a unique pan-Asian platform for capacity building and shared learning through participatory research in ALE. Besides ASPBAE, several large multi-country non-profit organizations, such as Plan International, OXFAM, Action Aid, DVV International and several others, have also been supporting education development programmes in many countries albeit on a small scale.
4. **South–South collaboration:** Development cooperation has to move in tandem with the changing economic reality of the region. With several Asian countries emerging on the global economic landscape as significant players, with several low income economies moving into the middle income category and with large economies such as India and China assuming the role of donor countries, the conventional North–South paradigm of international cooperation has to substantially transform itself. The calculus of funding that dominated the relationship has to be replaced with a system built on the plank of mutual support and assistance in terms of financial as well as knowledge-sharing.

5. **Cooperation for capacity-building and knowledge-generation:** Development partners have to explore collaborative action to provide more global public goods in education, particularly statistics, cross-country experience-sharing, research evidence, research funding and support for developing country research institutions and civil society organizations engaged in education sector monitoring. But this cannot be a one-way transformation. In order to benefit from such a changed paradigm of international cooperation, governments and other knowledge and research centres, particularly universities and higher education institutions in the region, should take part in trans-national knowledge generation and management in ALE, supported by adequate financial and human resources.

As we review the ALE policies and programmes across the Asia-Pacific region today, with economic liberalization sweeping the whole continent, one can see a great degree of consensus in perspectives across the sub-regions. Countries across the Asia-Pacific region seem to be pursuing a similar agenda for ALE, shifting the emphasis from a socio-political agenda of transformation and human development to an economic agenda of skill-building, market orientation and economic growth. Ultimately, ALE is about providing opportunities, contexts and conditions of learning that are responsive to the needs of adults. As long as this criterion is met, it is difficult to fault the direction in which ALE is moving. However, it is pertinent to remember the cautionary note sounded by the BFA Statement of Evidence: 'Although we are witnessing an increasing variety of adult learning and education programmes, the primary focus of such provision is now on vocational and professional education and training. More integrated approaches to adult learning and education to address development in all its aspects (economic, sustainable, community and personal) are missing.' In a diverse socio-cultural setting, group or horizontal inequalities in education are reinforced by lack of voice and power and impede the full and free participation of all persons in civic and political life. This, in turn, undermines good governance and the capability of all people to be agents of development and, consequently, influences economic growth and national stability by weakening social bonds, undermining environmental sustainability and feeding disengagement and dissent.

ALE in the Asia-Pacific region is at a critical juncture as countries embark on realigning their education policies and programmes with the long-term global Agenda for

Sustainable Development 2030. ALE in the region has to consolidate the gains made in recent decades and envision a new agenda for ALE that is more holistic, built on the three overlapping principles of lifelong learning, global citizenship and sustainable development, which form the cornerstones for education development of the future. Education is at the heart of this process. Youth and adult learning and education have to go beyond employability and foster the values of active citizenship, strengthen personal growth and secure social inclusion. They also have to imbibe values that underscore the inevitability of interdependence and collaboration; concern for environmental sustainability or the need for a new ethic, combining enterprise and environmentalism, and learning to live together within a world of increased diversity and inequality.

EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

This regional report looks at outcomes and results of CONFINTEA VI recommendations in the region of Europe and North America. Taking stock of the commitments made by Member States in the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) in 2009, it is structured to reflect its key areas of action: policy, governance, financing, participation, inclusion and equity, and quality. Following the 2015 UNESCO and UIL *Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE)*, it also looks at international cooperation between governmental bodies, research institutions, unions and other stakeholders in Europe and North America that aims to advance adult learning and education (ALE) in the region and beyond.

Taking into account the inter-sectoral approach of the third *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE III)*, the report includes a brief discussion on the impact of ALE in Europe and North America on health and well-being, employment and the labour market, as well as societies and communities. It closes with a set of recommendations to further advance ALE in the region.

While the BFA and *RALE* remain the dominant frameworks that are referenced, the report also analyses major policy documents of the European Union (EU). This is explained not only by the fact that many of UNESCO Member States on the continent adhere to EU frameworks, but also by the parallels between UNESCO and the EU in the approach to ALE. The cooperation between UIL and the EU in this respect was further advanced following the CONFINTEA VI follow-up conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, in December 2013, which was jointly organized by the Directorate-General for Culture and Education of the European Commission and UIL, and produced common recommendations. These recommendations are also taken into account in the regional report.

Based around the findings of *GRALE III*, the report looks at the data primarily from a regional perspective, discussing the predominant trends. The national reports that complement *GRALE III* serve as an important source of information for case studies. That said, the authors have conducted extensive research to complement the findings. When pertinent, the report references other studies, reports and publications released after 2009.

The authors have also conducted interviews with 16 ALE stakeholders representing national associations in Europe and North America to bring in a civil society perspective on outcomes and results of the CONFINTEA VI recommendations.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

While Europe and North America have diverse policies, practices and traditions of ALE, with fragmentation reported also within each continent, there are several similarities, especially with regard to the socio-economic background that directly or indirectly impacts the development of ALE.

The financial and economic crisis of 2008 led to a number of austerity measures that also affected ALE. The spillover of the crisis was unexpectedly powerful, with economic difficulties and inequalities persisting, particularly in Eastern and Southern European countries. As unemployment levels soared, governments started looking at ALE from a more economic perspective, as explored in the report.

A few important demographic trends are also to be noted. While the United States and Canada have historically experienced high immigration levels and consequently cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity, the influx of refugees from the Middle East in Europe has presented some countries in Europe with a new challenge. The latter might have a long-term impact on European demographics and ultimately ALE. In terms of demographics, new populations might counteract the 'greying of Europe', where almost 20 per cent of the population is over the age of 65. They also represent an important group of learners for ALE – *GRALE III* findings already show that several European policies on ALE target migrants.

POLICY

Thirty-six countries from Europe and North America report having enacted new policies on ALE since 2009, albeit at different levels of governance – it needs to be emphasized that in North America ALE policies are decentralized. In Europe, several countries have aligned their policies with the priorities of the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning, adopted by the Council of

the European Union in 2011. As is the case with UNESCO frameworks, EU policy documents on ALE are not binding but serve as recommendations. National Coordinators of the European Agenda support each Member State in the implementation of the priorities.

Several of the objectives of the Agenda with regard to policy and other areas correspond to those of the BFA. The Agenda calls for, among other things, strengthening monitoring systems and establishing 'fully functional systems' for recognition, validation and accreditation of all forms of learning, reflecting the commitments of the BFA.

GRALE III reports that monitoring systems have improved across the region – 89 per cent of the countries that responded to the question affirm that the governance of ALE has developed more effective monitoring systems since 2009. Several case studies show examples in this respect. Recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) systems have also improved across the region. In the EU, the 2012 Council Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) called on member states to link their national qualifications frameworks to the EQF to achieve greater permeability. In North America, where ALE policies are decentralized, new developments have been achieved, for example at the state level in the United States.

This section of the report briefly looks at the current priorities of ALE policies in the region. With 70 million adults in Europe lacking upper secondary education, EU policies have focused predominantly on the improvement of basic skills, with a new initiative of the European Commission, Upskilling Pathways, aimed at improving adults' basic skills. Several new policies and initiatives in Europe lean in the same direction. A number of policies in Europe and North America have prioritized literacy, often understood in a broader sense as a social practice. According to *GRALE III*, 86 per cent of the countries from North America and Western Europe and 59 per cent of those in Eastern and Central Europe reported basic skills and literacy as a top priority of their programmes.

Additionally, a number of policies prioritize ALE as a means of achieving employability as well as social cohesion. This is explored in the section on the impact of ALE on health, work and society.

GOVERNANCE

GRALE III shows a growing tendency to consult a wide variety of stakeholders in designing, implementing and monitoring ALE policies and programmes. Eighty-two per cent of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and 80 per cent of those in North America and Western Europe report that they have consulted stakeholders and civil society about ALE policies, compared to the global average of 68 per cent. Case studies, drawn both from national reports and desk research, show that stakeholders are consulted in several ways. At the EU level, ALE stakeholders are invited to participate in working groups. In some cases, a policy framework might be opened up to wide consultation. At national levels, different mechanisms are adopted: some countries have established permanent national platforms, focus groups and other consultative bodies. Draft policies might be put up online for public consultation, open hall, face-to-face consultations are also organized in some cases. A closer look at national reports from the region suggests that stakeholders tend to be involved only at the first stages of a policy cycle.

Decentralization of ALE policies is another important tendency in governance. While in North America policies in ALE were decentralized already before 2009, some European countries have only experienced it recently. A growing decentralization is reported, for example, in Greece.

Inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial policies, while not yet widespread, have been implemented in a few European countries since 2009. Case studies from Slovenia, Switzerland, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Netherlands are analysed in this respect.

FINANCING

GRALE III reports that some progress has been made towards achieving the goal of devoting 6 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) to education. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, total government spending on education amounts to 5.3 per cent in North America and Western Europe and 4.7 per cent in Central and Eastern Europe.

Interestingly, as many as ten countries from Europe and North America claim they 'do not know' what percentage of public education spending currently goes to ALE. While 10 countries from the region report spending '4 per

cent or more', seven put the spending between 0 and 0.4 per cent of public education spending. This confirms the scarcity of data on funding at the national level, stated also in several recent studies that this report references.

The report looks at recent research to discuss funding instruments, which vary greatly across the region. Some, while quite common in Europe – for example training leave – are relatively unknown in North America. The increasing popularity of training vouchers has been noted, with a small number of European countries starting to use them.

Only a few countries from Europe and North America have prioritized 'investment in lifelong learning for women, rural populations and people with disabilities' as recommended in the BFA; the great majority of EU countries have primarily focused on reskilling or upskilling low-skilled and unemployed adults.

Several studies published since 2009 both in Europe and North America have shown that investment in ALE has been constrained by the economic and financial crisis. In many countries, this has had a significant impact on a sector that is already fragile.

PARTICIPATION

The BFA made a strong commitment to promote and facilitate 'more equitable access to, and participation in, adult learning and education'. While most countries in the region report participation levels to have increased – by 65 per cent of countries in North America and Western Europe, and 71 per cent countries in Central and Eastern Europe – in some countries participation levels are alarmingly low – sometimes only at 2 per cent. At the EU level, ALE surveys show a large fragmentation across member states, with most of them unlikely to meet the 15 per cent target by 2020 set out in the European Agenda for Adult Learning. In North America, such statistics are not collected at the national level, or have not been collected since 2009 or even earlier.

GRALE III and other recent studies show that despite the commitment of the BFA and many valuable initiatives, more needs to be done to increase participation in ALE of disadvantaged groups. When looking at what target groups are highlighted in national policies, the answers clearly show that an overwhelming majority of policies focus on adults with low basic skills, long-term

unemployed or workers in precarious positions. Several countries target ALE for migrants, but only a few define 'socially excluded' groups as the priority.

Looking at specific initiatives, a number of policies have been adopted in North America since 2009 to 'recognize the value of indigenous languages', in keeping with the commitment of the BFA. Europe has seen more attention to ALE for migrants, following the influx of refugees; several notable initiatives have also been undertaken for people with special needs and inmates, but on a much more limited scale. A recent (2016) European Consultation on UNESCO's *Rethinking Education* highlighted the need for more inclusive policies, programmes and infrastructures for learners with disabilities, for whom learning environments still turn out to be a barrier.

The BFA also committed to promoting participation of ALE through 'activities and programmes such as Adult Learners' Weeks and learning festivals'; several countries have expanded the scope of their festivals since 2009. Additionally, one of the recommendations of the CONFINTEA VI follow-up conference in Vilnius was to organize a European Year for Adult Learning, promoting adult learning activities on a larger scale. While this was not achieved, the European Association for the Education of Adults has organized a campaign to mark 2017 as the Year of Adult Education in Europe, with over 80 events linked across the continent to promote ALE.

QUALITY

The majority of countries in the region report having introduced significant innovations to improve the quality of ALE since 2009, with several new quality frameworks for ALE having been established. Five provinces and territories in Canada have established such frameworks, focused mainly on adult literacy. In Europe, national quality frameworks were recently developed in Austria and Greece.

A recent European study found that while some countries have a quality system established at the macro level, others still suffer from fragmentation. The most common challenges include insufficient requirements for ALE staff, lack of monitoring data or no attention to adult specific elements in formal learning. While the BFA encourages 'recognizing the diversity and plurality of providers', it is often the diversity of the sector that makes it difficult to establish common indicators at the national level.

Working conditions and professionalization of ALE staff appears to be the largest problem. While 'improving training, capacity-building, employment conditions and the professionalization of adult educators' was one of the commitments of the BFA, 56 per cent of countries from the region that answered the question report that a continuing, in-service education and training programme for ALE teachers and educators is available, but with inadequate capacity. Only 28 per cent of the respondents describe the training as sufficient. Additionally, studies continue to show that ALE staff suffer from precarious working conditions, with part-time contracts and unpaid hours relatively common in the sector. Finally, two consultations held in the region in 2016 reported that ALE teachers and educators frequently feel that their voice is not taken into account at the policy level.

IMPACT OF ALE ON HEALTH, WORK AND SOCIETY

As the BFA has called for a more inter-sectoral approach to ALE, *GRALE III* has explored the impact that ALE has on different domains: health and well-being, employment and the labour market as well as social, civic and community life. With growing evidence that ALE has a positive influence on these areas, some countries in Europe and North America have started to recognize its value of ALE in the three domains.

With studies showing that health literacy rates in the region are alarmingly low, there is an urgent need to invest in ALE to improve health and well-being. Studies demonstrate that ALE improves general health, extends life expectancy and improves quality of life. The importance of ALE has been recognized in a small number of health policies, for example in Scotland and in the UK.

An increasing number of countries have invested in ALE for employment and the labour market, where the benefits of ALE tend to be easier to measure and translate into economic benefits. Policies at the EU level and beyond have prioritized investments in ALE for upskilling and reskilling primarily as a response to rising unemployment levels.

There has been, however, a growing shift towards a more comprehensive view of ALE, one that looks at its potential to bring social cohesion, increased participation in social, civic and political activities as well as diversity tolerance. Several studies conducted since 2009, both at national and international level, have shown that ALE can influence social engagement and

integration. As European countries have expressed their concern about radicalization following recent terrorist attacks, in 2015 EU ministers of education signed a declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

International cooperation has been strong in Europe, where the funding programmes of the European Union encourage transnational projects, exchange of best practices and capacity-building. Several networks exist at the European level, advancing research in ALE, exchanging knowledge and investing in capacity-building among members and beyond. A few new networks, such as the European Basic Skills Network, were founded after the adoption of the BFA. Several associations exist at the regional level, with particularly strong cooperation in the Nordic countries.

Similarly, North American associations frequently reach out to each other in their key activities, for example when organizing regional conferences and consultations. Specific examples of such collaboration since 2009 are outlined in the report.

ALE stakeholders in Europe and North America have also made significant efforts in promoting North-South cooperation and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the UN in 2015. In October 2016 representatives of ministries of education and of cooperation and development, and of UN agencies, academia, civil society organizations, the teaching profession, and development partners of European and North American states met in Paris for a Regional UNESCO Consultation on SDG 4 Education 2030 for Europe and North America. A few thematic networks, such as Bridge 47, have been established at the European level to advance SDG Target 4.7. At the EU level, a recent (2017) Consensus on Development marks an important commitment towards the achievement of the SDGs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While significant progress has been achieved in the implementation of the BFA in the region of Europe and North America, action is still needed. The authors have defined several recommendations for the five key areas of the BFA.

Policy. The value and role of non-formal adult learning in providing quality education needs more recognition. Recent European developments show a renewed emphasis on learning for active citizenship and sustainable development, in which non-formal adult learning can play a significant role by encouraging dialogue and safe learning environments. This comprehensive and holistic approach to ALE needs to be strengthened at European, national and regional levels. Structural support for non-formal adult learning is still needed.

Governance. All key stakeholders in ALE need to be included in the development, implementation and monitoring of ALE policies and programmes. While various stakeholders are consulted on ALE policies, consultations are frequently limited to the first stages of a policy cycle. A cross-sectoral governance structure is also needed. Partnerships have to be strengthened vertically and horizontally within governments, involving different ministries in trans-sectoral strategies. Finally, it is paramount to strengthen the role of civil society, as it ensures advocacy, representation and consultative ability in ALE.

Financing. With ALE spending remaining below 0.4 per cent of public education spending in a few countries in the region, there is an urgent need to increase investment in ALE. Without sufficient funding from public sources, many ALE providers are underfunded, leaving behind especially the most underprivileged learners. It is also necessary to collect comprehensive data on ALE spending. Several countries in the region are unable to estimate the percentage of public education spending that is attributed to ALE. Without improved data-collection and monitoring systems, the BFA commitment to 'increased investment in adult learning and education' cannot be achieved.

Participation. Countries in Europe and North America urgently need to reach out to and empower disadvantaged and under-represented groups. Research clearly shows that those who need learning are also the least likely to participate. While there have been encouraging examples of measures to support low-skilled and unemployed adults in learning, some groups have received little attention. Learners with disabilities, people living in rural areas, as well as refugees and migrants, need to be included in ALE policies. Recognition, validation and accreditation is a key tool to promote ALE, putting the learner in the centre of the process, encouraging more flexible learning and creating a more comprehensive understanding of

competences. Finally, it is crucial to monitor participation in ALE, as, particularly in North America, there has been a lack of updated nationwide data that would capture ALE participation.

Quality. A comprehensive approach to quality assurance in ALE can be best achieved by pursuing three strands of action: complementing existing resources; developing and extending existing resources; and integrating them into consistent framework of principles, criteria and guidelines. Quality in ALE would also benefit from peer-learning and reviewing. More efforts are also needed to improve employment conditions of ALE staff and their professionalization. Most countries admit that access to in-service training is 'inadequate', while several studies have shown that employment conditions continue to be dire in many countries, with unstable contracts and no access to social security. Finally, there is a growing need to look at ICT and open educational resources (OER) as a way of delivering quality ALE, one that is flexible and accessible for all.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

THE CONTEXT

The focus of this summary is on the commitments made during the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA), held in Belém do Para, Brazil, in December 2009, and set out in the Belém Framework for Action (BFA). It therefore adopts a similar architecture to the BFA, seeking to plot progress and obstacles encountered by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as they confront the challenges facing youth and adult learning and education (YALE). We ask 'Is there evidence to suggest that adult learning has the power necessary to guarantee a viable future?' and 'Who decides what is a viable future for Latin America and the Caribbean?'

The LAC region is profoundly heterogeneous, and intensely rich in linguistic, cultural, ethnic and geographical diversity. It is composed of 41 countries and territories in which more than 600 languages are spoken, with a total population of 577 million people (less than 10 per cent of the world population) (UN data, 2004), including an indigenous population estimated at around 40 million, across more than 400 ethnic groups. In addition, there exists an important afro-descendent population in several countries especially in the Caribbean and in Brazil and Colombia. At the same time, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), LAC in 2017 remained the most unequal region in the world, with the largest gap between rich and poor. The region has one of the highest concentrations of the 'ultra-rich' while, at the same time, 34.1 per cent of the population live in poverty and 12.6 per cent in extreme poverty (CEPAL, 2008). The recessive cycles of the global economy prevent countries from effectively maintaining social protection systems and implementing development and education policies.

Although we can observe many promising initiatives and developments in YALE, given the challenges the region faces, the pace of progress is much too slow. For example, an estimated 35 million adults lack basic reading and writing skills and 88 million have not completed primary education; even more have not completed secondary education. Evidence strongly suggests that limited access to schooling is broadly linked to structural poverty, as are unemployment, lack of access to health services, social

exclusion, migration, violence, and disparities between men and women. Seen through the lens of the Belém Framework for Action, and in the light of the more recent Sustainable Development Goals, adult learning and education faces a series of challenges with regard to coverage, gender, ethnicity, quality and participation.

POLICY

Latin America and the Caribbean was one of the first regions to introduce the category of young people into the concept of adult education in the 1980s, due to their growing presence in educational programmes designed for adults. Youth and adult education continues to be the most representative conceptual classification covering what is principally second-chance or compensatory schooling, including literacy. The popular education movement's pedagogic thinking has contributed strongly to the shape of youth and adult education in Latin America and the Caribbean and to the recent political history of the region. This was marked by resistance to authoritarian regimes and by a transition to democracy and national reconstruction after armed conflicts, in which civil society's capacity for self-organization and mobilization played a prominent role. Although the profile and focus of social movements and organizations were substantially modified at the end of the twentieth century, the popular education paradigm remains a fundamental reference point for forming democratic citizenship and the defence of human rights, particularly when those practices are promoted by civil society organizations. There is no doubt that, despite their limitations, which are principally financial, YALE and popular education together have created programmes which are both highly creative and responsive to the rich diversity of the region.

The social phenomenon of low educational achievement and levels of literacy reflects the complex relationship between the educational and social context of Latin American countries. It is directly related to social and economic inequalities, to the prevalent economic model of development in LAC countries, to the political culture in the region, to broader historical processes and to the quality of the education offered by schools in the region. Literacy challenges and the difficulties of accessing and completing educational processes are linked to patterns

of unequal power distribution. The issue of inclusion is particularly evident in the region. Meeting the educational rights of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants is critical.

One of the main challenges for LAC countries is to advance from initial literacy to higher levels of learning and build coherent lifelong learning systems. Many programmes for youth and adults are still focused on the first stage of literacy and little attention is given to continuity and succeeding levels. At the same time, the lifelong learning paradigm has not gained general application and continues to be associated only with adults. Although mentioned in policies and legal instruments, lifelong learning remains an obscure concept, associated with the North, lacking relevance and contextualisation in the South. Instead, under the slogan of 'skills for the modern life', there has been a greater alignment with approaches seeking to associate YALE with processes of adaptation to new economically globalized production and services systems, with mixed results.

GOVERNANCE

On the positive side, the governance of adult education programmes has become more decentralized, which indicates that decisions on the specific demand for programmes and their implementation are being made at local level. This means that YALE can potentially be more responsive to local needs. However, YALE continues to be a neglected and marginalized sector of the wider education field. The main trends observed in the analysis were: in most cases, learners do not participate in the discussion of YALE plans; a lack of coordination between a multiplicity of institutions and actors involved, mainly in the implementation of programmes; corruption; and spending on non-central aspects of educational processes, among others. NGOs have become important providers of basic services, and play a role of paramount importance to those who are harder to reach, especially where the state does not provide teaching services or where their quality is poor.

The reports show that the majority of countries have a specific governmental body coordinating YALE but that management of schooling and literacy is frequently separate with several cases in which literacy activities are not coordinated by the ministry of education. The need to strengthen strategies and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, as well as accountability mechanisms allowing for greater social control (the term

preferred in Latin America) and transparency, continues to be pressing. Equally, mechanisms for the collection of data and information on educational processes tend to be more organized and reliable for literacy programmes than they are for schooling programmes.

In a region such as Latin America and the Caribbean, with a large indigenous and Afro-descendent population, as well as other important minority groups, the question of learner participation in governance is of fundamental importance. The scarcity of formal channels highlights the need to establish communication channels in order to guarantee that learners' voices are heard and have an impact on the way in which their learning needs are met.

FINANCING

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the average investment in education in the region is 5.2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and demonstrated a small increase between 2000 and 2012. This is a positive sign, which should not be ignored. However, public funding of education remains one of the critical issues in the region, and even more so for ALE, traditionally relegated to the lowest percentages of budget allocation. It is a key issue that determines the possibilities of expanding opportunities for youth and adults who require educational attention.

It is evident that public investment in education in the region has not increased as would be desirable. In consequence, YALE financing has not improved substantially in real terms. The diversity of provision, which often lacks focus or coordination, has complicated effort to identify the budgets or expenditure dedicated to adult education. In many cases, budgets that serve adult education are not in budget lines explicitly designated as adult education. Some ministries (e.g. labour, agriculture and health) promote adult or non-formal education activities. This expenditure is not declared as adult education. Moreover, government and non-government organizations are frequently reluctant to reveal detailed financial information. Add to this the fact that the few lines dedicated to education by the Conference on Financing for Development (2015) do not mention ALE in any way, and it is evident that YALE does not occupy a prominent place on the political agenda.

The contribution of international cooperation to the development of YALE activities in the region is relatively small. Only one-third of countries declared receiving

external financial cooperation for this end. In these cases, funding came from the European Union, the Organization of American States, UNESCO and the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation (AECID), through the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI).

PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Analysis of country reports reveals that there has been progress in terms of reducing disparities in educational access between people from urban and rural areas and between people of different ethnicities, both fundamental issues in the region. Equally, there are important signs of coordination of local and regional development policies by different providers of YALE.

Access to high-quality adult learning plays a decisive role in developing skills and competences that contribute to employability and the overall competitiveness of LAC. Moreover, learning brings equally important benefits for adults' social inclusion and personal fulfilment. Although there exists an increasing diversity of adult learning and education programmes, currently their principal focus is on vocational education and training. More comprehensive and integrated adult learning and education approaches are needed to address development in all its dimensions (economic, social, community and personal). Participation in learning helps people to secure a constructive and active role in their local communities and in society. It can help reduce health costs and the incidence of criminality, for instance, while also helping to reduce poverty. Moreover, one cannot underestimate the importance of learning for personal development and well-being.

There is a concern that YALE programmes do not sufficiently respond to the learning needs of diverse groups such as indigenous and rural populations, the disabled, prison inmates and migrants.

In the last decade, the countries of the region have made an effort to incorporate information and communication technology (ICT) in education, with most countries reporting having initiated processes of modernization incorporating ICT, both in literacy and other YALE programmes. However, progress is uneven and heterogeneous. In order to evaluate the degree of incorporation of ICT in YALE in the region it is necessary to look at access, use and outcomes associated with ICT. In this field, the initiatives of international cooperation and the private sector have contributed.

QUALITY

Quality is a polysemic term when applied to learning and education. On one level, we emphasize the primacy of relevance and flexibility for quality in adult learning and education. It is fundamental that the content of adult education responds, primarily, to the needs of adult learners, while keeping in mind the concerns of socio-economic development in societies. Programmes are most relevant when they draw on local and traditional knowledge, especially those of migrant and Indigenous peoples. Flexibility in provision helps to ensure relevance.

At another level, quality in adult learning and education is strongly related to the role of teachers/educators. While many countries still rely on non-professional adult educators, others work with volunteers who are trained as adult educators. In general, government entities have the greatest weight in the training of educators, at both the initial and subsequent in-service stages.

On a third level, there is growing awareness of the need of data, data analysis and, particularly, for specific indicators on ALE which could contribute to improve quality of provision, results and policy. Some 71 per cent of ministries reported monitoring processes for literacy programmes, while only 57 per cent do so for the rest of the youth and adult education. Only 64 per cent are assessing the outcomes of the literacy processes and just 36 per cent are doing so for youth and adult education processes. These figures indicate the lack of a systematic approach to monitoring, evaluation and assessment and that, in many cases, attention is focused only on delivering services, and not on accountability mechanisms designed to deliver information regarding how they are operated and whether they are producing the expected results.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Regional and international cooperation in LAC, in the field of adult learning and education, has played, and continues to play, an important role in stimulating and articulating diverse practices in YALE. This involves both government and civil society as well as international agencies. Cooperation has, increasingly, become more technical than financial as governments assume their responsibilities for the right of all citizens to education irrespective of age. Cooperation has also provided an important space for the circulation of southern epistemologies,

which reflect the culture, history and world view of the indigenous and Afro-descendent populations of the region.

Within this field of international and regional cooperation, it is possible to identify four different categories. First, international and regional agencies such as UNESCO and OEI have played an important role in the past. More recently, the Ibero-American Plan for Literacy and Basic Education of Youth and Adults (2007–2015), promoted by OEI and known as PIA, has sought to articulate national plans and actions while offering principally technical support. In the field of prison education, RedLECE, the Latin American Network of Education in Contexts of Imprisonment, created as part of the EUROsociAL project financed by the European Commission, provided important opportunities for the exchange of experience among countries in the region.

Second, governments have made use of the mechanism of south-south cooperation as a means of furthering YALE. Cuba offers an important example of cooperation in the region particularly with Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia but also with Brazil and other countries.

In the field of non-governmental cooperation, regional NGOs such as the Latin America Adult Education Council (CEAAL) and the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), have placed the promotion of education as a human right and the strengthening of active and participatory democracy in the countries of the region at the core of their political agenda. Both are strongly influenced by the paradigm of popular education.

Lastly, one of the proposals agreed at the LAC Post-CONFINTEA Regional Meeting in 2010, the Latin American Observatory of Youth and Adult Education, has the potential to facilitate processes of exchange between the countries involved as well as to stimulate the production of better data on YALE in general.

ADULT LITERACY

Literacy is a field in which the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have exercised a profound influence on different regions of the world. The work of Paulo Freire and the praxis of popular education have changed not only the way in which literacy is thought about and taught but also the very foundations of education.

While literacy is an indispensable foundation that enables young people and adults to engage in learning opportunities at all stages of the learning continuum, LAC has, in recent years, seen a myriad of national and supranational initiatives and plans operating in a rather uncoordinated manner. The persistent literacy challenge reflects the complex relationship between the educational and social context of Latin American and Caribbean countries. It is strongly linked to social and economic inequalities, to the prevalent economic model of development in LAC countries, to the political culture in the region, to broader historical processes and to the quality of the education offered in schools in the region. In this context, youth and adult literacy cannot be understood as a uniquely educational concern. It requires an integrated and coordinated multi-sectoral approach.

Aggregated literacy data tends to conceal as much as it reveals. Hence, in addition to the age variable, low levels of literacy tend to affect those on the lowest incomes, the rural more than the urban population, people with disabilities, indigenous populations and, among these, women. The rich linguistic diversity also poses a serious challenge for literacy learning as it has to be complemented with learning the national language. Another challenge is the need to guarantee the continuity of learning after the initial period of a campaign or a project of short duration. The proportion of the youth and adult population still to complete basic education constitutes a problem to which the public education system must respond: it is clear that the instructional and merely compensatory functions of YALE are not sufficient to meet the requirements of the twenty-first century.

Due to the high political profile of adult literacy, governments tend to invest more in monitoring and evaluating literacy programmes than they do in the case of other youth and adult education programmes. This was particularly so up until 2010 when adult literacy was part of a composite indicator included in the Human Development Index. Its removal probably disincentivized government investment in both adult literacy and its measurement.

THE IMPACT OF ALE ON HEALTH, WORK AND SOCIETY

Determining the impact of ALE on health, work and society is important for making a case for a higher priority for ALE in public policy as well as for greater investment. The link with work is often explicit, with adults seeing YALE as a means of achieving conditions required for better job opportunities. However, evidence on the links between YALE and job satisfaction, improved productivity, innovation at work and better financial income demands better documentation by national governments.

The link between YALE and health is less visible. People do not regard YALE processes as a means of improving their health and well-being even though their participation in YALE might have an impact on their health and that of their family. Only a quarter of the countries in the region declared having evidence of the positive impact of YALE on the health of the population.

National economies depend, largely, on so-called 'informal' economies and on emigration (remittances from abroad). In both cases, working conditions have become precarious and the vulnerability of people has increased. The right to decent work and to better living conditions increasingly move to the centre of the frame of reference for YALE as it prepares young people and adults to confront and overcome these conditions.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

LAC has an extremely rich heritage in the fields of youth and adult education and popular education. The challenge for the region is to strengthen policies that emphasize creating endogenous productive, technological and cultural capabilities that will support the region's insertion in global economic and cultural dynamics. To this end, the state's role should be that of a coordinator of a new cycle of policies furthering equality, inclusion and sustainable development.

Challenges for education policy in general, and especially for YALE, include taking into account endogenous and innovative approaches, such as *buen vivir* (good living). The concept of *buen vivir* is based on the world view of indigenous peoples and is concerned with achieving a harmonious relationship between self, others and the environment. It emphasizes the contribution of indigenous peoples to the collective construction of an alternative

society which is open to intercultural learning. A key for success in this arena is to strengthen the initiatives of non-governmental organizations, popular education centres and self-managed community education programmes.

At the same time, the imperative of planetary survival, assumed in the Sustainable Development Goals, points to the urgency of adult learning and education in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in all regions of the world, subscribing to three fundamental principles: the understanding that development must advance from that of an anthropocentric process to that of a biocentric process; the recognition that learning is lifelong and lifewide; and, as Paul Bélanger affirmed in his keynote address to CONFINTEA VI in 2009, 'The planet will only survive if it becomes a learning planet'. Evidence in the report shows that where there is political will, adult learning has the power to contribute to a viable future and that decisions on the shape of that future should be the democratic prerogative of all learning citizens.

The **Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI)**, held in Brazil in December 2009, closed with the adoption of the Belém Framework for Action, which recorded the commitments of Member States and presented a strategic guide for the global development of adult learning and education from a lifelong learning perspective. The third *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE III)*, published in 2016, drew on survey data to evaluate progress made by countries in fulfilling the commitments made in Brazil, while also highlighting some of the contributions adult learning and education can make to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review, in Suwon, Republic of Korea, in October 2017, takes stock of progress made by Member States in the past eight years, looking ahead to *GRALE IV* in 2019. Five regional reports were commissioned and produced for the conference by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in cooperation with the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). Each report documents, for a particular region, the outcomes and results of the CONFINTEA VI recommendations. All five reports are summarized in this publication.