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International

Adult  
Education  
and  
Development

# Post 2015

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**DVV International**

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## Editorial

Listen. Where were you in 1973?

I am just about to start school, but I already know the letters and numbers. I am eager to learn, to become a grown-up.

The same year, the first issue of this publication *Adult Education and Development* (AED) sees daylight. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) puts a stranglehold on the West for supporting Israel in the Yom Kippur War; we get the first oil crisis. The US withdraws from Vietnam. The World Trade Centre in New York becomes the world's tallest building. Indira Gandhi is still prime minister in India; Nixon is president in the US. Martial law is declared in Greece after student riots. Pinochet seizes power in Chile.

I could go on, but I think you get the idea. We have come a long way since then, yet we are still stuck in the same place.

The first article in the first issue of AED is called *A Short Review of the Most Important Decisions of the Third World Conference on Adult Education, Tokyo 1972*. Looking back at 1973 makes me dizzy. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

In your hand you now hold the latest incarnation of the journal *Adult Education and Development*. We have rethought, redesigned and restarted, with the ambition to be in touch with our times. Our editorial board, with members from all over the world, has decided on a topical approach. From now on, *Adult Education and Development* will be published once a year and will focus on one topic per issue.

You noticed the cover, right? We are pretty proud of it. Each cover will be a unique piece of art, created for the journal by a different artist. Oh, and there are tons more of changes and innovations, for example an accompanying virtual seminar organised by our cooperation partner ICAE. But I invite you to explore the journal and see for yourself.

However, before you start, I would like to explain why we chose the topic for this issue.

We made this publication about Post 2015. It is about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the global discussion on what should happen after 2015, the year

the MDGs expire. To do that properly, we need to understand what brought us here.

What you will see on these pages reflects our attempt at making sense of a very complex issue. One thing will come back in article after article: Education is a Human Right. This is true today, this was true in 1972 when the World Conference in Tokyo stated that:

Learning is life long; the education of adults and of children and youth are inseparable. But to be an effective agent of change, education must engage the active commitment and participation of adults. It should seek to improve living conditions and the general quality of life. Apathy, poverty, disease and hunger are major human evils facing the world today. They can be eradicated only by making people aware of what causes them and how to conquer them. Social improvement and Adult Education are thus complementary. [...]

Experience shows that the provision of more education in most communities tends to favour most the already well educated; the educationally underprivileged have yet to claim their rights. Adult Education is no exception to the rule, for those adults who most need education have been largely neglected – they are the forgotten people.

Thus the major task of Adult Education during the Second Development Decade of the United Nations is to seek out and serve these forgotten people.<sup>1</sup>

We are still struggling with the same problems. I hope we can contribute to serve the forgotten people through the publication of our journal.

**Johanni Larjanko**  
Editor-in-Chief

<sup>1</sup> / UNESCO (1972): Final Report. Third International Conference on Adult Education. Available at <http://bit.ly/1blv3vg>

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## Word of mouth

No filters. No alterations.  
Just word for word, this is what  
our interviewees had to say.



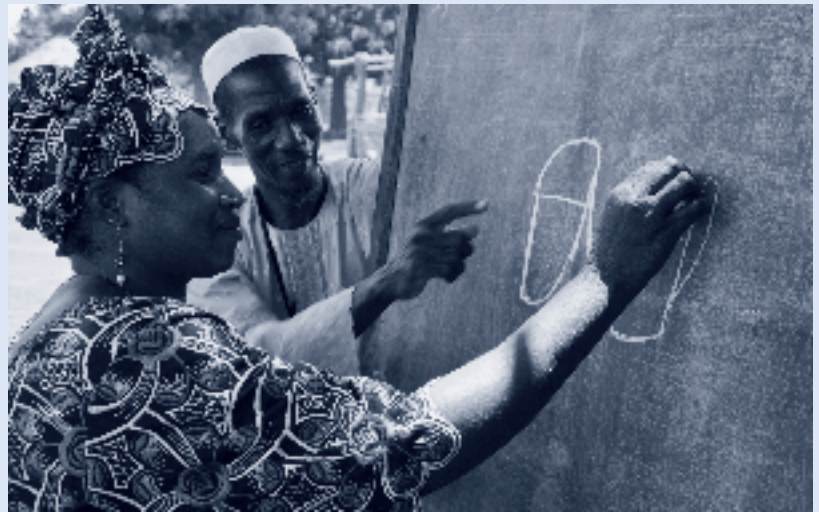
*Auma Obama*  
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how to fish. Ask us if we eat fish!”  
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## Caught in the eye

If you look closely you might  
be able to see it. Literacy shaping  
lives in rural Mali. Photographer  
Fatoumata Diabaté went to have  
a look.  
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## Story of my life

Learning. It is not an abstract  
concept, or a beautiful policy  
concept. For these people,  
it's about life.



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# Lifelong Learning for All – A potential global goal for the post 2015 education and development agendas!



Heribert Hinzen  
DVV International, Laos

**Abstract** – *The education and development agendas covering the years 2000 to 2015 will soon come to an end. This article explains the processes leading up to the current agendas and what happens now. We see already that despite several achievements and gains, most of the agreed goals will not be reached. This is especially true for what is related to Youth and Adult Education and their learning and training needs. Therefore the Adult Education community needs to get further involved within the post 2015 debate that is now in full swing. There is a need for more support for youth and adults within a perspective of Lifelong Learning for All.*

As we entered into a new millennium amid fears of Y2K-crashes<sup>1</sup> (remember those, anyone?) the United Nations accomplished something quite spectacular. The organisation, heavily criticised both for its slow decision-processes and its inability to implement decisions, succeeded in compiling an ambitious plan to reach many of its fundamental goals. Obviously the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs, were a result of much debate, and a compromise. Nevertheless, here was a concrete roadmap, with measurable objectives in eight areas. At the same time, back in 2000, we got the six Education for All goals.

## MDG and EFA

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) were a result of 193 member states meeting at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in New York, agreeing to achieve eight goals set towards reducing poverty, child mortality, HIV/AIDS, and improving primary education, gender equality, maternal health, environmental sustainability and partnership for development [*for more information see page 8, Ed.*].

Education for All (EFA) was a result of 1,500 participants of the World Education Forum in Dakar agreeing on six goals covering early childhood, primary education, youth and skills, adult literacy and continuing education, gender equality, and improving quality [*for more information see page 9, Ed.*].

The EFA agenda was a big step forward. It replaced the World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs of an earlier World Conference in Jomtien from 1990. EFA looked at education from a holistic perspective, the new vision wanted to cover the whole life-span – long, deep and wide.

## Being involved

The global Adult Education movement got involved in these processes early, and was thus going beyond CONFINTEA, the series of UNESCO World Conferences on Adult Education. In 1990, just before Jomtien, the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE) held its World Assembly, also in Thailand. On a national level, DVV International played a strong advocacy role in the preparatory taskforce within Germany, and I was later invited to join the Government delegation that participated in Dakar. Since then, this journal has published special issues and numerous articles preparing for or reporting on EFA events and their outcomes in policy and practice on global, regional and national levels.

As a result, ICAE, DVV International and other members were invited to participate in important committees like the CONFINTEA VI Consultative Group, the UN Literacy Decade Experts, or the Editorials Board of the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, which is published on a yearly basis. In 2012 the Monitoring Report was on Youth and Skills, and the next issue will be on Learning and Teaching for Development.

Two of our goals were approved as part of EFA in Dakar:

- “(III) ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes
- (IV) achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults...”

Unfortunately, this wider EFA vision became limited to the second of the Millennium Development Goals which wanted to: “Achieve universal primary education”. As a result only this aspect of the EFA agenda got any attention by most governments and development partners. It would be an important task to analyze the flow of development aid for education, and demonstrate how much – although not enough – there was for children and schools, and how little there has been for the continuing education and training needs of youth and adults.

The adult learning community has criticised the implementation of the MDGs and EFA goals for the narrow focus on primary schooling, and the way youth and adults and their learning and training needs have been ignored. This publication aims at setting the records straight,

and to engage in the debate that has already started: What should happen after 2015? As the success of the Adult Education community in Dakar did not result in an equally successful implementation, it is time to take stock of what has been achieved and look at what should be done now.

## Post 2015 debates

We see a diversity of processes, conferences, and websites on the world stage. They try to evaluate the outcomes so far, and start the debate of what should follow. All in all it has become clear that most of the eight MDGs have not been reached in most of the countries of the global South, and will not be reached by 2015. The same can be said for the six EFA goals, where most indicators show much more is needed. At the same time we should celebrate and learn from the many successes as they can provide lessons to be learned for the next decade. Many of these successes are well presented in the yearly Global Monitoring Reports, which are full of such stories.

There are voices raised suggesting that we once again set global goals, but this time with national and/or context-specific targets with related indicators. The argument is that what is easy to reach in one country may be very difficult in another one. Even within countries there are often large differences between opportunities in urban and in rural areas, between richer and marginalised people, not to mention the ongoing inequality between female and male access. For the new MDGs, which may be named Sustainable Development Goals, there is a growing understanding of the interconnectedness of the different goals: Healthier people learn better, better educated youth and adults are less vulnerable.

The UN System Task Team on the post 2015 UN Development Agenda published what they called a “thematic think piece” on “Education and skills for inclusive and sustainable development beyond 2015”. The Task Team observe trends for education, and divide their findings into:

- The growth of information and its changing nature
- A shift away from teaching to an increased focus on learning
- Lifelong Learning: Beyond a classroom-centred paradigm of education
- Future learning: Blurring boundaries between learning, working and living
- Rising skills requirements and foundational skills
- Employability challenges: Facilitating transition from school to work
- Anticipating change



It seems that despite a variety and diversity of views and arguments, there is a growing common understanding which in respect to the different agendas calls for:

- An education-specific agenda covering all aspects of schooling, training, and learning
- that education must be everywhere in the implementation of the development agenda

This common understanding can be seen in the many documents floating around. This trend works in our favour, but it needs to be reinforced. The post 2015 debate is in full swing, and if the March 2013 meeting in Dakar is any indication, the Adult Education community needs to step up its efforts if we are to influence future goals. Luckily, all of us are invited to join the discussion.

The Adult Education community has a lot of opportunities to participate in the discussion through the high number of meetings, websites, blogs and social media available. The discussion in the Asia Pacific region can serve as a positive example where the UNESCO Bangkok office has taken the lead to explore future perspectives together with experts through a series of meetings:

- May 2012: Towards EFA 2015 and Beyond – Shaping a new Vision of Education
- November 2012: What Education for the Future: Beyond 2015. Rethinking Learning in a Changing World

- March 2013: Education in the post 2015 Development Agenda. Regional Thematic Consultation in the Asia Pacific

#### Where are we now?

The debate reached a first global momentum with the UN Thematic Consultation on Education in the post 2015 development agenda. The meeting in Dakar, March 2013, came up with priorities towards: “More focus on quality and how to measure it; on equity and access for hard-to-reach children; and what should happen during the first 3 years of secondary school.” These priorities clearly show that the current flow of processes and debates around new EFA goals are once again dominated by schooling needs of children.

At the same time there is also a great step forward in the Summary of Outcomes where: “Equitable quality lifelong education and learning for all” is proposed as an overarching education goal to realise the world we want. The Civil Society Communique of the Global Civil Society Forum on the post 2015 Development Agenda held in Bali in March 2013, came up with a statement that a future “framework must include goals and zero-targets on universal access to equitable healthcare, quality, inclusive education and Lifelong Learning, water and sanitation, and food and nutrition security.”

By engaging in these debates now, and deepening them through our journal, we hope to provide an increased



opportunity to have an in-depth-discussion of why “Lifelong Learning for All” would be an overarching aim that sets education as a human right as well as skills and competencies for citizenship, livelihoods, and vocational needs as an overall orientation.

It is not too late for the Adult Education community to get more deeply involved. Members of ICAE should do it at the national and regional level. The Adult Education community can strengthen its positions and claims through evidence-based policy recommendations coming from good practice. All readers of this publication are invited to join the discussion in a virtual seminar organised for early 2014 [see page 44 for details, Ed.]. Potential issues to be raised include:

- What are the alternative paradigms in and for education and development that transcend the limited orientation towards economic growth?
- How can education systems reach out to provide better access and more inclusive structures based on policy, legislation, and finance for all sub-sectors?
- How can civil society at the national, regional, and international level get better involved in these debates, and thus support the efforts by ICAE and others?

This involvement should cover both the education as well as the development agenda. Youth and adult learning and training must be strong components in both.

## CONFINTEA and GRALE

The Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals are not the only processes that address education globally. We should not forget the CONFINTEA process. The Belém Framework for Action which was approved at CONFINTEA VI in 2009 is monitored by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. A midterm report is due in 2015.

Belém saw the first Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE). Once the new GRALE report is published, later in 2013, the Adult Education community will be in a position to know what has been achieved since Belém, and what policy and practice, support and partnerships it should concentrate on. This includes the greatly needed governance, professional and financial structures and mechanisms.

It should be clear that opportunities and time for bottom-up debates are running out very quickly. The EFA-follow-up might already take place at the beginning of 2015 in Korea. Thus a clear strategy is needed. One such could be “Lifelong Learning For All” – with related goals for the diversity of specific education sectors and needs of the people. This should focus on youth and adults, and move to national targets and indicators for implementation and measuring of achievements.

## About the Author

Professor (H) Dr **Heribert Hinzen** studied at the Universities of Bonn and Heidelberg, Germany, gaining a doctorate in comparative studies with a thesis on Adult Education in Tanzania. He has been working with DVV International since 1977 in headquarters and offices in Sierra Leone and Hungary. He was Director of the Institute in Bonn from 1999 to 2009 before moving to Lao PDR. Additionally, at the Royal University of Phnom Penh he teaches comparative studies of education, looking into non-formal education, Lifelong Learning, skills training for youth and adults. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Pecs. Previously, he was a Vice-President of ICAE and EAEA.

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## Note

1 / The fear was that all computer systems around the world would cease to function on January 1st, 2000.

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**McGrath, S. (September 2012):** Education and Skills Post-2015: What Education, What Development? In: NORRAG NEWSBite. Available at <http://bit.ly/PJvFlx>

**UNESCO (February 2013):** Education for All is affordable – by 2015 and beyond. EFA global Monitoring Report. Policy Paper #6. Available at <http://bit.ly/10PdBJJ>

More information on “Education Post 2015” on the EFA website: <http://bit.ly/19syAKP>

# Key Document

## 2000: Millennium Development Goals (excerpt)



### Goal 1 **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

**Target 1A** – Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.25 a day

**Target 1B** – Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people

**Target 1C** – Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

### Goal 2 **Achieve universal primary education**

**Target 2A** – Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

### Goal 3 **Promote gender equality and empower women**

**Target 3A** – Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

### Goal 4 **Reduce child mortality rates**

**Target 4A** – Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

### Goal 5 **Improve maternal health**

**Target 5A** – Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio

**Target 5B** – Achieve universal access to reproductive health

### Goal 6 **Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases**

**Target 6A** – Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

**Target 6B** – Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it

**Target 6C** – Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

### Goal 7 **Ensure environmental sustainability**

**Target 7A** – Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources

**Target 7B** – Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss

# Key Document

## 2000: Education for All Goals

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**Target 7C** – Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation

**Target 7D** – Achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Goal 8

**Develop a global partnership for development**

**Target 8A** – Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system

**Target 8B** – Address the special needs of least developed countries

**Target 8C** – Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States

**Target 8D** – Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries

**Target 8E** – In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries

**Target 8F** – In cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

More information on the MDGs, the indicators and progress available at:  
<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Goal 1

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Goal 2

Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Goal 3

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

Goal 4

Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Goal 5

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Goal 6

Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

# *Auma Obama*

“Do not give us fish.  
Do not teach us how to fish.  
Ask us if we eat fish!”

*Interview*

**Interview** by Dr Anton Markmiller & Ruth Sarrazin – DVV International  
**Photography** by Bert Heinzlmeier





*Dr Auma Obama grew up in Kenya. She studied German Philology and Sociology in Germany and graduated with a Doctorate from the University of Bayreuth. After returning to Kenya, she worked for five years for the international aid organisation CARE where she coordinated the initiative “Sports for Social Change”. With her foundation Sauti Kuu, she continues her work with underprivileged children and young people.*

*We talked with her about sustainable economic development, the Millennium Development Goals and about the need for a new concept of international cooperation. She was accompanied by two young people from the Sauti Kuu Foundation, Kennedy Odour Omondi, a beneficiary of the program and a youth leader, and Dan Joshua Odour, Project Field Coordinator for the rural program.*

**Dr Auma Obama, you have been working with children and young people for many years now. In 2010 you founded the organisation Sauti Kuu. Tell us about your engagement.**

I founded *Sauti Kuu* because I wanted to do something for the youth. I wanted to give them a perspective for the future and to support them in a sustainable way. When I worked with the international aid organisation CARE, we focused on working with local grassroots non-profit organisations to build their capacity and help develop effective sport for positive behaviour change programmes. I worked with the *Boxing Girls Eastleigh*, *Moving the Goalposts* and *Kenya Homeless Street Soccer*, to mention just a few. Even though this work was very successful, I had the sense that we needed to do more for these young people. I wanted to support them to become independent adults, independent in their thoughts but also – and this is very important – independent economically. I felt that our job was not done unless we achieved this. If you want to eradicate poverty, one of the major aims of the Millennium Development Goals, you have to do it in a sustainable way. In my case, I want to support these young people to become employable adults. It's all about sustainable economic development. With *Sauti Kuu*, we focus on personality development, formal education and on vocational training, and we include the families of the young people and the whole community in the work we do.

**The Swahili expression *Sauti Kuu* means “powerful voices”. Why did you choose this name?**

When you hear the power of your own voice and the effect it can have, you develop a different awareness of self; you can express yourself and take a stand on things that affect you. Only then can you make decisions about your

life. With *Sauti Kuu*, I want to give young people a powerful voice, so that they can speak for themselves and be instrumental in defining their position in society.

**Can you give us a concrete example?**

We have built a youth centre, a safe meeting space. We started off by asking the young people from the very beginning to be part of the process of designing the space and developing the concept behind the use of the space. They consciously were part of building their own safe space.

*Kennedy Odour Omondi (Sauti Kuu Foundation, Youth Leader):* It was difficult for us to start with, as we had no place to meet. We literally met under a tree. Now, that we have built the centre, we come together regularly and are able to discuss our challenges, issues and aspirations in a safe and comfortable space. We brainstorm on social and economic issues in our community. We discuss how we can transform our village.

*Dan Joshua Odour (Sauti Kuu Foundation, Project Field Coordinator):* To be part of the process of designing the centre was initially a challenge for the young people. But gradually they learnt how to discuss and make decisions on what they wanted. The whole process made them self-confident. In the beginning, it was also just a very small group of around ten young people that we worked with. But our numbers are growing fast. The centre has been well received by the community. Parents allow their children to go there because they know where they are and know that they are in a safe space – there are no drugs, there is no violence...



We want the young people to take matters into their own hands. For example, their families often have land, but they do not use it. The young people can help their parents to generate an income from the land they have. Our motto is: Use what you have to get what you need. It's not about what you want, but what you need.

**In 2015, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be formally phased out. What do you think of this global process?**

I see a lot of positive developments and I see that the MDGs do have an impact. But there are two things which were not given enough attention in my opinion:

First of all, an exit strategy with regards to higher education and employability of those moving out of the formal or informal education system into the workforce. There was rightly a lot of focus on early childhood education, but unfortunately not enough on the other end of the spectrum, on the question of what happens when people leave the education system.

Second, the weight of achieving the MDGs was very much put on the shoulders of the western countries. The approach used had conditions that required governments receiving support to collaborate with western countries/organisations as a criteria of credibility. Again the "developing" world took the back seat in contributing towards making development happen in their own back yard – very much in keeping with the traditional concept of development.

**The old neo-colonialist system...**

I would say that indeed some neo-colonialism is still evident in the relationship between the southern and the northern hemisphere. But this system can no longer work if we want real and sustainable economic development for all countries of this world. It has to change. We have to change our perspective on how we partner with each other. We have to collaborate eye-to-eye with each other, in dialogue on a par to discuss which concepts really work. The West does not always have the solution for the issues of the southern hemisphere. The West has to learn humility. I always say: "Do not give us fish. Do not teach

us how to fish. Ask us if we eat fish!" Only when this question has been answered can we make a decision on whether to discuss fish or not. We can then together determine the direction of the dialogue.

The world is changing, getting "smaller" and the old models do not work anymore. Countries in the western world are having serious problems these days, similar to our own; look at youth unemployment, social disparities, natural catastrophes, etc. We have to work together, and ask ourselves: What can we all do to make a difference? We have to listen to each other and give each other a voice.

People need to pay attention to Africa. Africa is the future; we have a great deal of the world's natural resources. There are also a lot of well-educated people – young people, like Kennedy and Dan – who are coming up and asking the question: "Why should the western countries tell us what to do?" The African governments cannot hide behind old concepts of development cooperation either. We have to appreciate our countries and we have to take responsibility. We have to do it for ourselves.

**Many authors in this issue of Adult Education and Development talk about education as a human right. Do you agree?**

Education must be a human right. But we have to know what we mean by "education". We have to understand education as a broader concept, formal and informal education, for all ages, for children, youth and adults. In order to make education a human right, we have to take it more seriously. And it's not only about the learners; it's also about the teachers. Teachers are often not qualified enough, not well-equipped and underpaid. We entrust our most precious good, our children, to people we pay a pittance and expect them to prepare them for future. Education, if not thought through, can do as much harm as good. We therefore first have to develop, to the highest standard, our education system before we can present it as a human right. Because, what is the point of it being a human right if it is not quality education?

**Dr Obama, thank you for the interview.**





From left to right:  
Ruth Sarrazin, Dan Joshua Odour,  
Dr Anton Markmiller, Dr Auma Obama and  
Kennedy Odour Omondi

# The world moves us – you might be more global than you think



Rajesh Tandon  
Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)  
India

**Abstract** – *Active citizenship is being manifested throughout the world today. Some expressions of this citizenship are challenging the assumed relationship between citizens and the state. Expressions of solidarity across distant and unknown others is also increasing in the world. As a global phenomenon, active and participatory citizenship are redefining democratic practices. Processes and practices of Lifelong Learning and Adult Education are central to becoming an active citizen.*

## Introduction

- During the recent earthquake in distant China, several thousand people from Europe made charitable contributions towards relief measures being taken by some NGOs.
- In support of the Delhi gang-rape case recently, there were protests in New York and Melbourne.
- Demonstrations by youth in Cairo were supported by similar citizens' actions in dozens of cities around the world.
- Prayers for the health of Nelson Mandela are held by people of all faiths in many countries.
- Chinese migrants in Ghana and Filipino migrants in Japan are given shelter by local residents in those countries.

The stories above are illustrations of human solidarity; many more such stories can be narrated from all cultures and societies around the world. Unknown, distant others are being supported through solidarity actions by citizens of all persuasions and communities. When we show solidarity towards our own families, neighbours and friends, it is understandable. We feel connected and related to them as we have known them for a while. But what explains solidarity actions in support of unknown and distant others? Not only do we not know them, but we also do not understand their contexts. Why do human beings show solidarity with distant and unknown others?





## Meanings of Citizenship

The answer to this question lies in our understanding of citizenship. In a narrow, legalistic sense, citizenship is what states and governments confer on their people. Citizenship carries with it some state-determined rights and duties; all people so given the status of citizen, can claim similar rights, and must fulfil similar duties. It is this conception of citizenship that gives us national identities, passports and social security numbers. The authority vested in the state that governs a territory and its people is the basis for defining and conferring citizenship. “The vertical view has to do with the perceived relationships of citizens to the state, and potentially to other authorities. Historically, this is the most prevalent view at the national level. Rights are conferred to citizens by the state, through constitutions, laws and policies, and in turn, citizens can claim these rights and accountability from the concerned state agencies, which are duly bound to respond.” (Gaventa & Tandon 2010: 11)

This conception of citizenship is based on a vertical relationship between people and the state which governs them. In democratic states, citizens have the power of the vote to select their representatives; but, they still remain in a vertical relationship with state authorities which provide their citizenship legitimacy.

However, there is another conception of citizenship in practice; it is the sense of rights and responsibilities we feel towards our communities, fellow citizens and humanity as a whole. As social and cultural beings, humans are

constantly in relationship with others in their families, clans, communities and societies. We interact in these social relations; and social obligations emerge in the process of that interaction. Interestingly, we also claim rights in these relations. Thus, horizontal aspects of citizenship emerge in the context of our daily life and interactions. “The second dimension, the horizontal view, has to do with how citizens perceive themselves as part of a broader global community.” (Gaventa & Tandon 2010: 12)

“Learning to feel a sense of belonging in the world, learning to be a citizen of the world, learning to act in solidarity with distant and unknown others – these are the basis for Lifelong Learning as a global citizen.”

To sum it up, citizenship is both a vertically conferred status by the state and a socially earned status in the community. It is this horizontal aspect of citizenship that gives us the capacity to show solidarity with distant and unknown others. We feel a sense of obligation towards those affected by an earthquake or floods in far-away places; we feel that violence against girls in one country resonates with our sense of abhorrence towards

violence; we feel a sense of duty to help those who are in distress, even if they are being treated as “illegitimate” by the state; we claim a share of “ownership” of icons from other societies as our own.

Therefore, in the world we live in today, citizenship is about belonging, responsibility and solidarity, as much as it is about rights and claims. Global citizenship is a phenomenon gaining rapid ascendancy in our world of today. This is even more illustrative as it begins to include the ordinary citizens in the global landscape, a phenomenon hitherto confined to diplomats and statesmen.

“Participatory citizenship requires citizenship to be conceptualised by taking into account the experiences of those whose inclusion remains problematic.” (Mohanty & Tandon 2006: 10)

### Learning Global Citizenship

The essence of horizontal citizenship lies in its life-long and life-wide nature; it is learnt throughout life, and in all spheres of life. Learning to feel a sense of belonging in the world, learning to be a citizen of the world, learning to act in solidarity with distant and unknown others – these are the basis for Lifelong Learning as a global citizen.

Around the world, many formal educational programmes are launched to teach children and adults their rights and duties of citizenship. States are concerned about ensuring discipline amongst citizens so that social order is maintained. Civic education in the classroom is compulsory in modern educational systems.

But, there are not many efforts to learn about and nurture horizontal citizenship. Citizenship in this perspective is learnt through and in life. Conversations about rights and obligations towards fellow citizens are not very common; many non-formal educational programmes focus much more on the vertical aspects of state-conferred citizenship than on the horizontal meanings of citizenship.

It is here that civil society has played a critical role. Social movements have been interesting sites of learning, not only for those who participate in these movements, but also those who hear about them. Most universal human values have been spread and learnt through social movements and civil society actions. It is truly amazing that universal values of human rights are being accepted around the world; gender equality as a value is no longer being contested; living in harmony with nature is being promoted worldwide. Social movements of our times contribute to critical Lifelong Learning for all citizens. Hall et al (2012: 10) emphasise the value of such social movement learning: “We hope that readers will see as we do that one powerful contribution to social movement learning is the rendering visible of the extraordinary scope, diversity, range of actors, breadth of means and methods and indefatigable energy of those who are immersed in the educational work, the teaching and learning, the formal and informal sharing and knowledge making that is the world of social movement education and learning.”

These values of justice, equality, sustainability and solidarity are being practiced in all societies and communities today. Of course, rapid strides in communication technologies have made access to information instant; media, IT, social media, mobile phones – all have contributed to accelerate the sense of global citizenship. Rapid growth of mobile phones worldwide has enabled transmission of pictures and stories of monks protesting in Tibet, of youth demanding safety for girls in India and citizens raising voices against pollution in China. The formal media is no longer the only source of information about the world, around the world, today. Use of social media by the youth is commonplace in expressing solidarity everywhere. The youth in Senegal protested against parliamentarians giving another term to the sitting President beyond the two-term constitutional limit. The youth in Chile created a nationwide movement to demand improvements in quality of and access to education in the country. Social media played a key role in spreading the “Occupy” movements worldwide during 2011-12. The “Idle No More” movement of indigenous women is spreading in Canada (and around the world) as new media is sharing the stories of denial of justice to indigenous people. Commuters’ action in Indonesia was enormously mobilised through solidarity actions using social media. The anti-tax movements in Uganda and Kenya have found resonance around the world due to the spread of their stories through the new media. “However, a closer interrogation does reveal distant complementarities in the face of proximate isolation; historical processes of conscientisation and mobilisation by formal civil society organisations and NGOs contributed to ‘building-up’ citizen capacities and associations over time” (Tandon 2012: 9).

**“Censorship, silencing, denial and security are all being used as tools or arguments to obstruct the rise of global solidarity and expressions of citizenship by governments around the world.”**

This expansion of global citizenship is far ahead of any mechanisms that states and governments may create. In fact, in many societies, governments are acting in ways that can obstruct learning of global citizenship. Censorship, silencing, denial and security are all being used as tools or arguments to obstruct the rise of global solidarity and expressions of citizenship by governments around the world. It is distressing that governments, even in western democracies, are using wire-tapping and cyber-tools to “snoop” on citizens and deny access to open and transparent communication channels to all. British and American governments have been shown to be using security logic to do so. Other governments (like India, Russia and

China), facing protests from their citizens, are also moving in similar directions. These efforts are curtailing access to building shared understanding and connections.

It is in this sense that civil society has to become more proactive in promoting learning for global citizenship; it is in this context that civil society's programmes of action need to focus on building and nurturing that solidarity amongst citizens of the world.

The efforts of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) in building citizen leadership amongst women, youth and the indigenous communities have been especially interesting examples of using Lifelong Learning approaches to learning global citizenship. In a workshop in South Asia, women civic leaders from around the countries of the region share stories and examples of exercising citizenship in their local communities. In the process, they learn about other contexts and exercise of citizenship in the same. This understanding builds a sense of belonging, and then solidarity, among these women citizen leaders of South Asia.

Likewise, coalitions of civil society working on Education for All (as enabled by ASPBAE and DVV International) in the Asia region and internationally have brought together grassroots actors to campaign for giving visibility to Lifelong Learning approaches to EFA, and not merely primary education and adult literacy. The distance education courses of PRIA contribute to shared learning about participatory methodologies and practices of Adult Education amongst practitioners around the world.

Developing a perspective of global citizenship generates capacity to act as global citizens in the face of global challenges of inequality, injustice, violence against women, corruption, climate change, etc. Learning approaches that facilitate preparation of global citizens contribute effectively to such global campaigns.

## About the Author

Dr **Rajesh Tandon** is founder-President of Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), based in New Delhi, India. Over the past 35 years, Dr Tandon has contributed to the promotion of participatory research as a methodology of learning, knowledge and social transformation.

He is an internationally recognised civil society leader working for citizen participation, especially for socially excluded and economically marginalised citizens around the world. He has served on the governing boards of many international NGOs and academic think tanks; he has served on a number of advisory committees of the World Bank, the UNDP and the Government of India.

Dr Tandon has written extensively on participatory research, citizen participation, civil society, democratic governance and social responsibility of higher education. His pioneering contributions have been recognised by the Government of India, University of Victoria, UNESCO and many others. He now serves as co-director of UNESCO Chair on Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education.

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# Getting the job done: What actually happens after an international action plan has been approved?



John Aitchison  
Education specialist, South Africa

**Abstract** – *The Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) held in Belém, Brazil, in December 2009, adopted the Belém Framework for Action (UNESCO 2009b), to guide and revitalize Adult Education in the world. Among the follow-up activities have been regional meetings of Adult Education experts such as the one held in Cape Verde in late 2012 where African developments and examples of good practice were examined and an action plan to help put the Belém Framework for Action into operation were approved.*

*In the buildup to CONFINTEA VI, African participants at the Nairobi sub-Saharan Africa Conference had placed heavy stress on combining delivery to both youth and adults (UNESCO 2009a), and one of the studies reported on at Cape Verde was a five nation Youth and Adult Education study conducted in 2011 and 2012 in the following Southern Africa Development Community nations: Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, and Swaziland. The urgency of developing policies catering to youth was strongly reconfirmed by results from this study.*

Tell me this: What do Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, and Swaziland have in common?

If you answered that they are all located in Southern Africa you would be right. But only partly. These five countries were selected as research objects. The mission: to find out what had happened with the implementation of the Belém Framework for Action, which had been adopted at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI).

The research study was funded by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and supported by DVV International. The study was deliberately designed to map what had happened since CONFINTEA VI. The task: to generate usable popular reports on each country and a general synthesis report, including recommendations for ways forward as well as models and templates for data collection and analysis.

One or several researchers were identified in each country and supported by a local host NGO helping with practical arrangements. These researchers looked at the laws, policies and institutional frameworks governing the sector as well as funding sources. They also identified the key stakeholders and role-players. Their findings highlighted the failure of the education sector to address the needs of young people who end up with no skills and no prospects for the future. Two regional research meetings brought all the researchers (and host organisation representatives) together. Country verification and report



workshops were also held. In addition, a high-level roundtable meeting and report launch was held in August 2012.

This study focused on “Youth and Adult Education”. The definition included “all education and training (including non-formal education and informal learning) for adults and out-of school youth that is not part of the regular schooling, business, technical and training college and higher education system that children enter at about age 6 or 7 and exit from in their mid-teens to early twenties.” It is worth noting that the researchers argue for the use of internationally recognised standardised terminology as an aid in avoiding the narrow identification in much of Africa of “Adult Education” meaning only literacy and adult basic education, not to mention the confusing use of the term “non-formal education” for school equivalency education.

## “More than half of the children in southern Africa who enrol in grade one don’t make it to secondary school.”

### The shape of educational achievement

A starting point for the analysis of the situation of Youth and Adult Education in these countries was the acknowledgement that they all had a “shape of educational achievement” typical of poor developing countries. This shape includes a majority of the population only having primary education, a very limited group having secondary schooling and a tiny minority having post-school education.

Compare this to highly developed societies and you will find that there the majority of the population has either secondary or post-school education. Modern economies require people with at least secondary and, increasingly, post-school education and training. Thus modern economies have little scope for the employment of people with only primary or limited primary education. This leads to the vexing problem of the NEETs.

### The rise of the NEETs

More than half of the children in southern Africa who enrol in grade one don’t make it to secondary school. Many drop out before they even complete primary school and some do not even have the opportunity to enrol. Unemployment is high. The result is a large number of young people who are neither in education, employment nor training – and hence the new acronym now becoming current in the development and educational discourse – NEET. It stands for those “who are Not in Employment, Education or Training”. In Southern Africa (and indeed in most of sub-Saharan Africa) to be a NEET is the fate of most school-leavers. Recently a senior World Bank official working with Southern Africa, Dr Chunlin Zhang, warned

South Africa that the high number of young people not in employment, education or training had emerged as South Africa’s most urgent challenge (Creamer 2013). That some 70% of the nearly 5-million South Africans who are currently unemployed were youth he likened to a “bleeding”, which required decisive intervention to stem.

The situation in the five countries studied can be characterised as a “perfect storm” of low levels of general schooling (1.2 to 7.1 years on average and a looming problem of male under-education), many out-of-school children (1.5 million), high unemployment (21% to 60%), adult illiteracy (overall some 9.1 million adult illiterates, some 2.4 million of whom are youth), and nowhere for them to go for education and training. In particular, vocational education and training facilities are totally inadequate. For example in Namibia, with some 47,000 school-leavers a year, there are only 1,500 places in vocational education and training institutions. In Swaziland, with some 7,500 school-leavers and 6,500 school-dropouts each year there are only 1,000 places. With a bulging population of young people in every country, such a trend threatens the economic and political stability of the region.

The Adult Education alternatives available are few, quantitatively simply inadequate, and poorly funded. Formal schooling already takes a high proportion of national budgets. The policy frameworks for addressing this situation are generally weak, complex and unclear. Designed largely for illiterate adults, the non-formal sector fails to accommodate out-of-school youth and its curriculum often does not meet the needs of this generation.

### The data desert

The situation is made worse by a data desert – the dearth of hard information and data – and the lack of any real effort at a policy level to aggregate data to get a clearer view of the picture and magnitude of the problem. There is generally a poor capacity in (or prioritisation of) data collection, analysis, dissemination, maintenance and updating that leads to no data or out of date data. This weakens the capacity for evidence-based monitoring, evaluation and research. When research is done it is not capitalised on or updated. When it comes to analysing financial data and the cost effectiveness of interventions the situation becomes catastrophic. The data desert also means that aggregations of interpreted data into “big pictures” (that politicians and other decision-makers might understand) are seldom attempted.

There is a need for a standardisation of the data required from Youth and Adult Education providers and all providers should be encouraged to develop their own capacity to supply this information. Digitised, online libraries of reports, research, evaluations and other documentation are needed. There should be a strong commitment to share documentation and materials. A comprehensive, systematic regional web-based database on Adult Education provision and practice is needed. Governments

should work hand-in-hand with universities and other research-based institutes to strengthen or revive research capacity in the field. The research findings should also inform policy and practice.

**“Governments in southern Africa must urgently reform their education systems so that they respond better to the needs of illiterate adults and out-of-school youth and are more relevant to contemporary economic trends.”**

### Conclusions from the findings

The study's conclusions highlighted the urgent need to rethink policy around youth and adult learning and education. It is necessary to address the needs of the many youth not in education, employment or training. The challenges are not incidental temporary misfortunes – they are the result of systemic and endemic factors. They can only be altered by systemic changes.

Some of the systemic changes required are:

- the ending of the ongoing ambiguity on what Adult Education is. Is it only adult literacy and adult basic education/school equivalency “non-formal education”? What about vocational and life skills education?
- the ending of the broad and vague statements (by discordant actors) about Youth and Adult Education and the development of comprehensive and detailed policies (including the ratification of those that have existed, sometimes for decades, in unratified form) that are specific (and not tagged onto other policies).
- the coordination of Youth and Adult Education policies and effective fundraising for them.

The researchers argue that the main immediate challenges to be tackled are:

- the effective implementation of already existing education policies,
- appropriate coordination mechanisms,
- the recognition of Adult Education as an autonomous sector.

### Recommendations

Each of the country reports (Figueri and Inácio 2012; Jele 2012; Luis 2012a; Setoi 2012; Shaleyfu 2012) listed a set of recommendations which in the synthesis report (Aitchison 2012a) were summarised into a list of 45 (Aitchison 2012a: 32-36). What is particularly notable about these recommendations is that they are almost identical to those generated at Nairobi and Belém.

In essence they say that:

- Each country needs a comprehensive consolidated youth and Adult Education policy.
- There must be appropriate coordination mechanisms.
- Governments in southern Africa must urgently reform their education systems so that they respond better to the needs of illiterate adults and out-of-school youth and are more relevant to contemporary economic trends.

Whilst the congruence might be seen as some kind of achievement, its import could be more negative – we know what needs to be done and have known it for some time. “What is to be done?” is no longer the question. It is replaced by a double one: “How are we going to do it and when?”

### Changes are necessary – and they might be coming

The official launch of the report in Johannesburg was attended by ministers of education and over 50 national, regional and international experts. Mrs Graca Machel emphasised the need to rethink Youth and Adult Learning and Education:

“The demographics are changing dramatically in the region and the majority of our people are children and adolescents. These changes in demographics must inform our planning and resource allocation, but systems are not adapting to the new realities. Formal education, academic knowledge is not going to adequately prepare youth for the future.”

The regional launch was followed by launches in all five countries, which were also attended by high-level delegations from the ministries of education, including ministers – all of whom responded positively to the findings and recommendations of the study and agreed to use the study findings to inform their policy planning. Each country event developed its own “Ways forward” statement.

Following these launches, OSISA's Education Programme received a number of enquiries about the studies, especially as the recently launched 2012 UNESCO Global Monitoring Report on education focuses on youth skills and addresses the very issues that were raised in the OSISA study. The Southern Africa Development Community Education and Training Portfolio has requested support in developing a regional youth education and development

strategy, while the authorities in Malawi and Zimbabwe have expressed the need for similar studies to be conducted in their countries. In Angola, the government has responded by nominating a National Director for Adult Literacy for the first time, as well as making a budget allocation to the programme.

While the findings of the study have provoked much-needed reflection and debate about Youth and Adult Education by policy-makers, experts and funders at national and regional levels, it is clear that the road toward educating Southern Africa's out-of-school youth and adult population will be a long one. OSISA's study is a catalyst. Real progress now requires a concerted effort by civil society, governments, donors, the private sector and other actors. Together they must address this challenge and ensure that the NEETs are given the opportunity to contribute to socio-economic development instead of becoming a threat to economic growth and political stability.

This resonates with the key message from the Cape Verde meeting: it is necessary and urgent to clearly distinguish between the mere declaration of political will and the true manifestation of political will. True political will is translated into action and manifested by funds and implementation mechanisms. More than enough analyses of progress and gaps have been done – it is no longer a matter of the what to do but the how to do it. That requires operational strategies and recommendations. In practice this means the mobilisation of financial and material resources and inter-sectoral capacity building.

### About the Author

Emeritus Professor **John Aitchison** was Head of the School of Adult and Higher Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Prior to that he was head of the School of Education, Training and Development of the University of Natal. He was Director of the Centre for Adult Education on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal from 1981 to 1999 and has played a significant role in Adult Education policy development at both national and provincial levels.

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# Key Document

## 2009: Belém Framework for Action (excerpt)



### Preamble

**1** – We, the 144 Member States of UNESCO, representatives of civil society organizations, social partners, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental agencies and the private sector, have gathered in Belém do Pará in Brazil in December 2009 as participants in the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) to take stock of the progress made in adult learning and education since CONFINTEA V. Adult education is recognised as an essential element of the right to education, and we need to chart a new and urgent course of action to enable all young people and adults to exercise this right.

**2** – We reiterate the fundamental role of adult learning and education as laid down during the five International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA I–V) since 1949 and unanimously undertake to take forward, with a sense of urgency and at an accelerated pace, the agenda of adult learning and education.

**3** – We endorse the definition of adult education, first laid down in the *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education* adopted in Nairobi in 1976 and further developed in the Hamburg Declaration in 1997, namely, adult education denotes “the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society”.

**4** – We affirm that literacy is the most significant foundation upon which to build comprehensive, inclusive and integrated lifelong and life-wide learning for all young people and adults. Given the magnitude of the global literacy challenge, we deem it vital that we redouble our efforts to ensure that existing adult literacy goals and

priorities, as enshrined in Education for All (EFA), the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), are achieved by all means possible.

**5** – The education of young people and adults enables individuals, especially women, to cope with multiple social, economic and political crises, and climate change. Therefore, we recognise the key role of adult learning and education in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education for All (EFA) and the UN agenda for sustainable human, social, economic, cultural and environmental development, including gender equality (CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action).

**6** – We therefore adopt this Belém Framework for Action to guide us in harnessing the power and potential of adult learning and education for a viable future for all.

### Towards Lifelong Learning

**7** – The role of lifelong learning is critical in addressing global educational issues and challenges. Lifelong learning “from cradle to grave” is a philosophy, a conceptual framework and an organising principle of all forms of education, based on inclusive, emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values; it is all-encompassing and integral to the vision of a knowledge-based society. We reaffirm the four pillars of learning as recommended by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, namely learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together.

**8** – We recognise that adult learning and education represent a significant component of the lifelong learning process, which embraces a learning continuum ranging from formal to non-formal to informal learning.

Adult learning and education cater to the learning needs of young people, adults and older people. Adult learning and education cover a broad range of content – general issues, vocational matters, family literacy and family education, citizenship and many other areas besides – with priorities depending on the specific needs of individual countries.

**9** – We are convinced and inspired by the critical role of lifelong learning in addressing global and educational issues and challenges. It is furthermore our conviction that adult learning and education equip people with the necessary knowledge, capabilities, skills, competences and values to exercise and advance their rights and take control of their destinies. Adult learning and education



are also an imperative for the achievement of equity and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies.

## Recommendations

**10** – While we acknowledge our achievements and progress since CONFINTEA V, we are cognisant of the challenges with which we are still confronted. Recognising that the fulfilment of the right to education for adults and young people is conditioned by considerations of policy, governance, financing, participation, inclusion, equity and quality as outlined in the annexed *Statement of Evidence*, we are determined to pursue the following recommendations. The particular challenges faced by literacy lead us to place recommendations on adult literacy to the fore.

## Adult Literacy

**11** – Literacy is an indispensable foundation that enables young people and adults to engage in learning opportunities at all stages of the learning continuum. The right to literacy is an inherent part of the right to education. It is a prerequisite for the development of personal, social, economic and political empowerment. Literacy is an essential means of building people's capabilities to cope with the evolving challenges and complexities of life, culture, economy and society.

Given the persistence and scale of the literacy challenge, and the concomitant waste of human resources and potential, it is imperative that we redouble efforts to reduce illiteracy by 50 per cent from 2000 levels by 2015 (EFA Goal 4 and other international commitments), with the ultimate goal of preventing and breaking the cycle of low literacy and creating a fully literate world.

## Policy

**12** – Policies and legislative measures for adult education need to be comprehensive, inclusive and integrated within a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective, based on sector-wide and inter-sectoral approaches, covering and linking all components of learning and education.

## Governance

**13** – Good governance facilitates the implementation of adult learning and education policy in ways which are effective, transparent, accountable and equitable. Representation by and participation of all stakeholders are indispensable in order to guarantee responsiveness to the needs of all learners, in particular the most disadvantaged.

## Financing

**14** – Adult learning and education represent a valuable investment which brings social benefits by creating more democratic, peaceful, inclusive, productive, healthy and sustainable societies. Significant financial investment is essential to ensure the quality provision of adult learning and education.

## Participation, inclusion and equity

**15** – Inclusive education is fundamental to the achievement of human, social and economic development. Equipping all individuals to develop their potential contributes significantly to encouraging them to live together in harmony and with dignity. There can be no exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment. Combating the cumulative effects of multiple disadvantage is of particular importance. Measures should be taken to enhance motivation and access for all.

## Quality

**16** – Quality in learning and education is a holistic, multi-dimensional concept and practice that demands constant attention and continuous development. Fostering a culture of quality in adult learning requires relevant content and modes of delivery, learner-centred needs assessment, the acquisition of multiple competences and knowledge, the professionalisation of educators, the enrichment of learning environments and the empowerment of individuals and communities.

## Monitoring the implementation of the Belém Framework for Action

**17** – Drawing strength from our collective will to reinvigorate adult learning and education in our countries and internationally, we commit ourselves to the following accountability and monitoring measures. We acknowledge the need for valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative data to inform our policymaking in adult learning and education. Working with our partners to design and implement regular recording and tracking mechanisms at national and international levels is paramount in realising the *Belém Framework for Action*.

The whole document with all commitments concerning the recommendations 10 to 17 and the annex "Statement of Evidence" is available at <http://bit.ly/RFCvrs>

# *Rita Süßmuth*

## “Adult Education needs an independent global process”

*Interview*

**Interview** by Uwe Gartenschlaeger – DVV International

**Photography** by Ruth Sarrazin



*Professor Dr Rita Süßmuth is President of the German Adult Education Association. From 1987 to 2002 she was a member of the German Parliament. 1988 to 1998 she served as President of the German Parliament. In addition, she has been involved in many other fields, particularly in areas such as migration, integration*

*and demographic change. In 1997 she was Chairperson of the UNESCO Conference CONFINTEA V in Hamburg. We spoke with her about her assessment of the debates taking place currently around the globe, and the effects of the CONFINTEA process.*

**Professor Süßmuth, when you think back to CONFINTEA V in Hamburg in 1997, what were the most important results for you?**

A new world opened with the first ever inclusion of civil society representatives and NGOs to the UNESCO Conference on Adult Education, which previously had a government-only delegation format. The NGO representatives were a very dedicated, assertive and rebellious group. They brought important issues to the table that previously were paid less attention to, whether it was Education for All or formal and informal education. They significantly influenced the outcome of the conference. The negotiations were not always easy because of the heterogeneity of the participants and their partial lack of experience with such processes. However, the result has proven itself to be extremely stable.

The 10 thematic headings in the final statement – Agenda for the Future – represented a milestone in the development of global Adult Education [see page 27, Ed.]; many of them are still highly topical. For me, and I think I can speak for many of the former participants, we felt a new spirit of optimism at CONFINTEA V.

**CONFINTEA today: How do you assess the results of Belém and the importance of the process? Do we still need the CONFINTEA process?**

Let me put it very clearly: Adult Education needs an independent global process. Otherwise it is in danger of drowning in other contexts. We continue to require a global forum in which we can articulate achievements and non-achievements within important topics – just think of literacy or the question of the marginalised – and can discuss all the facets.

**2015 is going to be a crucial year. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA)-process are coming to an end and have to be renegotiated. How would you judge the debate so far?**

If we first ask ourselves what has been achieved, the result is a mixed picture: On the one hand, the importance of education for human development – that is my impression – is being increasingly recognised. The proportion of people who have access to education has increased. Compared to the beginning of the century, 50% fewer people are today excluded from education. But there are still many people excluded, particularly in the poorer countries. We must continue to ask: Who does not belong to the “for All” in “Education for All”? My impression is that the old exclusions are also the new exclusions. Take only the situation of people with disabilities, where still, in many cases, the old prejudice, leading many to think that it is “not worth training” these people, has a powerful effect though it was refuted long ago by brain research. Unfortunately, many of these exclusions affect even highly developed countries; I would like to remind you of the situation of the Roma in Europe. Considerable investment in teachers and their training is still required. We also need buildings, and we must work with parents at the local level in order to make progress.

I see opportunities in the post 2015 development agenda, but not a sufficient guarantee that our demands will be heard. Although I take a positive view of the breadth of the debates, I also see a danger in the developing structure of power relationships and alliances that care primarily about protecting resources and neglect the weak, and those people and regions affected by poverty. For education, that means a dominance of cost/benefit calculations that completely loses sight of our starting point: understand-



Uwe Gartenschlaeger and Professor Dr Rita Süßmuth during the interview



ing education as a fundamental human right. For example, there is now talk of needing “the best minds”, which is neither acceptable from a social nor a human rights perspective. There are no people who are inept from birth. Education has the task of supporting talents and opposing exclusion and defamation – as for example of older people.

#### **What are the key messages of Adult Education for the next decade?**

The first step is to try and do what we have not yet achieved, for example in the field of literacy and basic education.

Then we must make it clear that it is the goal of education to put people in a position individually, socially and professionally to lead an independent life and to practice Lifelong Learning. Lifelong Learning is still a stepchild in our society. Even in developed countries, it is not the rule that everybody practices Lifelong Learning, rather it is a very personal decision to learn lifelong. There is often a neglect to inform people about the fact that without continuing education they will not be able to maintain their position in society or to win it back. It cannot be surprising that many people find life in the accelerated development of a globalised world dangerous and overwhelming and therefore reject it.

The future is hard to predict, but one thing we know for sure: the more frequently and intensively people have the opportunity to discuss future opportunities and associated risks with each other and work out solutions, the lower the unsettling impact on their daily lives.

#### **Looking back: What relevance did the MDGs and EFA goals have?**

The clear objectives of the MDGs allowed a goal-oriented process and its continuous review. In this way, better control measures were made available, which is increasingly clearer as we move closer to 2015.

Based on the EFA process, the relevant focus is particularly on education for all as the starting point. It is still

vital that those who were previously marginalised obtain access to education. At the same time – and this is where the debate on Sustainable Development Goals is relevant – we must ask ourselves: “What do we want to live from in this world in the future?” We must communicate global goals for this and education must help us in providing solutions and achieving these goals.

#### **Back to Hamburg in 1997: What was the experience that impressed you the most?**

Surely the night of the negotiations in which we met until the early morning hours, before we finally agreed on the Agenda for the Future. For hours, the question remained open as to whether it would be possible to find a compromise which both NGO representatives and government delegations could agree with. It was done, and in the end all the participants left the conference hall with the feeling that the struggle was worthwhile.

#### **You have been President of the German Adult Education Association for 25 years. Why is Adult Education so close to your heart?**

Because Adult Education – rather, learning from the very first hour of life to the end of life – is, for me, a matter of concern and a challenge that we ultimately have to take seriously. As quickly as possible, Lifelong Learning, and that includes Adult Education, needs a legal classification in education and it needs adequate funding.

Education for All only makes sense in the context of Lifelong Learning and its yet pending implementation. It is a scandal that Adult Education is still not fully integrated into the education system.

**Professor Süßmuth, thank you for the interview.**



# Key Document

## 1997: The Agenda for the Future (excerpt)



**1** – This *Agenda for the Future* sets out in detail the new commitment to the development of adult learning called for by the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning.

**2** – The *Agenda* focuses on common concerns facing humanity on the eve of the twenty-first century and on the vital role that adult learning has to play in enabling women and men of all ages to face these most urgent challenges with knowledge, courage and creativity.

**3** – The development of adult learning requires partnership between government departments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, employers and trade unions, universities and research centres, the media, civil and community-level associations, facilitators of adult learning and the adult learners themselves.

**4** – Profound changes are taking place both globally and locally. They can be seen in a globalization of economic systems, in the rapid development of science and technology, in the age structure and mobility of populations, and in the emergence of an information-based and knowledge-based society. The world is also experiencing major changes in patterns of work and unemployment, a growing ecological crisis, and tensions between social groups based on culture, ethnicity, gender roles, religion and income. These trends are reflected in education, where those responsible for complex education systems are struggling to cope with new opportunities and demands, often with declining resources at their disposal.

**5** – In the course of the present decade, a series of conferences has focused world attention on key international problems. Beginning with the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990), they have included the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II, Istanbul, 1996) and the most recent, the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996). At all these conferences world leaders looked to education to release the competence and creativity of citizens. Education was seen as a vital element in a strategy to nurture the sustainable development processes.

**6** – There have been parallel changes in education as well. Since its foundation, UNESCO has played a pioneering role in the conception of adult education as an essential part of any education system and of human-centred development. There are now numerous agencies active in the field, many of which have taken part in the Hamburg conference.

**7** – The first International Conference on Adult Education (Elsinore, Denmark, 1949) was followed by conferences in Montreal (1960), Tokyo (1972) and Paris (1985). Other important milestones include the 1972 Report of the International Commission on the Development of Education chaired by Edgar Faure, *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, and the influential 1976 UNESCO Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education which set out the vital role of adult education ‘as forming part of lifelong education and learning’.

**8** – During the twelve years that have elapsed since the Paris Declaration, humanity has been affected by profound changes resulting from the processes of globalization and technological advance, together with a new international order, all of which have led to far-reaching transformations in the political, cultural and economic fields.

**9** – A quarter of a century after *Learning to Be*, the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors, said that, ‘The concept of learning throughout life is the key that gives access to the twenty-first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinctions between initial and continuing education. It links up with another concept, that of the learning society, in which everything affords an opportunity for learning and fulfilling one’s potential’. The Commission’s report, *Learning: The Treasure Within*, emphasized the importance of the four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. As indicated in the Hamburg Declaration, adult learning has grown in depth and scale, and has become an imperative at the workplace, in the home and in the community, as men and women struggle to create new realities at every stage of life. Adult education

plays an essential and distinct role in equipping women and men to respond productively to the constantly changing world and in providing learning which acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of the adult and the community.

**10** – In Hamburg the broad and complex spectrum of adult learning was considered under ten thematic headings:

- Adult learning and democracy: the challenges of the twenty-first century
- Improving the conditions and quality of adult learning
- Ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education
- Adult learning, gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women
- Adult learning and the changing world of work
- Adult learning in relation to environment, health and population
- Adult learning, culture, media and new information technologies
- Adult learning for all: the rights and aspirations of different groups
- The economics of adult learning
- Enhancing international co-operation and solidarity

The full version of the *Agenda for the Future* with all commitments related to the ten thematic headings is available under: <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/agendeng.htm>

# Shouldn't we be there by now?



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**Abstract** – *The Policy Advocacy Group (GIPE-IGEP), part of the Council of Popular Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL) has made a study of the major developments reported by the governments of the region on Youth and Adult Education.*

*The study reveals a number of findings that show the lack of action on the part of most governments in fulfilling their commitments. It also reports on the existence of laws on the subject as well as on the lack of plans and policies to adopt new commitments.*

*A further finding has to do with the limited opportunities for learning in indigenous languages, and a marked absence of work materials in these languages.*

It takes patience. A whole lot of patience. Change, if it comes, comes slowly. But how slowly? Let us have a look at how the commitments made during the UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education, CONFINTEA VI, have translated into policy and funding in Latin America. A recent study by The Interdisciplinary Group on Educational Policies (GIPE-IGEP<sup>1</sup>) presents a review of progress in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The report is based on the national reports submitted by 24 countries to the Regional Office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

The countries covered in the study are:

Argentina	Guatemala
Bahamas	Guyana
Barbados	Honduras
Belize	Jamaica
Bolivia	Mexico
Brazil	Panama
Chile	Paraguay
Colombia	Peru
Costa Rica	Dominican Republic
Cuba	Saint Vincent and Grenadines
Ecuador	Uruguay
El Salvador	

Nicaragua and Venezuela are not included.

The study tries to strike a balance between progress made and progress pending. The result is a picture of the current situation of Youth and Adult Education in the region. It warns about the major obstructions blocking access to Lifelong Learning.

The reference point for this analysis is the right to education, and in this case it refers especially to young people and adults traditionally excluded from formal learning opportunities and development.

## What the country reports tell us

### Finding 1

#### The concept of Youth and Adult Education is limited

Although we have generally accepted definitions offering a comprehensive and inclusive perspective of what education of young people and adults is, official reports often reduce the phenomenon to school processes. Not only that, it is furthermore reduced to processes of literacy and basic education. Thus, the 1990 Jomtien definition, which stated that education policies should aim to meet the “basic” needs of learning, is lost. Without doubt, “the basics” of Jomtien were to be understood as the set of capabilities that allow people to become individuals, not just “cognitive needs” reduced to language and mathematical computation. This narrow reading manifested itself in all the educational reforms of the 90s of the last century. Such a restricted view has led to reduced resources for Youth and Adult Education and to lowering the goals of what has to be achieved. Rather than institutionalising Youth and Adult Education we see that it has been separated from the requirements and needs of communities and countries. In its place, didactics and methodologies have been institutionalised.

### Finding 2

#### The problem is not in the laws

Of the 24 countries that submitted reports, only one (Barbados) has no legislation or policies that relate specifically to Adult Education and literacy. This means that the vast majority have formal provisions that explicitly support processes specifically aimed at this segment of the population.

Having laws, ordinances or policies does not ensure that public action is directed towards the relevant segment of the population efficiently and in the form indicated. But it is an element of formal order that allows the execution of processes and can also be a manifestation of the political will to provide systematic education to the adult population.

In most cases it is ordinary legislation which supports this commitment and entitles the respective public entities to develop programmes as needed.

Since legal frameworks already recognise the importance of the state offering Youth and Adult Education services, it is necessary that they make an about-face or be subject to reinvention. This is the only solution for the education systems to be guided by the paradigm of Adult Education/Lifelong Learning as an attribute of democracy and a universal human right.

### Finding 3

#### The majority of programmes have no specific targets

An analysis of the various official reports shows that half of the countries developed programmes directed at literacy and education of young people and adults without these being aimed primarily at specific groups in the population. Generally, these countries only identify the target groups as “vulnerable people.”

For the other half of the countries, which report on a specific target group, groups mentioned are: indigenous people, women, youth, peasants, and descendants of Africans in the following percentages:

- Indigenous: 30%
- Women: 26%
- Youth: 17%
- Peasants: 17%
- Afro descendants: 9%
- Other: 1%

### Finding 4

#### Local languages are not on offer and there is no policy on the language of instruction for adults

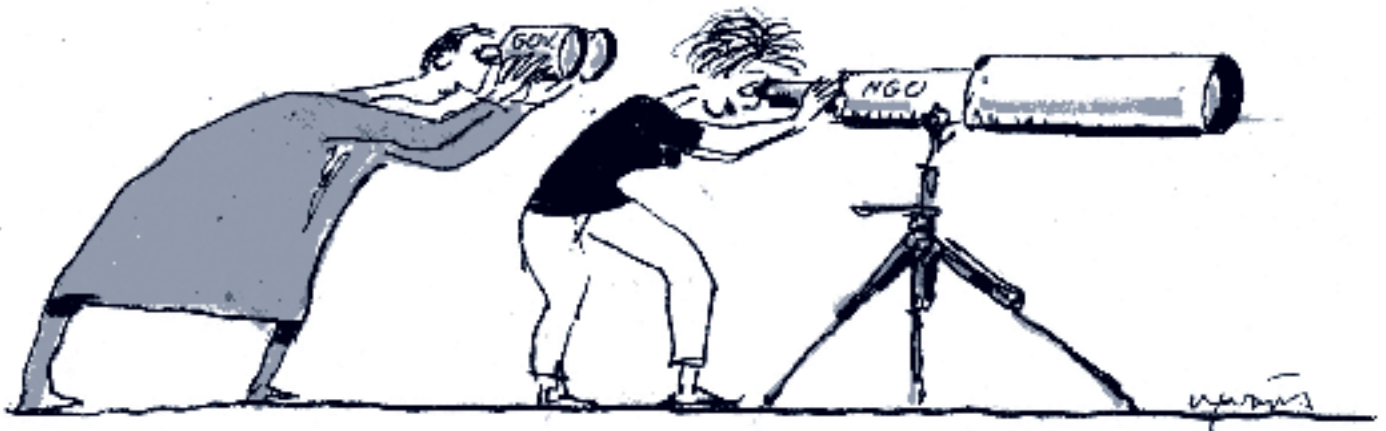
Most of the countries do not implement literacy processes in the languages of the respective indigenous peoples and cultures. Only 11 of the 24 existing reports (46%) recognise the development of literacy processes in languages other than the official and national languages in use.

Considering that the communities in which the phenomenon of illiteracy is usually more prevalent are typically the rural and indigenous communities speaking languages different from the national language, we have a problem when less than half of the countries in the region report the development of literacy processes in the languages of the indigenous people.

This is a very important factor, since literacy is not only the formal process of the acquisition of certain skills; more than that, it actually proposes a way to place people into various settings and situations in which they can develop as individuals, as a citizen and as an actor in the development of their community and their country.

As if this is not bad enough, we find that less than a third of the countries in the region have reported literacy materials in indigenous languages. This means that several countries report literacy processes in indigenous languages





but use materials in national languages or simply do not use any materials. This is a contradiction that has a great impact on the quality of the processes carried out in the field.

Although the use of one or more languages is a key aspect of any educational process, and although one of the main features of the region is multicultural and multi-lingual presence, not all countries have a defined policy regarding the language or languages of instruction.

**Finding 5**  
**Less than half of the countries have formulated or updated action plans after CONFINTEA VI**

Only 11 of the 24 countries reported having made new plans or reformulations after the CONFINTEA VI conference (December 2009). More than three years have elapsed since the conference held in Belem, Brazil, and more than half of the countries in the region have not changed or updated their plans.

This demonstrates the absolute irrelevance of the commitments and international monitoring mechanisms undertaken by UNESCO and the whole international community. This aspect is highly illustrative of the lack of interest and involvement that many governments and public institutions have repeatedly been accused of when governments have made commitments that subsequently fail to be implemented.

Countries reported undertaking various activities as a result of CONFINTEA VI, but these are usually actions of a more complementary nature and not substantial.

The actions most reported are (from most to least mentioned):

- Conferences, forums and other actions;
- Publications;
- Media campaigns;
- Creating committees to include learners;
- Learning festivals;
- Development of a financing plan;
- Development of a roadmap;
- Translation of the Dakar Framework for Action.

Not even half of the countries have reported these actions and it is clear that there are no official announcements from governments to work on or develop new Youth and Adult Education policies.

## **Finding 6**

### **In most cases the learners have not participated in the discussion of national plans**

A total of 14 of the 24 countries indicate that learners in the literacy processes and in Adult Education have not participated in the discussion of policies and plans that are available to them. This factor reflects a top-down concept in the management of public policy and the traditional lack of mechanisms for social participation.

Some countries reported involvement of the learners, for example:

- Peru reported the carrying out of a “public consultation” from which policies and plans are formulated.
- Paraguay reported conducting “people’s roundtables” through which they have achieved broad participation.
- Guyana reports having carried out “public consultations”.
- El Salvador indicates that it is implementing a process of Education Policy for Youth and Adults in which representatives of the learners are participating.
- Brazil indicates it is holding “municipal and inter-municipal conferences” in which the learners have been involved, as well as participating in forums that are created for that purpose.
- Bolivia reports the carrying out of “social summits, meetings and workshops.”

## **Finding 7**

### **Technology has come to the literacy processes and education of young people and adults**

Two thirds of the countries in the region have incorporated the use of technology as part of the learning processes in literacy and/or Adult Education. This is a factor that can influence the shape and quality of the learning process and has been gaining ground in these areas.

The countries not using new technology are:

- Brazil
- Belize
- El Salvador
- Guyana
- Honduras
- Paraguay
- San Vicente
- Surinam

It is necessary to look relatively at the use of technology, particularly because this is no more than a medium that can (but does not always) facilitate learning processes. The mere presence of technological resources in the educational

environment does not guarantee anything. Technology must be accompanied by methodological strategies for it to have an effect on the processes and on the final results.

In fact, the primary obstacle to the use of the technology is related to the physical arrangement and connectivity needed. When technology is available, it is necessary to monitor its use.

## **Finding 8**

### **The various emphases on literacy**

Traditionally, literacy processes have been accompanied by complementary aspects. These are very diverse but are usually accompanied by aspects of training and capacity-building in other areas that are traditionally used to capture the interest of the learners and to strengthen literacy permanence.

According to the reports filed, the component mentioned most is technical training related to income generation, which allows participants to solve two problems simultaneously.

In second place are processes which generally can be perceived as developing “life skills” and, in third place, the use of communication and information technologies is mentioned.

## **Finding 9**

### **Multiplicity of institutions involved**

The reports generally state that the steering processes are run by public entities, while there are many non-governmental entities in the implementation.

Although the information provided by official reports is very general and disparate, it may indicate that in all cases the presence of the state is manifested through various entities. In the vast majority of cases it involves the ministries or departments of education at the forefront, except in the case of Guatemala where there is a multi-sector state guiding entity for the country.

In all cases there is the presence and coordination of other state ministries and in some cases specific institutions that relate broadly to Youth and Adult Education. Civil society presence is constant in all cases.

## **So, what do the findings tell us?**

Progress in the region has been extremely slow and limited. It is telling that less than half of the countries have formulated (or reformulated) existing plans after the CONFINTEA VI Conference. This can only be interpreted as a lack of prioritisation of commitments on Youth and Adult Education.

With these poor results in the region, it becomes more urgent to modify, strengthen, reshape, correct or simply to design action plans that get the process back on track. But the opposite has happened; many countries have done nothing, despite discovering that their efforts are not on the right path.

Why are they doing nothing? It's simple. We lack laws and/or formal rules, laws which generally offer an acceptable framework for the development of Youth and Adult Education.

It is important to consider what roles other stakeholders are playing, particularly civil society, the private sector and others. While official reports give little account of this aspect, it is clear that a great diversity of non-governmental organisations are participating in the implementation process. This effort has been important over time and has been consolidated.

The question not answered in these official reports is whether the participation of these non-governmental actors is influencing policy decisions or if the participation is limited to implementation and governed by public institutions.

#### Note

1 / For more information, please see <http://bit.ly/1amMNZ2>

#### Reference

The complete reports are available at <http://tinyurl.com/oujxdph>

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#### About the Author

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# Learning for All: The World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020



Elizabeth King  
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**Abstract** – *Education is one of the most important drivers for ending poverty and boosting shared prosperity. Since 1990, the number of out-of-school children around the world has been halved. Yet 61 million children today are not in school – and too many young people are finishing school without the knowledge and skills required for productive employment in a 21<sup>st</sup> century labour market.*

*The ten-year World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020 focuses on Learning for All by emphasising the need to:*

- *Invest early because the ability to learn throughout life is best acquired in early childhood.*
- *Invest smartly because national, family and donor resources are limited and must yield results.*
- *Invest for all because a nation can prosper only when all students – including girls and disadvantaged groups – can learn.*

Education is one of the most important drivers for ending poverty and boosting shared prosperity. Since 1990, targeted actions by a number of countries and their development partners have helped reduce by half the number of out-of-school children around the world. Yet 61 million children today are not in school – and there is abundant evidence that learning outcomes in many developing countries are alarmingly low, especially among disadvantaged populations. Because growth, development, and poverty reduction depend on the knowledge and skills that people acquire, not the number of years that they sit in a classroom, we must transform our call to action from Education for All to Learning for All. Learning for All means ensuring that all children and youth – not just the most privileged or most clever – not only can go to school but can acquire the knowledge and skills they need to lead healthy and productive lives, secure meaningful jobs, and contribute to society. Learning for All is exactly what the ten-year World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020 (World Bank Group 2011) emphasises:

- Invest early because the ability to learn throughout life is best acquired in early childhood.
- Invest smartly because national, family and donor resources are limited and must yield results.
- Invest for all because a nation can prosper only when all students – including girls and disadvantaged groups – can learn.



Students of the Government Najeeb Memorial Girls High School in Gujranwala, Pakistan

In 2010, the World Bank Group embarked on a year-long, comprehensive process of global consultations and technical work to shape the Bank's Education Strategy 2020. From Argentina to Mongolia, extensive consultations were held with stakeholders from more than 100 countries. In these conversations, representatives of governments, development partners, students, teachers, researchers, civil society, and business shared their views about the emerging education challenges facing developing countries and how the Bank can best support countries to expand both education access and quality.

#### What did we learn from this process?

First, foundational skills acquired early in childhood make possible a lifetime of learning. The traditional view of education as starting in primary school takes up the challenge too late. The science of brain development shows that learning needs to be encouraged early and often, both inside and outside of the formal schooling system. Prenatal health and early childhood development programmes that include education and health are consequently important to realise this potential. In the primary years, quality teaching is essential to give students the foundational literacy and numeracy on which Lifelong Learning depends. Adolescence is also a period of high potential for learning, but many teenagers leave school at this point, lured by the prospect of a job, the need to help their families, or turned away by

the cost of schooling. For those who drop out too early, second-chance and non-formal learning opportunities are essential to ensure that all youth can acquire skills for the labour market.

Second, getting results requires smart investments – that is, investments that prioritise and monitor learning, beyond traditional metrics, such as the number of teachers trained or number of students enrolled. Quality needs to be the focus of education investments, with learning gains as the key metric of quality. Resources are too limited and the challenges too big to be designing policies and programmes in the dark. We need evidence on what works in order to invest smartly.

Third, learning for all means ensuring that all students, and not just the most privileged or gifted, acquire the knowledge and skills that they need. Major challenges of access remain for disadvantaged populations at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. We must lower the barriers that keep girls, children with disabilities, and ethnolinguistic minorities from attaining as much education as other population groups. Learning for All promotes the equity goals that underlie Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Without confronting equity issues, it will be impossible to achieve the objective of Learning for All.



## Seeing Results

Since we launched our global education strategy in April 2011, World Bank-supported programmes have:

- *Helped countries accelerate progress toward the Millennium Development Goals for universal primary education.* Over the past two years, the Bank has provided more than \$2.7 billion in financing from the International Development Association (IDA) for basic education in the poorest countries. We are working closely with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) – the Bank supervises the implementation of most GPE grants, and has provided IDA co-financing in a number of countries.
- *Reduced inequality in education.* Some examples include enabling private-public partnerships to expand access and quality of education for low-income children in Pakistan; providing stipends for girls to go to school in Bangladesh; and job training programmes for young women in Ethiopia and Jordan.
- *Improved the quality of service delivery.* The Bank is supporting performance grants to secondary schools based on test scores and teacher attendance in Nigeria; school grants based on achievement of school plans in Indonesia; expansion of training in priority occupations aligned with employer demands in Rwanda; and is helping a number of countries like Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Zambia, Armenia, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Vietnam build regulatory and quality-assurance frameworks to strengthen their student assessment systems.
- *Generated new evidence to improve learning outcomes.* Through our Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)<sup>1</sup>, the Bank is building a comparable, world-wide database on education policies and institutions so countries can assess and benchmark themselves in key policy areas such as teacher policies, student assessments, school management, and workforce development. The Bank is also building a unique provider-level database on the quality of service delivery in African countries.

## Expanding Students' Horizons

Our strategy stretches to 2020, but who knows what the world will look like seven years from now?

We must prepare our youth today for the world we hope to realise: A world in which people can escape the bonds of deprivation and disadvantage to become their own agents for development and prosperity. To get there, we know that investments in education must focus not just on inputs like new classrooms, teacher training, textbooks, and computers, but also on all the policies, incentives, and financing that make education systems work.

To ensure that developing countries can be competitive in today's global marketplace, we must equip the next generation with the essential cognitive skills and the skills for critical thinking, teamwork, and innovation. Knowledge and skills can expand the horizons of our youth and enable them to take advantage of emerging opportunities. We must also measure what students learn, and hold governments and educators accountable if they don't.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> / Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). Available at <http://bit.ly/12cM1IV>

### References

**World Bank Group (2011):** World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020: Learning for All: Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development. Available at <http://bit.ly/hTiJbA>

For more details on the progress of the World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020, please visit: <http://bit.ly/fSCTtF>



### About the Author

Dr **Elizabeth King** is Director of Education in the Human Development Network of the World Bank. In this position, she is the World Bank's senior spokesperson for global policy and strategic education issues in developing countries. Until January 2009, she was a manager in the Bank's research department, heading the team that focuses on human development issues. She has published on topics such as household investments in human capital; the linkages between education, poverty and economic development; gender issues in development, especially women's education; education finance, and the impact of decentralisation reforms.

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# Story of my life

Part I



## Roshan

Kabul, Afghanistan

### What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?

I had to undergo lots of difficulties to study and learn because I was so old. I couldn't link the letters together easily. Fortunately, I have moved beyond all the problems and now I can link the letters, read the words and even write sentences and paragraphs.

### Why did you want to learn?

I wished to learn to write and read and to be able to solve problems myself. After a long hard struggle, I attained my hopes and desires. I hope I can help myself and the children and illiterate people in the community so that they can have a brighter future.

### What has it meant for you? How has your life changed?

My life has changed a lot through studying and learning. I was an illiterate person who couldn't even write my own name. But now I can be a good teacher for my children and other illiterates. I can also gain admission to class nine in school. I can find addresses very easily and now I don't need to ask someone else for directions. I can also read the advertisement boards and signs as well.

### What would you like to say to other adults who cannot read and write?

As an Afghan woman and as an elderly woman who was deprived of reading and writing, my message to all those who are illiterate is: Learning doesn't stop when you are old. As our great Prophet said: *Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave*. I urge all women who – for whatever reason – are illiterate to continue their learning and to be at the service of their family and community.

### At what age did you learn to read and write?

I am Roshan. I started to learn reading and writing when I was 60 years old. When a literate learning centre was established near our house, I and some other ladies from our region went there and found the lessons very educational and useful. My enthusiasm and interest led me to ask permission from my family, after which I was admitted to the course. I am very happy that I learned reading and writing within nine months.

### Why did you not learn as a child?

I didn't learn when I was a child because my father and mother were illiterate and their prejudice blocked me. But now I have the opportunity and I like to study and want to be able to get education until the last day of my life.



## *Antonio*

Paranoá, Brazil

### **At what age did you learn to read and write?**

I was 28 years old when I learned to read and write.

### **Why did you not learn as a child?**

I lived in a town called Granja, in the countryside of the State of Ceará. It was subsistence farming land. I had to work to help my parents on the land. It was our living working the land. My father didn't let us study because we had to help on the farm. Everything was very difficult there and studying wasn't just for anyone. The school was also a long way from where we lived.

### **What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?**

Maths! I find numbers complicated and I still get mixed up with some numbers. I know how much things cost, but understanding numbers is very difficult. I still get some numbers wrong.

### **Why did you want to learn?**

Because I would have more knowhow to get to places without having to depend on other people. I wanted to be able to get around without having to ask people for information. Without always having to ask for help whenever I go anywhere. When we depend on other people it is always very hard. With this reading business, they don't always tell you what is really written and then we don't understand properly and end up getting lost.

### **What has it meant for you?**

#### **How has your life changed?**

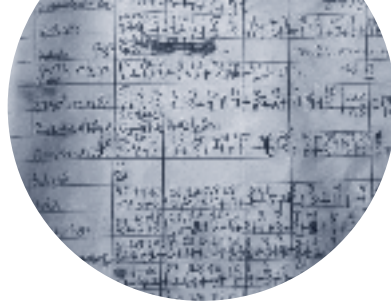
My life has changed a lot. I can now get around on my own. I can catch a bus and read some things. Everything has become easier and I don't get lost like I used to before. Neither do I have to keep asking for information the whole time. It's like everything has changed for the better. My eyes have opened! I am still learning and I have much to learn but I am already much better off with what I have learnt. I am stronger.

#### **What would you like to say to other adults who cannot read and write?**

I would tell them to go to school because studying is great. I have already received a lot of wrong information, I have already caught a load of wrong buses and now I am studying and getting better and better. I would tell them that they have to come and study. It is our opportunity to make a better life, to escape from the darkness of those who don't know.

## Bosena

Ethiopia



### At what age did you learn to read and write?

I started to read and write two years ago at the age of 44. I am now 46 years old.

### Why did you not learn as a child?

I grew up in the countryside where girls' education was not considered important by parents and by the society at large. My parents didn't want to send me to school because they had a very poor attitude towards girls' education. While they were preparing to give me away in marriage, I escaped and started to live with my aunt in a little town called Dangila. She earned her income from daily labour. I escaped because I hoped to go to school and be an educated person. Soon after, my aunt and I went to Humera (a place with a very big government cotton farm) to look for a job. It is there I got married and started to have children. Twenty years ago, we moved to Addis Ababa because my husband got a transfer. I never had a chance to go to school. I was busy with raising children and doing the housework. So many years had passed and I had lost hope of getting an education.

### What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?

Obviously, learning is difficult with so many responsibilities and house chores. Especially in the beginning, I was not that interested. I often forgot what I learnt. Arithmetic is also challenging, especially when it comes to subtraction. I still have challenges in doing subtractions in my business transactions and retrieving missed calls from my phone number.

### Why did you want to learn?

I knew I had problems. I was afraid and lacked confidence in interacting with people. I knew only some places in the neighbourhood, the church and the market. I did not know many places because I had a fear of getting lost and most of the time I preferred to stay home. I had left education to my children. Two years ago I was encouraged by my neighbour to participate in the Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme (IWEP), implemented by DVV International in Ethiopia. I was almost laughing at her and telling her not to spend her precious time on such nonsense. She kept telling me that by learning we can improve our way of life. Day by day, she was convincing me and so I started to participate in the programme. After some time, I certainly became aware that the program would improve my life.

### What has it meant for you? How has your life changed?

Participating in the literacy program opened new opportunities in my life. Now, I can read and write. I have no fear to communicate with people. I know the bus numbers now if I need to go to the hospital, kebele (municipal office) or others places. I can read the directions and office numbers. I am able to read, fill forms and sign what I read. I am confident enough that I will not be lost. I can use my mobile phone. My sons helped me to learn how to save and retrieve numbers. I can call relatives and friends without any problem.

I have developed a saving attitude. I have also got business skills and I bake bread and 'injera' (Ethiopian flat-bread) at home for sale. I earn some profit while I am at home. I have a monthly savings of no less than ETB 300 and I have a vision to open up a shop in the compound where I live now. In addition, I take part in a group savings plan in which we have already bought a milk cow. Now I do not bother my husband for each and every expense. I have my own income which I can spend when necessary and I can support my family.

Arithmetic was challenging. However, I tried hard and I found it very useful, especially in my income-generating activities. I use my literacy skills to register dates, names, and the number of 'injera' and bread customers bought to collect the amount at the end. I can imagine how I would be in trouble if I were not able to register credit customers.

### What would you like to say to other adults who cannot read and write?

I have a strong message to you women like me. Wake up! You should escape from illiteracy. You should take advantage of literacy programs. In addition to all the other benefits, isn't it nice to be able to move freely and to perform your activities by yourself?!



# The world needs a clear target on Lifelong Learning for All for another world to be possible



Alan Tuckett  
ICAE, United Kingdom

**Abstract** – *This edition of Adult Education and Development marks a new beginning, and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is delighted to be a partner with DVV International in presenting this set of essays and reflections on the issues under debate and discussion as new goals, targets and indicators are worked on for the period 2015–2030. In this piece I offer a short review of ICAE’s work to date in seeking to influence the post 2015 global development targets, and review issues that need attention over the next year, as the UN system shapes its final proposals for overall goals, and a parallel process is developed for Education for All (EFA) beyond 2015.*

## The story to date

Ever since the eighth World Assembly of ICAE in Malmö in 2011 we have followed three key threads of the process which will lead to the adoption of new global development targets for the period 2015-2030. The first strand focused on the world Earth Summit conference in Rio in 2012. At this conference UN member states made the commitment to create Sustainable Development Goals, and commissioned 30 countries to lead an Open Working Group to report in 2014. Adult educators had only modest success at the summit in Rio in securing two discrete mentions of the Lifelong Learning agenda in the formal agreement of the conference, but ICAE made an effective alliance with other education civil society organisations, and led the preparation of a civil society policy paper on education for the world we want.

The second strand of our work was the Education For All process – which monitors progress on the range of education goals adopted at Jomtien in 1990 and confirmed in Dakar in 2000. Three of the EFA goals have a direct bearing on our interests. Target 4 makes a commitment to gender equality – but has in practice been focused overwhelmingly on access to schooling for girls. Target 2 commits to expanding learning opportunities for young people and adults – and whilst the EFA Monitoring Report in 2013 reported on skills for youth, no attempt at all has been made to monitor wider adult learning provision. Target 3 promised a 50% reduction in the numbers of adults without literacy skills – but in 23 years there has been an

improvement in the literacy rate overall of just 12%, and numbers (just short of 780 million) are broadly static given the expansion of the world's population. No improvement has been achieved in the proportion of women without literacy – still 64% of the total number.

ICAE and its partners have been relatively successful in influencing the EFA agenda, through the Consultative Committee of NGOs, the EFA steering committee, and the Dakar Consultation on Education, held in March 2013, which adopted an overall goal of “Lifelong Education and Quality Learning for All”. All well and good – but the summary of the Dakar event still managed to omit any mention of adults.

The third process has been the work in considering what should follow the Millennium Goals. This has had a bewildering range of threads, co-ordinated by the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel (HLP), and we have found it difficult at times to see how best to contribute. The Panel reported at the end of May 2013.

The report, *A New Global Partnership*, is in some ways more positive than I had feared, but it also contains major and disturbing omissions, and clarifies areas where we need to redouble our advocacy. It provides, though, one clear context for our immediate discussions, and in my view highlights some key challenges the adult learning movement needs to address.

The report bases its recommendations on global goals on an analysis that five “big, transformative shifts” in priority are needed for a sustainable future in which poverty can be eradicated. These are:

1. “Leave no one behind” – income, gender, disability and geography must not be allowed to determine if people live or die, or their opportunities. Targets are only to be achieved when they impact equally for marginalised and excluded groups.
2. “Put sustainable development at the core” – the report argues that it should shape actions by governments and businesses alike. There is little, though, securing sustainable ways of living.
3. “Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth” – jobs are what help people to escape poverty but people need “education, training and skills” to be successful in the job market. There is, though, nothing on the need to strengthen the skills of people working in the informal economy – though these are the overwhelming majority in sub-Saharan Africa and in India.
4. “Build peace and effective, open and accountable public institutions” – the report argues that freedom from conflict and violence are essential foundations for effective development, and that “a voice in the decisions that affect (people's) lives are development outcomes as well as enablers.”
5. “Forge a new global partnership” – including a key role for civil society.

A new global partnership then offers, for illustrative purposes twelve universal goals, each with between four and

six sub-goals, to be accompanied by targets set nationally, and indicators that can be disaggregated to see the impact on marginalised groups. The targets are ambitious, wide-ranging, and as the report argues, interrelated:

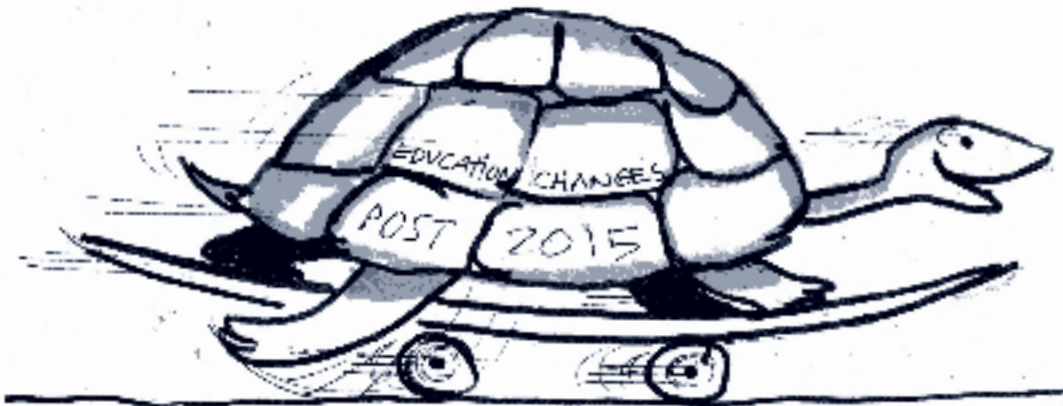
1. end poverty;
2. empower women and girls and achieve gender equality;
3. provide quality education and lifelong learning;
4. ensure healthy lives;
5. ensure food security and good nutrition;
6. achieve universal access to water and sanitation;
7. secure sustainable energy;
8. create jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth;
9. manage natural resource assets sustainably;
10. ensure good governance and effective institutions;
11. ensure stable and peaceful societies
12. create a global enabling environment and catalyse long-term finance.

It is an impressive list, weakened by little clarity about how everything is to be paid for, but adult educators will recognise that few, if any of these goals can be achieved without adults learning – understanding, adapting to and shaping the changes that are needed. But it is perhaps no surprise that this is not a central conclusion of the report.

Nevertheless, there are things to welcome. First, the reassertion of human rights as the basis for development, and the determination that new targets should focus on ensuring that “no-one gets left behind”. The key proposal that no targets can be met unless they are achieved for each quintile (20%) of the income distribution, and that they are achieved for women, for disabled adults, for migrants, and for others previously excluded is reiterated through *A new global partnership*. The report recognises that for this to happen, there needs to be major investment in improving data, which can be disaggregated to provide accurate information on how effectively marginalised and excluded groups are reached. Improved household surveys, including questions about participation in learning would go a long way to assist adult educators in monitoring the success of programmes in meeting the needs of under-represented groups.

A second benefit is that the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals processes are brought together. It argues, like the Earth Summit that anti-poverty and sustainable development goals must be developed hand in hand. It recognises, too, that the 12 goals identified are interrelated.

At first glance, the recommended goal for education looks positive, too. The third goal, to “provide quality education and Lifelong Learning” – at least includes Lifelong Learning on the agenda. Yet it differs from the Dakar education thematic conference in omitting any commitment to make provision “for all”. And when we look at the detailed targets we find that the one covering youth and adults is to “increase the number of young and adult women and



men with the skills, including technical and vocational needed for work”.

This formulation of a Lifelong Learning goal – as yet only illustrative – fails to meet the challenge the High Level Panel set in their overview. They say: “Education can help us reach many goals, by raising awareness and thus leading to mass movements for recycling and renewable energy, or a demand for better governance and an end to corruption. The goals chosen should be ones that amplify each other’s impact and generate sustainable growth and poverty reduction together.”

Again, reporting on what young people told the panel, they note that what is wanted is “for education beyond primary schooling, not just formal learning but life skills and vocational training to prepare them for jobs ... they want to be able to make informed decisions about their health and bodies, to fully realise their sexual and reproductive health and rights. They want access to information and technology so that they can participate in their nation’s public life, especially charting its economic development. They want to be able to hold those in charge to account, to have the right to freedom of speech and association and to monitor where their government’s money is going.”

The proposed goal addresses hardly any of that agenda. Nor does it address the challenge identified in goal 2: “Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality”. There the Panel notes: “A woman who receives more years of schooling is more likely to make decisions about immunisation and nutrition that will improve her child’s chance in life; indeed more schooling for girls and women between 1970 and 2009 saved the lives of 4.2 million children.”

The report fails to mention adult literacy as an issue at all. Nor does it recognise that for all those currently excluded, or who missed out on quality education in the

past, the right to a first or second chance education for adults – lifewide as well as vocational – is essential if no one is to be left behind.

#### What next?

For me, a key challenge from all the work so far is how to find a better voice for adult learning and education in the education community itself. We need to ensure that the energies of our colleagues in the wider educational community understand enough, and are convinced to include the case for adult learning and education (ALE), which is rights-based, and includes the right to literacy, vocational, democratic and civic education, education for well-being; for sustainable lives, that is alive to arts and culture, intergenerational learning, and respects diversity and difference. That was, of course, the essential vision of the UNESCO World Conferences on Adult Education CONFITEA V and VI, but it is not yet a vision colleagues working in schools and universities automatically include in their advocacy. Adults, like children, need quality education from properly trained teachers. Children do better in school when their mothers learn. Early childhood education works better when families are engaged. We need to be better at stressing our common and interrelated goals, but also at explaining our own clear priorities.

Related to this, we have a major task in helping the wider development community to understand better the role education of adults has in securing other goals for overcoming poverty and securing a better quality of life. An early task for us is to enumerate for each of the 12 universal goals proposed in the High Level Panel report just how adult learning makes a difference, backed ideally by hard evidence – of the kind the Wider Benefits of Learning Research Centre in the University of London’s

Institute of Education pioneered, and OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) has taken up. It will be important not to over-claim, but work in building that case would be a constructive use of the virtual seminar ICAE will run with DVV International following the publication of the journal. *[To join the discussion, please see page 44 for more details, Ed.]*

Of course, the most important task of all, in my view, is to frame concrete proposals for a clear and easy to understand Lifelong Learning target, and to articulate the indicators that can be measured. Mine would include just a modest change to the High Level Panel report goal adding “for all” to the current formulation – to read “provide quality education and Lifelong Learning for all”. This will then inevitably involve recognition that Lifelong Learning covers formal, non-formal and informal learning.

My three indicators would start with adult literacy. It is a fundamental right – and we should secure universal literacy by 2030, with the number of adults without literacy halved in every country by 2020, and halved again five years later, with an immediate priority given to eradicating the gender gap in access to literacy.

Given that the new targets are to cover the industrialised as well as developing world, it also needs to recognise that literacy skills are context specific, and the millions with poor literacy skills should be identified, and their numbers reduced.

ICAE, like DVV International has a commitment to decent learning for decent work. Access to fit for purpose education should be accessible to people working in the formal and informal economy, and the participation gap between the numbers reached in the most affluent quintile of a country’s population, and those in the least affluent 20 percent should narrow with each five-year measurement of progress.

Thirdly, education for democratic engagement needs to be a priority. But since that is so hard to measure, and since the power of learning to leak from one domain to another is so strong, I would settle for an overall participation target – measured by household surveys, and with data disaggregated by all the groups highlighted in the HLP report. Then the indicator would again seek to secure a reduction in under-representation by marginalised groups.

I have concentrated here on the High Level Panel report, since it is the first attempt to bring the full range of issues together. But the parallel work of the Secretary General’s Open Working Group on sustainable development targets will, doubtless, shift the debate again in different directions, and we must be ready to argue the case for education for sustainability to include the themes discussed here. And then there will be a parallel process to identify Education for All targets for the world after 2015. There is, without doubt, a great deal to do. But the vision of a learning society where everyone can learn to know, to do, to be and to live together, laid out in the Delors report in 1996 has yet to be achieved, and it is well worth working for.

## Reference

**High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (May 2013):** A New Global Partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development. The Report of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Available at <http://bit.ly/1aF1nGJ>

i

### About the Author

Professor Dr **Alan Tuckett** was elected President of the International Council for Adult Education in 2011, just as he retired as CEO of NIACE, the national NGO in England and Wales representing the interests of adult learners and teachers. Alan was at NIACE from 1988, and among his achievements there was starting Adult Learners’ Week, which was adopted by UNESCO and spread to 55 countries. Earlier in his career he helped to start the adult literacy campaign in the UK. He is a visiting professor at the universities of Nottingham and Leicester, and will teach this year at Julius-Maximilians-University in Wuerzburg, Germany.

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# Get Involved! ICAE Virtual Seminar

Following this issue of *Adult Education and Development*, our cooperation partner, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is offering you the chance to discuss the question of what should be done after the end of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 in a virtual seminar.

**The seminar is free of charge and open to anyone. Do you want to participate? Send an e-mail to:**

[icae3@icae.org.uy](mailto:icae3@icae.org.uy)

Registration is open now and until the beginning of the seminar. The seminar will start in the first week of February 2014 and last for approximately two weeks.

The virtual seminar runs via e-mail. The articles will be sent to all participants in English, French and Spanish. You can respond to the articles and comments by e-mail. Your contributions can be in English, French or Spanish and they will be translated.

**If you have questions ahead of the seminar, do not hesitate to contact Irene Lobo [apoyo@icae.org.uy](mailto:apoyo@icae.org.uy) at the ICAE Secretariat in Montevideo, Uruguay.**



ICAE has been running virtual seminars for several years on topics in *Adult Education and Development*. With more than 1000 participants from all regions of the world, the last ICAE Virtual Seminar (held from 17 June to 10 July 2013) discussed the Post 2015 education agenda: advocacy actions. The exchange included a thorough joint reflection on the preparation process of the post 2015 Development Agenda. Two aspects deserved special attention. On the one hand, the place and role of lifelong education were debated. On the other hand, the Virtual Seminar asked what the participation of civil society means and what advocacy power the organisations that defend education as a fundamental human right are actually having. The debate was well-informed and rich in content thanks to the valuable contributions, comments and proposals received. As a result, the seminar shed some light on a process that is neither simple nor easy to follow. The intention was to facilitate and promote advocacy actions necessary for Lifelong Learning and education to obtain the priority they deserve. In addition, the seminar aimed at maintaining the focus on human rights and to counteract instrumentalist and reductionist views of development.

# Should we give up on a literate world?<sup>1</sup>



Rosa María Torres del Castillo  
Education specialist, Ecuador

**Abstract** – *It seems the world is giving up the aspiration of a literate world. Before the year 2000, the aspiration was to eliminate or eradicate illiteracy. In 2000, the aspiration visibly shrank to “reducing it by half” by 2015. Even this much more modest goal has not and will not be achieved. Both Education for All (1990–2015) and Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015) have focused on children and on children’s access to primary education. Early childhood development and Youth and Adult Education have been systematically sidelined. In the Information Society, “digital illiterates” have become more important than plain “illiterates”. Can humanity claim progress when, at the same time that information and communication technologies and the Internet expand in an accelerated manner, 775 million young people and adults cannot read and write?*

Every year, for years and decades, we read the same thing: There are millions of illiterate people worldwide (two thirds are women) and little headway is made despite the recommendations, statements, events and even the recent United Nations Literacy Decade (2003–2012), of which few knew about and which ended almost unnoticed.

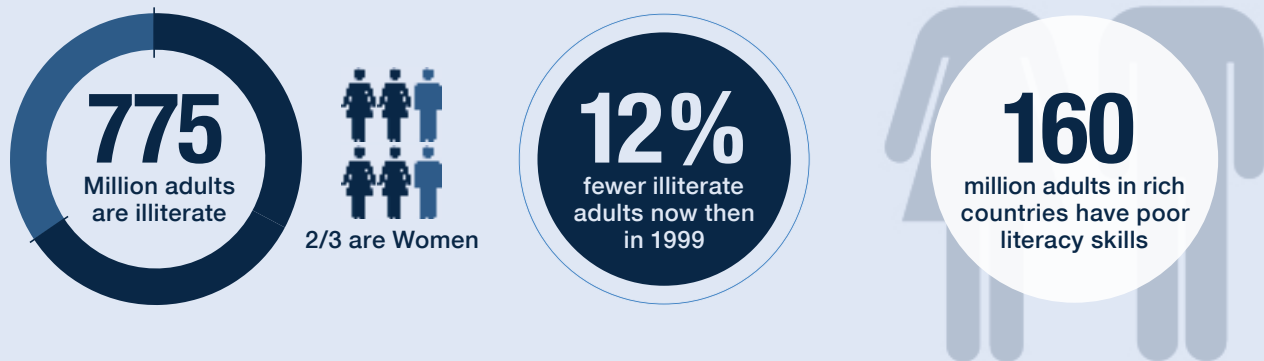
**“In almost 25 years of Education for All and already well into the 21st century, we are still a long way off from a literate world.”**

Infographics of the 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report graphically display the progress of the six goals of Education for All from 2000 (World Education Forum, Dakar) to the present. In all of the goals, progress has been lower than expected and less than what was pledged for 2015. Adult literacy is the furthest from being achieved: In 2010, there were 775 million illiterate adults, only 12% less than at the end of the century in 1999; the commitment to reducing illiteracy by 50% by 2015 is clearly unattainable at this stage. On the other hand, the report points out that 160 million adults in “developed countries” have “poor literacy skills” (see infographic on the next page). In 2010, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) con-

## Education for all / Goal 4 – Adult literacy

Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults

> Adult literacy remains an elusive goal



Source of infographic: GMR2012: EFA Goals. Available at <http://bit.ly/TpQ7VS>

cluded that “literacy rates are increasing, but not fast enough”. In fact, progress has been insignificant and even more so if we go back a decade to the beginning of Education for All (EFA), to its launch at the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand) in 1990. The illiteracy figure disclosed by UNESCO as an EFA baseline was 895 million in 1989. The goal proposed at the time was also to reduce illiteracy by half – by the year 2000.

Therefore, in almost 25 years of Education for All and already well into the 21st century, we are still a long way off from a literate world. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the commitment to “eradicate illiteracy” goes back to 1980. The goal that captured the attention at a global level in all these years of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals was primary education with a focus on access and enrolment. Early childhood education and the education of young people and adults, at both ends of the “school-age” spectrum, have always been pushed to the background, with the option of education of children versus education of adults being wrongly accepted, with the complicity of society.

History repeats itself when there is a race against time in trying to reach 2015 with what is possible and the issue of how to continue beyond 2015 is debated. The education of young people and adults, and specifically literacy, once again get relegated to the sidelines. Some demand that these goals be added, forgetting that they have always been there and what has been missing is the political will

to fulfil them, both on the part of governments as well as the international agencies. Surely, this will once again end by adding a related goal and once again take the form of the usual salute to the flag.

“The number of illiterate people in the millions seems to have become perfectly tolerable and compatible with the progress of humanity.”

In a world that prides itself on having entered the Information Society with an eye towards the Knowledge Society, that boasts of technological advances and struggles to decrease the digital divide, that tries hard to gain points in the global rankings on poverty reduction, the “digital illiterates” are more important than those who are “just” illiterate. It seems to bother no one that those people who claim to be illiterate continue to number in the millions, swell the ranks of the poorest and dispossessed and will never read a book or benefit from the internet or broadband.

The number of illiterate people in the millions seems to have become perfectly tolerable and compatible with the progress of humanity. Who wants to take responsibility for them? Who wants to accept that the actual number of illiterate persons must be much greater since, as we

well know, many people do not assess themselves as such in censuses and surveys? Who wants to pay attention to the failure of literacy education, to the worrying reality of the millions of people who cannot read or write even though they have formally learned to read and write?

The utopia of a literate world seems to be getting shelved away. Gone are the days of aspiring to end illiteracy (and poverty); the most that is aspired to today is the “reduction” of both in defined percentages and conveniently prorated. And there are even those who, from an economic calculation, ideology or simply ignorance, are ready to claim that the illiterate persons who live among us in the world today are surely impaired and incapable of literacy.

Renouncing the objective of universal literacy is not only denying a basic learning need and a fundamental human right that assists people of all ages and conditions, but the renunciation of one more piece of dignity and hope in an increasingly dehumanised world.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> / This article has been published in Spanish on Rosa María Torres del Castillo's Blog: <http://otra-educacion.blogspot.com>

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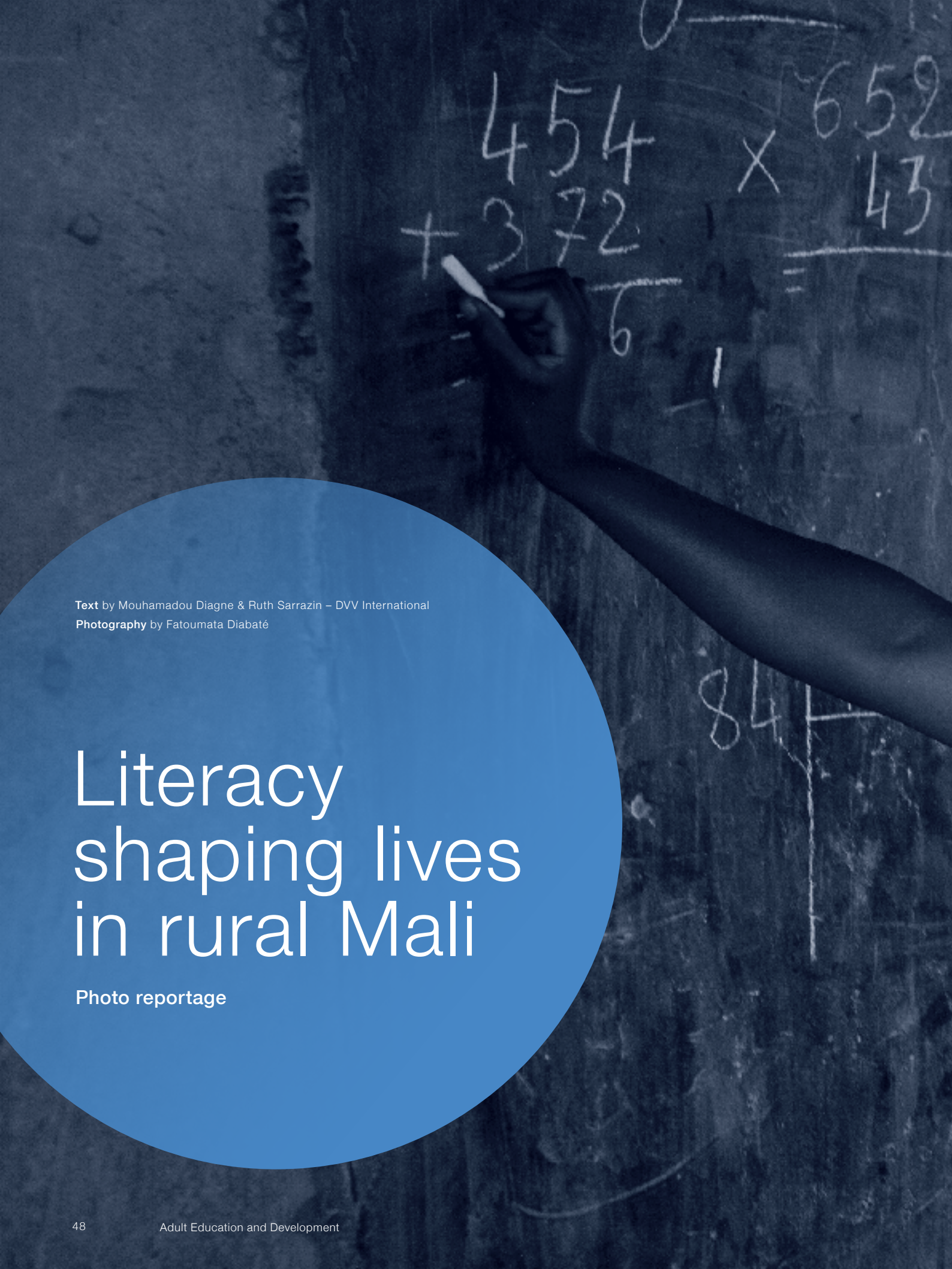
#### About the Author

Dr [Rosa María Torres del Castillo](#): Ecuadorian, educationist, linguist, education journalist and social activist, researcher and international adviser specialised in basic education, reading and writing, innovation and Lifelong Learning. Worked with UNICEF and UNESCO in different capacities. In charge of preparing the Base Document for the UN Literacy Decade, and the Regional Report on Adult Education and Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean presented at CONFINTEA VI in Belém (2010). Minister of Education and Cultures in Ecuador (2003). Author of over 15 books and numerous articles on education and communication.

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Text by Mouhamadou Diagne & Ruth Sarrazin – DVV International

Photography by Fatoumata Diabaté

# Literacy shaping lives in rural Mali

Photo reportage



Sitan, a participant of the Kambali Reflect circle, performing an addition with carry.







1

2

1 / Literacy is the foundation of development – the participants of the Kambali Reflect circle.

2 / Literacy strengthens skills in farming techniques.

Malian Photographer Fatoumata Diabaté visited the villages of Kambali and Habaladougou-Kéniéba in Mali. These villages, some 100 km from the capital Bamako, are running the project VITAL, organised by DVV International and the local NGO Jeunesse & Développement (Youth & Development). A similar project is being implemented in the north of Mali, and two more in the neighbouring state of Guinea.

The French abbreviation VITAL (Village d'apprentissage Tout Au Long de la vie) means 'villages of Lifelong Learning'. VITAL improves the lives of the inhabitants of the villages through Youth and Adult Education.

VITAL is focusing on literacy, vocational training and civic education. Of the three, literacy is the most important and the basis for the two others. Skills in reading, writing and arithmetic are taught through so-called Reflect circles.

It is in these Reflect circles that the actual needs for literacy, vocational training and civic education are discussed, translated into activities and later evaluated. Reflect is an innovative approach to adult learning and social change, which fuses the theories of Paulo Freire with the methodologies of participatory rural appraisal.

Reflect provides an on-going democratic space for a group of people to meet and discuss issues relevant

to them. The participants choose the topics themselves, according to their own priorities and supported by a local facilitator.

Initially groups of learners convene to learn literacy, and develop maps, graphics, calendars and matrixes to analyse different aspects of their lives. These are done on the ground and then translated to flip-chart paper using simple pictures drawn by the illiterate participants. Words will then be added to the visual images as labels and these serve as the basis for literacy practice. Participants identify action points to resolve issues, and literacy is then put to practical use in taking forward such action.

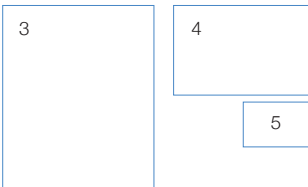
These days, Reflect programmes around the world are hugely diverse – shaped by and adapted to the context in which they have grown as well as to the different interests/backgrounds of their parent organisation. Some programmes remain strongly focused on linking adult literacy with empowerment while others have abandoned the teaching of literacy and focus instead on social mobilisation.











3 / Writing session at the Kambali Reflect circle.

4 / Nja Kamara, Vice President of the Management Committee of the Kambali Reflect circle reading her poem.

5 / Two newly literate members of the Kambali Reflect circle.



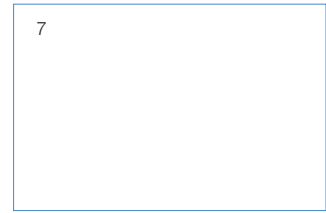


6 / Participants of the Habaladougou-Kéniéba Reflect circle discussing malaria with the help of the 'problem tree'. The 'problem tree' is a tool that communities use to analyse problems in their daily lives. The trunk of the tree symbolises the problem, the root the source of the problem and the branches its consequences. After this analysis, participants choose a symbol that represents the subject of the debate.

7 / Sidiki Keita, the facilitator, helps Kadiatou, the participant, to draw the symbol derived from the malaria debate. Here it is a cup representing the stagnant water which is the source of the development of mosquito larvae.

8 / All the Reflect circle participants draw the same symbol – the cup – which is the key word in the malaria debate. This keyword is then cut into syllables and participants train writing it in letters.



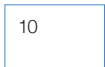
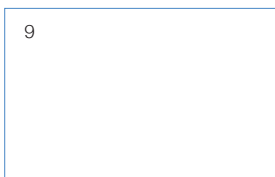






9 / Reflect circle participants playing a game about knowledge of plants. We give assurances to losers. Here, for example, the facilitator must imitate a goat. Games or jokes are moments of relaxation and are part of the Reflect circle sessions.

10 / Practice session in the Kambali "field school". The "field schools" are experimental fields in which Reflect circle participants experiment with new production techniques.





# Artists of this issue

## Fatoumata Diabaté

### Photographer

Fatoumata Diabaté tells us what she expected before she went to take the photographs and what surprised her the most.

“I expected to go find the people in the literacy classes under a very green tree. My surprise was that literacy allows the villagers we visited to make calculations with numbers, but to speak in Bambara [a West African language spoken by 80% of Malians, Ed.]”

#### Fatoumata Diabaté

Born in 1980 in Bamako, Mali, Fatoumata Diabaté received her initial experience at the Promo-Femmes audio-visual training centre before joining the Photography Training Centre (Centre de formation en photographie – CFP) in Bamako between 2002 and 2004. She continued her education with a one-month internship at the vocational learning centre (Centre d'enseignement professionnel) in Vevey, Switzerland and has participated in numerous workshops both in Mali and abroad.

She has participated in several group exhibitions (Bamako Encounters 2005, 2009 and 2011; Kornhaus Museum of Bern in Switzerland, etc.) and had several solo exhibitions (Festival of *Visages francophones de Cahors*, France; the Malians of Montreuil, outside the walls of the *quai Branly museum*, etc.)

She has reported for World Press Photo, Oxfam, Rolex. In December 2005, she received the *Africa in creation* prize of the French Association for Artistic Action (AFAA) for her work entitled *Tuareg, in gestures and movements*. In 2011 she was awarded the Blachère Foundation prize for her work entitled *The Animal in Man*; the prize was an atelier in Arles and an exhibition at the Blachère Foundation. She is currently developing an art project about *soutiki* youth (The night is ours).

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# But where does the money actually go? – Aid flows for Youth and Adult Education



Raquel Castillo  
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**Abstract** – *While the Education for All (EFA) goals supposedly address the learning needs of children, youth and adults alike, this article examines how much the international community actually acknowledges this and subscribes to a Lifelong Learning paradigm. It looks at how civil society has asked donors and governments to look at EFA, not as discrete and separate goals but as indivisible and holistic, and advocates for an equitable share of investment across all sub-sectors of education and skills development. A look at recent education strategy papers of some major donors show a marked neglect of Adult Education and Learning (except for the EU), while the post 2015 official global discourse is proposing expanded access indicators to include up to lower secondary education only. The latest available data on official aid flows are analysed to show how these trends are reflected in general, and how very much less support there is for basic life skills, adult literacy, and vocational-technical education. The article concludes with a strong caution that decreasing financing support for education in general and for investments in Youth and Adult Education in particular – because of the financial crisis and the changing priorities of donors – will reverse the EFA gains we've had so far and stymie our ambitions for sustainable development goals beyond 2015.*

When the discussions are over and global agreements signed, the work of the negotiators is done. Now begins the long and tricky road to implement the decisions. How does that happen? There are many methods. Let us look at one of them. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has been called a model of “multi-stakeholder partnership in practice to deliver quality education”<sup>1</sup>. The GPE Fund aims to “finance the development and implementation of education plans in developing countries and the dissemination of knowledge and best practices in education at the global and regional levels”. With a current annual budget of around \$3 billion, it provides longer term funding support to 70 eligible, low-income countries. The funding is phased out when national income rises.

As of the 1st quarter of 2013, there were 18 country donors contributing to the GPE Fund, with the UK, Netherlands, Spain, Australia, Norway, Sweden and the EC as the biggest contributors (GPE 2013). It directs funds to a single local education group led by the ministry of education. This group includes educators, development agencies, corporations (domestic and global), regional development banks, state education ministries, civil society and philanthropic organisations, sometimes UNESCO and UNICEF representatives, as well as other experts.

In 2008 in the Asia-Pacific region, more than a hundred education advocates, national education coalitions and civil society formations gathered together in Manila, Philippines, to debate on issues in education financing and

on Official Development Assistance (ODA) for education.<sup>2</sup> These are funds provided to developing countries to promote their economic and social development and come in the form of either grants or concessional loans carrying a lower rate of interest than the market and a longer repayment period. As a result of the debate there was a specific call on the donor community, the World Bank, and in particular the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI, now known as the Global Partnership for Education or GPE in its new incarnation), to undertake key reforms to make it more responsive and reach out to more countries in need of resources to meet all the EFA goals. The gathering wanted the Fast Track Initiative (now GPE) to expand its coverage beyond the two Millennium Development Goals on universal primary education and gender equality in education. They wanted GPE to include the full EFA agenda.

Why did the meeting in Manila suggest this? It has a lot to do with the gap between the six Education for All goals and the actual funding of education.

### Who is the “All” in Education for All?

Civil society has for a long time insisted that donors and partner governments adhere to the Dakar Framework for Action for Education for All (EFA) in financing education plans. The six EFA goals are significantly interlinked and the accomplishment of any of them requires action on all of them: early childhood care and education, universal primary education, youth and adult Lifelong Learning and life skills opportunities, adult literacy, gender equity and quality. Recognising this indivisibility, the global and regional movements for EFA asked countries to take the goals together as a plan of action and not prioritise one or another of the goals to the detriment of the others.

The problem seems to be that when civil society advocates to the multilateral donors (and also bilateral donors) on this issue, donors point to governments and say that they are only acceding to what the partner governments (and their ministries of education) ask for in their funding proposals. This is in line with the Paris Aid Effectiveness principle on country “ownership” of the agenda. But when civil society organisations engage governments, they are told that ministries of education need to also take into consideration and take their cue from the expressed focus areas of the donors when developing and submitting their education sector plans for aid support. Thus we are caught in a Catch-22 paradox.

There is one case that civil society organisations were able to use as a precedent whenever they advocated for governments and FTI/GPE to embrace the full Education For All agenda and include adult learning in financing national education plans. The case is Mali. Mali is a country where 70% of the population is illiterate. Following the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) 2009 study called “Étude Sur Le Niveau de Realisation des Objectifs de L’ept Au Mali Cas de l’Education Non Formelle”<sup>3</sup>, the Mali Coalition launched a well-coordinated

advocacy campaign. As a result the Government of Mali increased funding for adult literacy from 1% to the international benchmark of 3% in the financial year 2009/2010<sup>4</sup>. But ANCEFA also pointed out that this was a “rare case”.

During the transition from FTI to GPE, the partnership underwent reforms, and civil society organisations were hoping to influence changes within the funding partnership. But a rundown of its current strategic goals, formulated after the reform process, would show that GPE kept its previous bias for children’s education, at the expense of youth and Adult Education. Its goal on “Access for All” meant only access for all children to safe, adequately equipped space to receive an education with a skilled teacher. Its goal on “Learning for All” referred, again, only to children mastering basic literacy and numeracy skills by the early grades. The goal on addressing equity was reduced to “Reaching every Child”, ensuring that resources are focused on the most marginalised children, which is commendable per se, but which does not really address the education needs of all disadvantaged people in a society (GPE 2013). The expansion of access, in line with the dominant official discourse in the post 2015 education agenda, covers mostly increased support for secondary education for youth (apart from early childhood education). There is almost nothing on Adult Education.

“A concerted effort for *The Big Push* for EFA in the last laps would still require aid from the international community.”

### A crucial role to play

The EFA Global Monitoring Report of 2012 observes that aid is a vital component of education spending in poor countries. “While national spending provides the most important contribution, aid amounts to as much as one-fifth of education budgets in low-income countries on average” (UNESCO 2012). The amount of resources developing countries invest in education will have an impact on how much they can complete their “catch-up” plans just before the 2015 deadline of EFA goals and targets. It also determines how much they can join the new sustainable development goals being envisioned beyond 2015. The GMR 2012 points out that “most countries that accelerated progress towards EFA during the last decade did so by increasing spending on education substantially or maintaining it at already high levels”. Many low-income countries strive to increase their domestic revenues and find ways to rely more on local resources to fund education but they need to build up their capacities to do this. In the meantime, a concerted effort for “The Big Push” for EFA in the last laps would still require aid from the international community.



## Dilemma between an emphasis on basic education and upholding the Lifelong Learning paradigm

The Global Campaign for Education has spearheaded civil society advocacy to increase the share of basic education in national budgets as well as in donor aid to the sector. This is because basic education provides the foundational learning and skills needed by unreached groups as a first significant step in overcoming their multiple layers of disadvantage and claiming for themselves a role in the country's sustainable development. On average, about 41% of total aid goes to basic education (Castillo 2011). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines basic education as covering

- 1 early childhood education,
- 2 primary education and
- 3 basic life skills for youth and adults.

There is much critique against low-income countries that devote their scarce resources in a misplaced bias towards higher (tertiary) education when millions of their children are not in school and are dropping out and millions of their vulnerable women cannot read, write nor calculate numbers.

The high political traction that support for primary education got globally during the last decade was principally due to the reduction of the EFA goals to only two education goals in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), one of which was on Universal Primary Education (the other being gender equality in all levels of education).

## “Does the EFA advocacy mean that Lifelong Learning is only for developed countries and that basic education is for low-income and developing countries?”

On the other hand, civil society advocating for transformative education and learning have come to embrace the concept of Lifelong Learning. The UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL) thinks that “Lifelong Learning for All implies not only a holistic and sector-wide educational reform in which all sub-sectors and elements of the education system should be designed to cater to lifelong and life-wide learning, but also the creation of learning opportunities in all settings or modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) for people of all ages (infants, children, adolescents and adults)”. With such a perspective, a more thought out balancing of the needs of different age groups in society – difficult though it may be under stringent resources – needs to be worked out in line with the development aspirations of the local communities and the country as a whole.

There is another dimension to this. In discussions with youth groups in developing countries, a question has been posed: Does the EFA advocacy mean that Lifelong Learning is only for developed countries and that basic education is for low-income and developing countries? There is a whole slew of equity questions behind that.

A regional seminar on National Policy Frameworks for Lifelong Learning in the ASEAN Countries (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) was held in Hanoi, Vietnam 10–11 January 2013. The event was co-organised by the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and UNESCO Vietnam with the support of the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok and the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International). The seminar produced an advocacy brief addressed to the member countries of the ASEAN. One of the strong recommendations was to increase financial resources in alignment with legislation and policy to promote Lifelong Learning for all and to allocate an equitable share of investment across all sub-sectors of education and training.

## Examining aid flows

An analysis of the aid flows to education shows the gap between the sub-sectors.

Data was trawled from the OECD International Data Statistics databases, in particular the Creditor Reporting System (CRS), where direct aid to education can be found. Disbursements of aid in constant 2011 US dollars was chosen instead of commitment amounts, as there can be significant discrepancies between the two when allocations are disbursed in tranches over more than one year or when they are delayed for some reason.

Direct aid to education, as defined by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), are allocations made to:

- 1 Basic education – covering early childhood education, primary education, and basic life skills for youth and adults;
- 2 Secondary education – covering both general secondary education and vocational training;
- 3 Post-secondary education – covering higher education and advanced technical and managerial training;
- 4 Education, level unspecified – covering any activity that cannot be attributed solely to the development of a particular level of education, such as education research, teacher training, and general education programme support such as education policy and administrative management, education facilities and training.

**Table 1 – Gross aid disbursements for education sub-sectors in all developing countries (constant 2011 USD millions)**

Education sub-sectors	Bilaterals	Multilaterals	Non-DAC	All Donors
Early childhood education	51.0	32.5	0.2	83.5
Primary education	2,151.8	1,134.6	0.5	3,266.3
<b>Subtotal: Aid for children's education</b>	<b>2,202.8</b>	<b>1,167.1</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>3,349.8</b>
General Secondary Education	212.2	205.2	...*	417.3
Higher education	3,706.4	338.3	18.2	4,062.8
<b>Subtotal: Aid for formal, General education track for youth &amp; adults</b>	<b>3,918.6</b>	<b>543.5</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>4480.1</b>
Basic life skills for youth and adults	145.2	48.0	...	193.2
Vocational Education	481.8	199.9	0.6	682.3
Advanced technical and managerial training	148.8	21.8	...	170.6
<b>Subtotal: Alternative track Youth and Adult Education</b>	<b>775.8</b>	<b>269.7</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1,046.1</b>
<b>Subtotal: Total Aid for Youth and Adult Education &amp; training</b>	<b>4,694.4</b>	<b>813.2</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>5,526.2</b>
Scholarships and imputed student costs	2,956.8	105.0	...	3,061.8
<b>Total Aid for Youth and Adult Education &amp; training without scholarships and imputed student costs**</b>	<b>1,737.6</b>	<b>708.2</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>2,464.4</b>
Aid disbursements, education level unspecified	2,277.3	1275.8	34.4	3,587.5
<b>Total Aid disbursements to education without scholarships and imputed student costs</b>	<b>6,217.6</b>	<b>3,151.0</b>	<b>53.2</b>	<b>9,421.8</b>

\* nil / \*\* Imputed foreign student costs refer to the cost of educating foreign students from ODA-eligible countries in the donor country.  
Source: OECD DAC International Data Statistics, Creditor Reporting System, 2012

In trying to determine shares of Youth and Adult Education in contrast to children's education, the following groupings of aid flows were studied (See Table 1):

- 1 Aid for children's education – to include:
  - Early childhood education
  - Primary education
- 2 Aid for Youth and Adult Education – categorised in 2 tracks:
  - Formal, general education track – to include:
    - General secondary education
    - Higher education
  - Alternative track – to include:
    - Basic life skills for youth and adults
    - Vocational training
    - Advanced technical and managerial training

Donors were classified as:

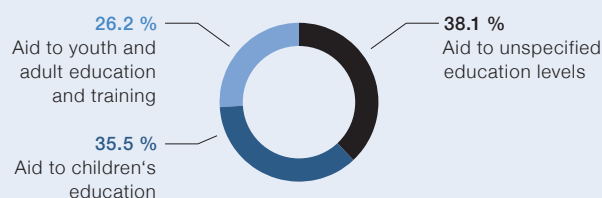
- 1 Bilaterals – countries that provide development assistance directly to recipient countries. Most are members of the DAC, a forum of major bilateral donors established to promote aid and its effectiveness.
- 2 Multilaterals – international institutions, development banks such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Fund, UN agencies, regional groupings such as the EC.
- 3 Non-DAC donors – include the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and the Czech Republic.

(See Table 1)

The total aid disbursements to education for all developing countries and including aid to unspecified levels of countries that report to the DAC in 2011 is USD 12.48 billion. Subtracting scholarships and imputed student costs from this would amount to USD 9.42 billion. The share of children's education in this would be about 35.5%, for youth and adults 26.2%, for unspecified levels 38.1%.<sup>5</sup> (See Chart 1) In fact, not all aid for General Secondary Education should count as "aid for youth education" because the age bracket of Lower Secondary Education would still fall under the UNESCO definition of "Children" (18 years and below). This would make the actual share of aid for youth and adult education even smaller.

Using the same process of analysis, the estimates for Asia show much less share for Youth and Adult Education in ODA, at only 16.2%. Aid for children's education as a percentage of total aid to education (without imputed student costs) would be about 31.8% while that for unspecified education levels would be 52%.

**Chart 1 – Share of Aid to Education, 2011**



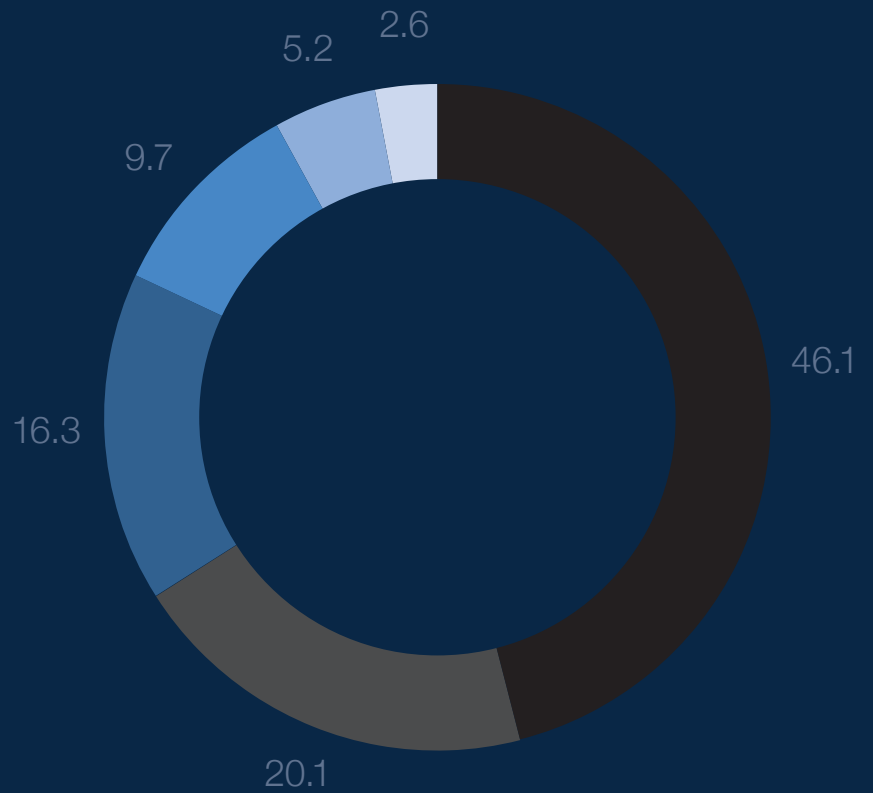
Source: OECD DAC International Data Statistics, Creditor Reporting System, 2012

Chart 2  
 Work Programme Budget Framework 2010–2012  
 of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Trend 2000–2009

\$ 3.03 Billion: 80% ADF, 15% OCR

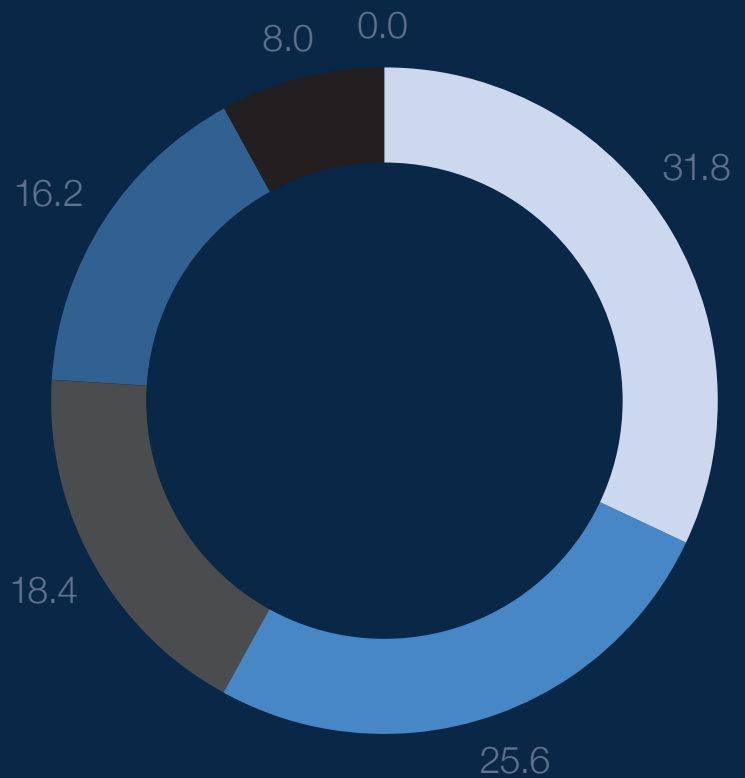
- 46.1% – Basic education
- 20.1% – Broad education sector development
- 16.3% – Technical education, vocational training and skill's debt
- 9.7% – Secondary education
- 5.2% – Non-formal education
- 2.6% – Tertiary higher education



WPBF 2010–2012

\$ 1.5 Billion: 48% ADF, 51% OCR

- 31.8% – Tertiary higher education
- 25.6% – Upper secondary education
- 18.4% – Broad education sector development
- 16.2% – Technical education and vocational skills
- 8.0% – Pre-primary and basic education
- 0.0% – Non-formal education



WPBF = Work Program Budget Framework, ADF = Asian Development Fund, OCR = Ordinary Capital Resources  
 Source: Operation Departments' pipeline submissions for WPBF 2010–2012

We can also see that almost 4/5 of aid for the education of youth and adults is flowing to the formal, general education track, while only a fifth goes to the alternative life-skills-vocational-technical track. The share of this in the latter, in total aid to education, would be estimated at only 8.4% in 2011. Basic life skills would only be 1.5%.

Note that Aid for Adult Literacy is not being monitored separately in the DAC. In DVV International's Bonn Conference on Financing Adult Education for Development last 23–24 June 2009, one of the important policy requests was for OECD to set up a specific account item reporting for aid towards adult literacy under 112: I.1.b Basic Education. This was in part requested because 775 million non-literate adults remain in the world today, two-thirds of them women.

“Almost 4/5 of aid for the education of youth and adults is flowing to the formal, general education track, while only a fifth goes to the alternative life-skills-vocational-technical track.”

### The biggest donors and Lifelong Learning

In the Asia region, the major bilateral donors to education aid are Germany, Japan, UK, US, France and Australia. The biggest multilateral donors are the World Bank (IDA), the Asian Development Fund (ADB), and the EU.

The EU's Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training 2020 says that “... Lifelong Learning should be regarded as a fundamental principle underpinning the entire framework, which is designed to cover learning in all contexts – whether formal, non-formal or informal – and at all levels: from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, vocational education and training and adult learning.”

This is the strategy that comes closest to the civil society perspective. The long-term strategic objectives of EU education and training policies for Europe include ‘making Lifelong Learning and mobility a reality’. Two of the benchmarks for 2020 are:

- 1 The share of 15-year-olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%; and
- 2 An average of at least 15% of the adults (age group 25–64) should participate in Lifelong Learning (Lifelong Learning is mentioned 17 times in the document).

The World Bank Education Strategy 2020 acknowledges Lifelong Learning as a basic premise, but quickly provides

a caveat by identifying the early years as the most crucial, and therefore the stage meriting the most resource support. “The new education strategy is built on the premise that people learn throughout life. However, the period between birth and young adulthood is especially critical because the ability to learn that is developed during this period provides a foundation for Lifelong Learning...” (Lifelong Learning is only mentioned twice in the entire document.)

The Asian Development Bank/Asian Development Fund's strategy paper “Education by 2020” had no mentions of Lifelong Learning at all. There is a marked difference in its sub-sectoral allocations between the previous period 2000–2009 and the Work Program Budget Framework for the period 2010–2012. The share of aid going to tertiary and higher education increased from only 2.6% to 31.8%. Pre-primary education, which was not there previously, is now getting 8%. The originally small aid for non-formal education at 5.2% suddenly got wiped out. Secondary education support got focused on upper secondary only. And technical education and vocational skills remained flat at 16%. (See Chart 2)

There was a marked opacity and lack of details in the CRS reporting on ODA-funded interventions and projects by each donor country. However, a scan of the CRS micro-data revealed a few of the projects in the pipeline.

#### Germany

- Under advanced technical and managerial training: Scholarship Program for Personnel in Development Work in Asian Countries through the Asia Social Institute, ASI; Indigenous Learning Institute – A Regional Inter-Peoples Learning and Empowerment Programme among Indigenous Peoples in Asia.
- The regional cooperation platform (RCP), as a forum for regional professional exchange in the field of vocational teacher education, is established and the institutional capacity of the RCP's members to contribute to regional integration processes is improved.
- Innovation Network South East Asia for TVET (technical and vocational education and training) and Sustainable Development.
- USD 4.47 million for the promotion of basic Adult Education.

#### Japan

- Most were for scholarships in Japan, though there was mention of a small core support for NGOs, other private bodies, Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and research institutes on vocational training.

#### US

- Strengthening institutional capacities of public and private higher education institutions including research institutes, teacher-training colleges and institutes, universities, community colleges and the relevant official departments and ministries

responsible for higher education) to teach, train, conduct research and provide community service; to contribute to development; and to promote professional development opportunities institutional linkages and exchange programmes. [through Nathan Associates Inc., Academy of Educational Development, Inc, JBS International, Inc]

- Improving early childhood education, primary education and secondary education delivered in formal or non-formal settings. It includes literacy, numeracy and other basic skills programmes for youth and adults. [through Personal Services Contractors – USAID, RTI International]

## Big ambitions, tight flows

As a whole, a worrying trend is that for the first time since 1997, total aid fell in 2011. In the eight years until 2010, aid to education increased by a hefty 77%; in 2010 it started to stagnate. The three donors that made the biggest increases in 2009 reduced their funding in 2010 (UNESCO 2012).

The expectation is that aid for the education sector will likewise do the same since it has always received a relatively constant share of total aid since 2002, and by inference a similar thing will happen to aid for youth and Adult Education, especially for the already marginalised non-formal sector.

At the threshold of a new global chapter of common dreams for a new future – though we hemmed and we hawed and we debated with passion for a new set of development goals – we are at risk of getting stymied in our efforts. We may be facing a reversal in gains we've had so far in pushing for quality education and Lifelong Learning for all: children, youth, women and men. It must be remembered that there are now 7 billion reasons to keep the lifeblood of resources flowing.

## Notes

- 1 / The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda titled: "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development"
- 2 / They agreed on The Manila Statement on ODA for Education which is available at <http://bit.ly/17Pr1Hf>
- 3 / Study On The Level of Realisation of the Objectives of EFA in Mali regarding Non-Formal Education
- 4 / More Information at <http://bit.ly/144luPm>
- 5 / Some donors like ADB, China and India, do not report to the DAC.
- 6 / Total percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding errors.

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## About the Author

**Raquel Castillo** has worked for two decades with civil society on policy research, policy advocacy and lobbying. She was the first National Coordinator of E-Net Philippines, a coalition campaigning on equitable access for quality Education for All (EFA), alternative learning for youth and recognition for the work of grassroots educators. Ms. Castillo was the Advocacy and Campaigns Coordinator of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), and helped mobilise ASPBAE's constituencies to maximise regional and international platforms such as the CONFINTEA VI, the ASEAN Summits, the Asia-Europe Meeting, the UNESCO/UNICEF-led Thematic Working Group on EFA. She was also part of the Working Groups on Decent Learning and Decent Work of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). She continues to advise ASPBAE on advocacy issues, particularly around Lifelong Learning, quality education, recognition and accreditation of prior learning. She has recently initiated a network of individual professionals in the Philippines who volunteer their specific expertise to promote Stakeholder Partnerships for Education and Lifelong Learning (SPELL).

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# If we don't look at how to finance Adult Education, we can forget about the post 2015 agenda

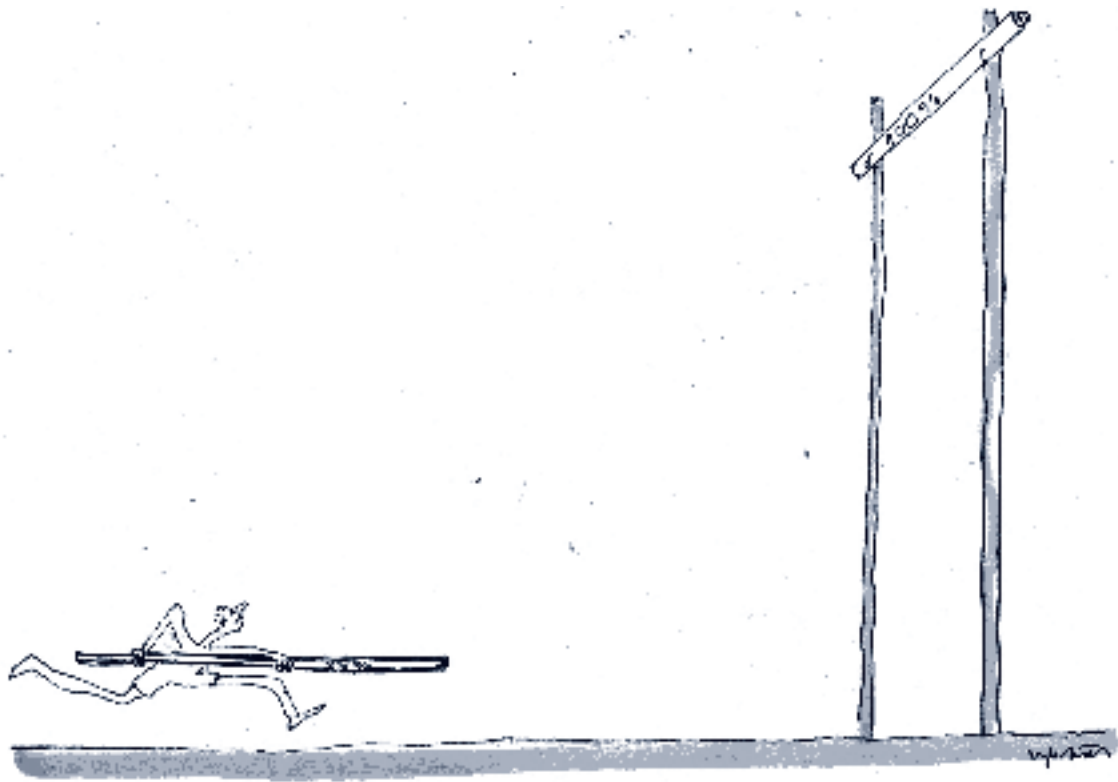


David Archer  
ActionAid, United Kingdom

**Abstract** – *Goals around Adult Education are often the first to be dropped in the face of political prioritisation or economic austerity, so what can we do to secure a space for it in the post 2015 sustainable development framework? In 2000, adult literacy secured a place as one of the six Education for All goals agreed in Dakar – only to be dropped within six months as only two of those goals made the grade as Millennium Development Goals. To avoid the same happening in 2015, adult educators may be best focusing their energies on the struggle for a credible approach to financing the development agenda – through macro-economic reform and tax justice. It is only if we win these struggles that we will see significant new investments in Adult Education.*

There are many ways in which the case for Adult Education can be made as an integral part of in the post 2015 sustainable development agenda. We can argue that Adult Education is fundamental to achieving the five transformative shifts that the High-Level Panel identify in their report from May 2013: that Adult Education is essential if no-one is to be left behind, is vital for achieving sustainable development, for transforming economies, for building peace and holding public institutions to account. Equally we can argue for Adult Education as the connector to other goals, whether ending poverty, empowering women, ensuring healthy lives, increasing food security, promoting sustainable livelihoods etc. We can (and we should) present strong arguments and credible evidence for all of these. And we can celebrate the fact that the High-Level Panel gives us a hopeful title to the education goal “Provide quality education and Lifelong Learning”.

Many of the groups who have prepared papers about the post 2015 agenda have incorporated Adult Education as a demand. The Global Campaign for Education discussion paper (2013) argues that “access” to education must be lifelong and “quality” must go beyond tests and rote learning. Education International (2013) proposes two targets for post 2015, the second of which is: “By 2030 all young people and adults have equitable access to quality post-secondary education and Lifelong Learning enabling them to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies to achieve their full potential and participate positively in society and



in the world of work". The Commonwealth Ministers of Education recommend a subsidiary goal: "eliminate illiteracy and innumeracy amongst those under 50 years old and provide education opportunities for young people and adults" (Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group 2012). Even the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2013) proposes that "another focus should be placed on promoting adult literacy which demonstrably empowers individuals".

On the face of it there is thus some cause for optimism for Adult Education. However, as the crunch comes there will be ever more prioritisation, and from past experience we can be fairly confident that Adult Education will struggle to make it past the finishing post. The High-Level Panel may nod to Lifelong Learning but the only mention of adults in their targets is around technical and vocational skills for work. There are many powerful lobby groups pushing for a narrower education agenda, which focuses only on children or on learning outcomes.<sup>1</sup> And when money is tight, in practice the funds will flow to traditional formal education and not to Adult Education (or even early childhood education) which will continue to be seen as luxuries. We may argue passionately and convincingly that in a changing world we need to support people to become active citizens to contribute to sustainable development – and that education underpins this. But money will talk and Adult Education will be left underfunded.

For this reason I believe the Adult Education community ought to focus its efforts on adding weight to the arguments around the financing of the sustainable development agenda. It is only if we achieve a seismic shift in financing that Adult Education will attract the resources that it so clearly requires. Whilst the focus in 2000 and for many years after that (e.g. at the 2005 G8 meeting) was on aid as a key means to finance development, we now live in different times. Aid budgets are declining and even if we managed to reverse this decline they would still be marginal. The big finance questions are about domestic financing ... but to make a breakthrough we need coordinated international action. I want to touch on just two areas: macro-economic policy and tax justice.

Neo-liberal economic policies have been imposed on low income countries for decades through the International Monetary Fund – and now the impact of austerity is being felt also in richer countries. The latest financial crisis, starting in 2007, has presented a huge opportunity to challenge hegemonic economic policies, but to date we have failed to see the breakthroughs that are necessary. When governments are under pressure to hold down public spending, Adult Education is often one of the first things to be cut. There are alternatives and there is a particularly strong case that investing in education should be seen as part of the solution to the financial crisis. For these alternatives to gather momentum we need a huge Adult Education movement that demystifies macro-

economics. Economics must be reclaimed from the hegemonic elite – and we must further the understanding of citizens that neo-liberal macro-economics is driven by an intensely ideological agenda that betrays their interests. Until we overcome people’s fear of economics and build people’s confidence as para-economists we will continue to have governments and international institutions that hide behind the most powerful myth of our times: that “there is no alternative”.

In the past couple of years we have seen the remarkable emergence of a movement for tax justice that has immense potential. Some of the biggest multinational corporations are now known to be avoiding tax on an epic scale – whether it is Google, Apple, Vodafone or Amazon. Some of this may be legal according to the present rules – but the rules are often largely written under the conflicted advice of big accountancy firms – who then advise their paymasters on how to work around the rules. It is an utter absurdity that £21 trillion is hidden away in tax havens and that developing countries lose dramatically more in tax dodging than they will ever receive in aid. Rhetorically, this was on the agenda of the G8 in Northern Ireland in June 2013, but no serious action was taken to address these injustices. Again, it will take a huge citizen’s movement to really make a difference – and this will take time to build. In March 2013, in Lima, Peru, a new Global Alliance on Tax Justice was formed<sup>2</sup> which links trade unions, international NGOs, social movements and others. The first and perhaps most important task of such an alliance must be Adult Education – popularising an understanding of the scale of the injustices – and the pivotal role that ordinary citizens can play – as voters and as consumers – to hold governments and corporates to account. As long as we allow multinational corporations to effectively trample over democratic governments we will always be left with an impossibly constrained public sector which cannot invest credibly in Adult Education.

The sustainable development agenda that emerges post 2015 must be ambitious – and we must indeed fight for the inclusion of Adult Education using every argument that we can. However, the Adult Education constituency would do well to channel its energies also into making the case for a credible financing of sustainable development – focusing on the big picture around macro-economics and tax justice. We may win some victories now (tax justice has a foothold on the agenda but we need much more weight to get serious action) but the bigger victories will depend on sustained work over many years, using Adult Education to build people’s understanding and to build the movement that we will need to achieve more fundamental change. This of course is the very essence of a liberating approach to Adult Education – promoting coordinated reflection and collective action that goes far beyond the walls of any classroom.

## Notes

- 1 / For example the Brookings Institution (<http://www.brookings.edu/>)
- 2 / For more information see [www.gatj.org](http://www.gatj.org)

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**Sustainable Development Solutions Network (June 2013):** An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development, p. 13. Available at <http://bit.ly/13TPqdQ>

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**David Archer** is Head of Programme Development with ActionAid, having been Head of Education for many years. In the 1990s he developed the Reflect approach to adult learning (see [www.reflect-action.org](http://www.reflect-action.org)). Since the late 1990s David has worked on rights-based approaches to education and the building of civil society coalitions on education across Africa, Asia and Latin America. He is a co-founder and board member of the Global Campaign for Education and represents northern civil society organisations on the board of the Global Partnership for Education. David manages the Right to Education Project (see [www.right-to-education.org](http://www.right-to-education.org)) and has written extensively on the impact of IMF macro-economic policies on education.

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# Education in transition: The Arab world we want <sup>1</sup>



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**Abstract** – *This article paints a picture of the challenges and opportunities facing the Arab Educational systems following the Arab Spring. It calls for cooperative work among the countries in the region to face the ever-growing emergency demands that will be with us post 2015.*

*The Arab Uprising in the spring of 2011, along with the occupations, conflicts, civil wars and instability in the region makes it necessary to revisit development policies, within a new framework of envisioning a new social contract.*

*Development needs should be framed within the context of social justice, equity, equality and sustainability. Governments in the region should be transparent and be held accountable. A new Rights approach to development and education, rather than the traditional market-based service provision, should be adopted.*

It is easy to make the mistake of stereotyping. We talk about the Arab Spring, or the Middle East, as if it were one and the same uprising, one and the same country. The Arab countries are diverse in their size, population, natural resources, level of development and so on. Nevertheless, many challenges faced in the region are common. Education is one of the main sectors where we need joint efforts to make better use of available resources. This article looks at current challenges and opportunities, calling for cooperative work among the countries to face the ever-growing emergency demands that will be with us post 2015. A new social contract of mutual accountability should be forged by the governments of the region to face the ever-growing disenchantment of the Arab people. We need to break out of the current patterns of unbalanced developments and start to deal with the challenges facing our region (AHDR 2010).

The Arab Uprising in the spring of 2011, along with the occupation, conflicts, civil wars and instability in the region makes it necessary to revisit development policies. What is needed is a new framework, envisioning a new social contract. Development needs to be framed within the context of social justice, equity, equality and sustainability. Governments in the region should be transparent and be held accountable. A new Rights approach (human rights, children's rights, etc.) to development, rather than the traditional market-based service provision, should be adopted.



## The world is looking

The major transformation in the Arab world led by a grass-roots momentum has received the attention of the world. Looking at the political scene in the Arab world, we see that in Egypt, masses toppled a secular regime set up in 1952. This is a regime that once promised equity and equality and ended with a ruler that lasted over three decades. The deposed regime tried to consolidate a new form of government, the “Republic Dom” where “elected” political leaders bequeathed the presidency to their children.

The pinnacle of the mass struggle in Egypt was the toppling of a religious party that was elected to power, and toppled one year after it was installed. This proves that there is more to democracy than just voting.

Similar scenarios can be found in varying degrees in Tunisia, Libya and Yemen. Syria is witnessing civil strife with a regime that is trying to rule by force, denying its people the right of participation. Sudan was divided into two states and instability and conflict are still paramount. Somalia has been ravaged by a civil war that has continued for over two decades. Iraq is still suffering from the aftermath of the forcible removal of a dictator by western forces. I am not sure that the state of Iraq is in any better condition as a result.

Palestine is under an oppressive occupation that has denied its people most of their basic rights, including education and freedom of movement. Lebanon has not yet recovered from its civil war that lasted for over two decades. Jordan, like Lebanon, is another of the limited resources countries that are suffering the burden of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees displaced due to the civil war raging in Syria, a conflict that has displaced millions.

The Gulf region is witnessing disenchantment by its people for many reasons. In Kuwait, parliament has been dissolved with new elections taking place nearly on a yearly basis throughout the last decade. Bahrain is facing a struggle by minorities to get their full rights. The rest of the gulf region is facing a series of major issues, including dispute over the rights of women and the role of foreigners.

The presence of migrants in the Gulf, who in some states are twice the number of the indigenous population, is creating social upheavals. Social issues are handled with a Band-Aid approach in the absence of long-term strategies that make use of resources available in the region.

## The landscape that changed

With the political scene as perilous as we have described, national efforts to achieve equitable development have been thwarted. What is happening in the human resources sector of the Arab world?

The end of the twentieth century witnessed metamorphoses in the Arab region sparked by a series of events that included, among other elements:

- A high population growth of about 2.7%, leading to a high dependency rate where over 50% of the population is under 20 years of age.
- Progress was achieved in education and health, but gains have been uneven. Disparities prevail between countries, and within regions of the same country.
- Conflicts within and between countries of the region have threatened social cohesion, leading to slowing progress and development.
- The Arab Economic and Social Summit (Amman, January 2013) outlined a broad range of issues where gender, employment, poverty, and quality education were most prominent. Inequalities in services are most noticeable among marginalized groups and in rural areas.

According to UN statistics, the Arab world population will reach 395 million by 2015, up from 317 million in 2007. Knowing that 60% of the population is under 25, one can imagine what their impact will be on development at large, especially since the region is characterized by extreme disparities and diversity. Challenges include high levels of unemployment, poor job creation and a rapid urbanization of up to 40%. Shortages of water and food are partly due to environmental degradation and pollution.

## Don't trust the numbers

Four decades of enhancing the capacity of Arab governments to reach the Education for All goals have resulted in some impressive statistics. 88% of the children of primary school age are enrolled in schools. Universal enrollment is spreading in the Arab region with an adjusted enrollment rate of 95% or above. These figures are reported by governments, and published by UN agencies. They are questionable at best. Data collection and statistics have been a problem in the region due, among other reasons, to the political will of governments, and related societal and population distributions by ethnicity, factionalism, and religious beliefs. Lebanon is a country that has not had a census since 1932. Even published census statistics may not always be reliable for some countries.

The educational system in the Arab world has witnessed significant gains in enrollment and gender parity at the primary level. At the secondary level, 69% of the cohort is enrolled, with variances at all levels. The noticeable achievement at the gender level is that girls are outperforming boys in most Arab countries. A reversal in gender gap in mathematics has been witnessed. In many countries girls are going to higher education institutions in greater numbers than boys.

The sad picture is that there are over five million children out of school at the primary level, 61% of them are girls. In spite of the 50% decrease in illiteracy rates in the last decade, we still have over 50 million illiterates in the Arab world.



on education in the region exceeded 4.7% of the gross national product (UNDG 2013).

### Still a struggle if you are a girl

Nevertheless, significant inequalities persist between and within countries of the region. Aggregated averages of educational indices mask inequalities in levels of opportunities available, as well as the attainment level and outcomes. The “mutually reinforcing disadvantages”, such as urban/rural divide, along with income, minority status and conflict and occupation-affected countries are still at play. As for gender issues, it is noteworthy that by 2010 girls accounted for 47% of total enrollment in the primary cycle with the possibility of reaching parity by 2015. However, the crisis and emergency setbacks in the region may reverse this positive trend. In fact, national efforts to improve quality and outreach of the educational system have been hindered by instability, internal strife, civil wars, occupation, protracted conflicts and global economic disruptions as well as the financial crisis. All these factors are key reasons for the reversing achievements in education that we now see. An example of the negative effects of conflict can be clearly seen in the case of Syria. In 2009, 93% of primary school children were attending schools. In 2013, due to the civil war, up to 20% of the school buildings are totally damaged, enrollments and attendance have decreased significantly, especially among the millions of displaced Syrians, internally and externally.

Iraq achieved nearly universal primary education by the late 1990s. After the war, Western sanctions and the increased violence made attendance rates fall to 71%, leaving at least a million children out of school. As for Palestine, where occupation and apartheid treatment by the occupiers prevails, primary enrollments witnessed a decrease, from 92% in 1999 to 87% in 2010. (UNESCO 2012).

### A golden opportunity

Education reforms in the Arab world have not always been accompanied by equity, effectiveness and efficiency. They have not kept pace with socioeconomic and political changes, particularly now with the opportunities provided by and constraints imposed as a result of the political changes we are witnessing all over the region. Many Arab countries lack solid capacity in educational planning and relevant policy frameworks to guide plans and progress that responds to the new learning needs of students at different educational levels. Another major obstacle in the region is that most countries are ill-equipped with data collection and analysis and information management systems to feed into situation analysis and policy development. The potential for transformation has not been fully grasped.

I believe that this is a golden opportunity for the Arab world to take stock of the populous transformation taking place at this juncture in our history, to rework our joint agenda of advancement and development, analogue to

the European Union model, to join our resources, manpower and will. With a common language, history, traditions, and all sharing a monotheistic faith, Arabs have an opportunity to tackle their problems jointly with a much higher possibility of success. We have done it before.

### It must start with the data

When we look at data in the Arab region we face major problems. The region has undergone many attempts at reform and building information management systems in ministries of education. The problem with data collection and analysis remains, with few exceptions.

The validity of data remains the main issue, along with its timely availability to influence policy decisions. Even when we speak of 50 million illiterate Arabs, the aggregate figure hides a lot of valuable information that is needed by decision-makers to produce sound policies based on real information. For example, I am not sure if we even have the data divided by age and gender in allocation of these illiteracy figures.

Our indices of formal education are still far better than those on non-formal education and Adult Education specifically. In fact, this sector of the educational scene has always been problematic, and not very productive. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on different programmes ranging from literacy campaigns to all sorts of empowerment programmes, for women, dropouts, basic vocational skills, etc., with little to show for it.

The major issue is that non-formal education is not integrated into the educational vision of most countries. In most countries of the region the education system is very traditional and closed. It is very hard to move from vocational or technical education programmes to academic ones. The re-entry of dropouts to the main education stream faces major hurdles. It is hard enough to move from one college to another within a university. It is much harder to move from one institution to another in the same country without losing a lot of time and effort.

### Justice as much as economic growth

It is possible to identify several issues arising from present developments. The uprisings in many countries of the region underline needs not appropriately addressed before 2011. We see in particular that:

- Development needs to be framed as more than economic growth and access to social services. Development policies should engage key values like equality and justice, transparency and accountability, sustainability, quality and transferability.
- Factors that need to be addressed include equitable distribution of resources, inclusive growth, youth employment, and resilience to ecological change of resource scarcity.

- When faced with complex emergencies, occupation, conflict and security situations, we must shift from long-term development planning to being prepared for an immediate emergency response.

### We need a new paradigm

A new educational paradigm should be envisaged to answer the needs of the Arab world. This paradigm should take into account educational philosophies and development visions on national and regional levels. Based on new brain research and its link to knowledge formation, learning theories and processes, along with the advancement in the field of technology and communications, we can develop a new paradigm that will not necessitate being schooled for fifteen years before completing high school. Steps in the right direction include: seeking learning quality and developing new curricula, renewing pedagogy, raising the social status of teachers and professionalising the teaching cadre. We must also make teachers and trainers accountable by linking all these processes to their promotion and their salaries.

Teachers in the Arab world are suffering from serious problems affecting their performance. Their training is mediocre at best, their social status has deteriorated over time, and their financial rewards are low in comparison with other professions.

The admission standards for colleges or schools of education are among the lowest in higher education. Teacher preparation, faculties and programmes are too traditional in their approach and methods. Little attention is given to in-school internship and there is not much help from supervising teachers. Once teachers are in the classroom, they are faced with large numbers of students, little ancillary materials and nearly no monitoring and support. Teachers are overburdened by assuming too many difficult tasks and responsibilities with very little help or real training.

A shortage of teachers in the region, along with budget cuts, has led ministries of education to recruit novice teachers without pedagogic training. In-service training follows classical out-dated models where talk and chalk is paramount. This must be changed and improved.

### So, it's about the teachers

The professionalisation and empowerment of teachers was a major decision taken by Arab heads of state in their Khartoum Summit in 2007.

A task force was formed under the auspices of the League of Arab States, and all major Arab Educational centres, supported by UNICEF. A Guiding Framework of Performance Standards for Arab Teachers: policies and programme, was developed in 2009 and ministries of education of the region endorsed it as a step towards professionalising teaching. This includes a move towards quality, certification and licensing and improving work conditions for teachers.

It is strange to see after all these efforts, how one of the major ministries of education in the region was able to license over five hundred thousand teachers in less than a year. With all the efforts to start quality assurance programs and to focus on accountability, such behaviour blocks real development of the teaching force. This is slowing us down and is counter-productive when learning is the centre of the new pedagogic paradigm and not teaching.

### Recommendations and priorities for post 2015

- Education is a fundamental human right and the basis for the realisation of all other rights. It is not only one of the service sectors provided by government to the people.
- Education is one of the most effective means to overcome inequality, reduce poverty, and promote growth and development. It is the most rewarding investment that will open the door for the region to join the knowledge-based world economy.
- Equitable quality Lifelong Learning “for all” is an overarching educational goal that can enhance the advancement of Arab citizens. The vision of “Education For All” (Jomtien, 1990) should replace the Millennium Development Goals because of its vision, scope, and inclusivity. Education For All promotes a holistic, lifelong and all-inclusive vision of education and learning.
- Reduce and eliminate disparities in educational outcomes among learners, and monitor learning achievements.
- Redress disparities associated with gender, poverty, disability, location and other factors to promote inclusion at all levels.
- Ensure equitable access to quality education for children and youth in situations of occupation, conflict, and emergencies, which in the Arab world are becoming the order of the day.
- Quality education must equip people with 21st century skills, knowledge and values to obtain decent work and live together as active citizens, nationally and globally.
- Create safe and enabling learning environments including responsive and interactive curricula, and ancillary materials. Engage sufficient numbers of qualified and motivated teachers, develop information and communication technologies (ICTs), offer a learner friendly infrastructure, focus on school-based management, as well as monitoring, develop assessment and evaluation systems.
- Expand access beyond primary school to encompass all educational levels (ECCE basic and post-basic training), all forms of education (formal, non-formal and informal), and all age-groups, with special attention to the most marginalised.
- An overhaul of the education system should include: A vision, accountability, transparency, better data for evidence-based quality decisions, comprehensive evaluation and monitoring systems, along with the engagement of all the actors in the process.
- Best practices need to be revisited, and publicised. The region has tremendous wealth of educational knowledge and practices that are not properly known outside their local communities. Making these experiences available will enrich the education practice.



In conclusion, I believe that we need to revisit the education paradigm. It has served its purpose and times. It was created over three hundred years ago to serve the needs of the industrial revolution. Attempts at reforming and changing the educational paradigm have only been partly successful at times, serving short term goals. Today few countries of the world can claim that they are happy with their educational system. All failures and shortcomings are attributed to educational systems.

The dawn of the twenty first century, with all the advances and challenges it brought to humanity, will create an ever growing need for education and training. We deserve a new paradigm with a vision and an approach that can meet the challenge of our times.

We need the UN agencies, along with their regional counterparts, to convene a blue ribbon committee like Edgar Faure's, and Jack Delores', to revisit our educational paradigm and come up with a New Paradigm that answers the challenges we face, and lead our efforts.

#### Note

1 / This paper is based on a presentation made by the author at the Arab Development Forum: Priorities for the post 2015 Agenda (held in Amman, Jordan, 10–11 April 2013 under the auspices of the United Nations Development Group *The World We Want*). It summarizes working group 4: Access to and quality of basic services: Education in the MENA region. Data is based on UNESCO and UNICEF regional office reports and presentations (2013).

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# Story of my life

## Part II



### *Tamara*

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

#### **At what age did you start to attend the computer literacy course?**

I attended the computer literacy course in 2012. At that time I was 75 years old. I was the oldest trainee among the group of participants. Now I am 76 years old and really want to attend an English language course within any project for the elderly.

#### **What kind of knowledge have you been missing?**

Now I'm retired, but I am an educated physician. At first I worked as a therapist, and later as radiologist. But never in my career have I had to work on a computer. In our time, this was not taught at any school or college. I am far from the technology and would not even know how to turn on the computer.

#### **What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?**

I was scared that if I accidentally pressed the wrong key, I would spoil or break something. It was hard to overcome that fear. Only thanks to the very attentive and patient trainer, was I able to gradually get rid of these fears. For this we are all very grateful to him.

#### **Why would you want to take a course on computer literacy?**

I learned about the course for seniors from my friends. They had already signed up to the group and the set of participants had already been completed. As I approached the course organisers a little too late, I was not accepted. But I really wanted to learn, I repeatedly asked to be enrolled in the group and the organisers made an exception – they increased the number of participants by one person. To be honest, I missed communication a lot. As young people are now more focused on the business, for us – the elderly, the communication is more important. Loneliness kills a human. I live with my daughter, but she is forced to allocate a lot of time to her profession. There are times when I have nobody to talk to, to discuss something.

#### **What has it meant for you? How has your life changed?**

By the end of the course I learned to use e-mail services, draw pictures in the "Paintbrush" program, had mastered some other computer based softwares. My daughter had bought me a notebook. When I used to send letters and photographs via regular mail to my relatives living in Russia, for some reason they never arrived, no one saw them. Now it isn't a problem anymore – we correspond, exchange photos by e-mail, the communication improved and became regular. I am writing to my relatives in Tyumen and Khanty-Mansiysk, via Internet I had found my classmates and friends in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The social circle has expanded, life has become more interesting. All students of this course became friends, we continue to meet, communicate. This course has extended my life, I have found new energy. In my spare time I love to paint using a computer program. I picked up some greeting cards and redraw them. I like to draw animals. Thanks to the Internet the range of reading expanded as well. Now, for example, I read the author Diprak Chopra. This is a physician and writer who has written many books on spirituality and alternative medicine. He is writing very interestingly about life.

#### **What would you recommend to everyone who wishes to attend such a training?**

I would advise not to fear anything. Age is not an obstacle to learning.



## *Aurora*

Manhiça, Mozambique

### **At what age did you learn to read and write?**

I was 27 when I learned to read and write. This was thanks to the Reflect<sup>1</sup> circle that was set up in my community Melembe in Palmeiras (Maputo Province, Mozambique).

### **Why did you not learn as a child?**

I grew up in a rural community in Gaza Province where there were no schools nearby. My parents were both farmers and couldn't afford to send me to study outside the community. So I never had a chance to study as a child.

### **What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?**

I didn't really face any particular difficulties. Maybe the thought of sitting at a desk like a child when I was already an adult made me feel insecure. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to understand the lessons. But with the support of the Reflect facilitator the process was easy.

### **Why did you want to learn?**

I saw other girls of almost the same age as me working at various professions such as teachers or nurses. This made me always want to get ahead in life, which I felt I could do if I studied. I saw that wherever someone goes to look for work, even simple jobs, they always asked for some academic qualification and Curriculum Vitae.

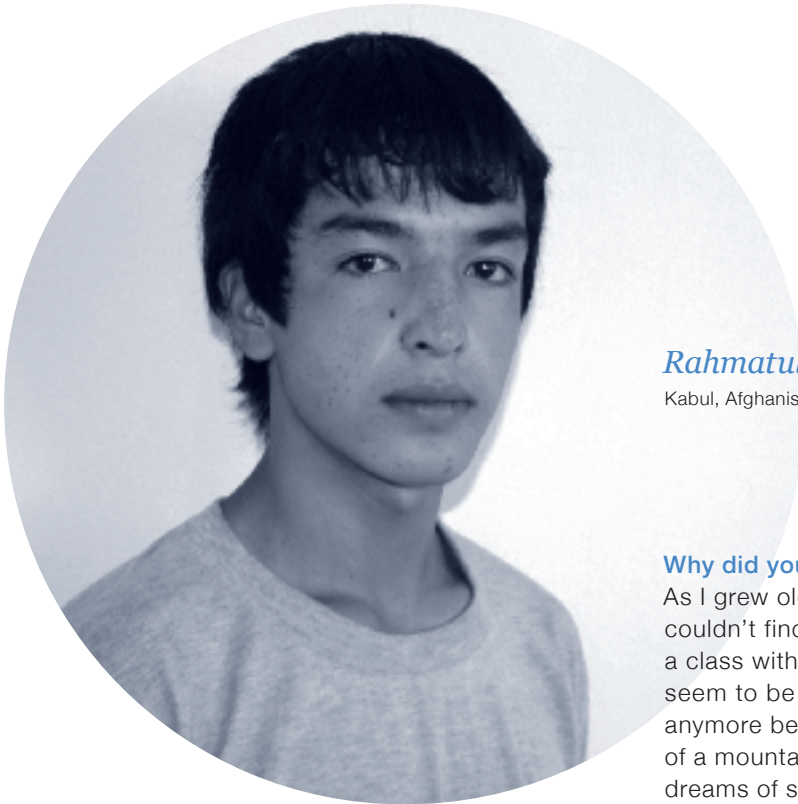
### **What has it meant for you? How has your life changed?**

My life has changed a lot now. With the learning I have acquired through literacy, I have a lot more self-esteem and I am much more respected by my husband's family – I live in the family house with 4 children. I had an opportunity to train in Reflect and now I am a Reflect trainer myself so people in the community look at me as a kind of role model.

### **What would you like to say to other adults who cannot read and write?**

I try to sensitise illiterate people about the importance of education. I always use my own case as an example to show that we must be determined to strive for what we want in life until one day we get it. These days everyone talks about school and training and qualifications. A future without education does not offer any guarantee of security.

<sup>1</sup> / Reflect is an innovative approach to adult learning and social change, which fuses the theories of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire with participatory methodologies. It was developed in the 1990s through pilot projects in Bangladesh, Uganda and El Salvador and is now used by over 500 organisations in over 70 countries worldwide (Ed.).



## *Rahmatullah*

Kabul, Afghanistan

### **At what age did you learn to read and write?**

I struggled to learn to read and write in primary school. It didn't work. Because I was so bad at writing and reading, school went poorly, my whole life was in danger. After a long struggle, I finally learned and now I have a successful career. I have a job as a supermarket clerk and I can provide for my family.

### **Why did you not learn as a child?**

I grew up in a rural community in Gaza Province where most of my early life felt like a struggle. My home situation was very unstable due to a family breakdown and arguments at times. Things weren't much better at school. I spent most days half-asleep at school and couldn't focus or concentrate on my lessons. What the teacher was saying didn't feel important to me and somehow I missed everything. While the other kids were learning to read and write, I skipped school for many years. My parents didn't pay any attention to what I did.

### **What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?**

During literacy lessons I didn't face any problems. It was only in the beginning that I had some difficulties with the pronunciation of some tricky words and letters. I found myself with a clever teacher and all my problems were solved.

### **Why did you want to learn?**

As I grew older, I was faced with a lot of problems and I couldn't find a job, so I went to a literacy centre. I joined a class with about 20 other adults. At first, there didn't seem to be much hope for us. I thought I couldn't learn anymore because to me my age felt like it was at the top of a mountain. My literacy problems stole my hopes and dreams of success in life.

The turning-point came when my teacher encouraged me to take part in the class. Knowing he believed in me made such a difference. I took part in the class very actively for 9 months. Then I even took part in other classes as an assistant. Despite all my difficulties, I discovered that I was intelligent.

### **What has it meant for you? How has your life changed?**

When I left the literacy centre, I decided to take action and I studied hard to improve my reading and writing. I challenged myself in many ways: reading books, newspapers and magazines. I knew nothing about learning new skills and seeing a positive outcome in all circumstances. It wasn't easy at first, but it made me stronger, more creative and more productive. I became a person who was never afraid to try something new. I now work as a store clerk in a big supermarket and now I can write notices, the list of shop materials, prices. I get a good pay, I can support my family and persuade others to learn and change their lives.

### **What would you like to say to other adults who cannot read and write?**

My years of struggle taught me how hard life is. By overcoming my difficulties and being patient and persistent, I have achieved things. If you try hard to read and write, it will not take forever. As our Prophet (PBUH) said: *Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.*





## *Floreni*

Paranoá, Brazil

### **At what age did you learn to read and write?**

I was 45 years old, when I started studying here in Paranoá.

### **Why did you not learn as a child?**

I lived in a town called Vanderlei in the state of Bahia and there was no school there. Everything was difficult and there was no way I could go to school. Afterwards, when I came to the city, I started the struggle for survival and studying had to wait for later.

### **What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?**

I found reading the most difficult. I think it is very complicated to understand all the letters and the words which they form.

### **Why did you want to learn?**

I want to learn to drive a car very much. I think it is great and important. So I want to learn to read so that I can get my driver's license. But I also want to read everything. I want to be able to go out anywhere and read everything that is written, to understand everything and to know what it all means.

### **What has it meant for you? How has your life changed?**

When I began to read it seemed that everything became clearer for me. By reading I can get to know the world better. I think that I am really hooked on reading. I want to read everything I see! I want to discover new words, I want to understand things and I want to discover the world – and reading is an enormous help in all of this.

### **What would you like to say to other adults who cannot read and write?**

Go and find yourself a school and try to learn because learning is great! When I didn't know how to read I used to catch the bus by identifying the colour, I used to write the numbers on my hand and compare them with the number on the bus. If the number was the same then I got on the bus. Now that I know how to read and write I don't catch the wrong bus. Everything in life is better when you know how to read and write. I already suspected that, but now I know that everything is really better.

# Human Rights are the key to the world we want



Camilla Croso  
Global Campaign for Education, Brazil

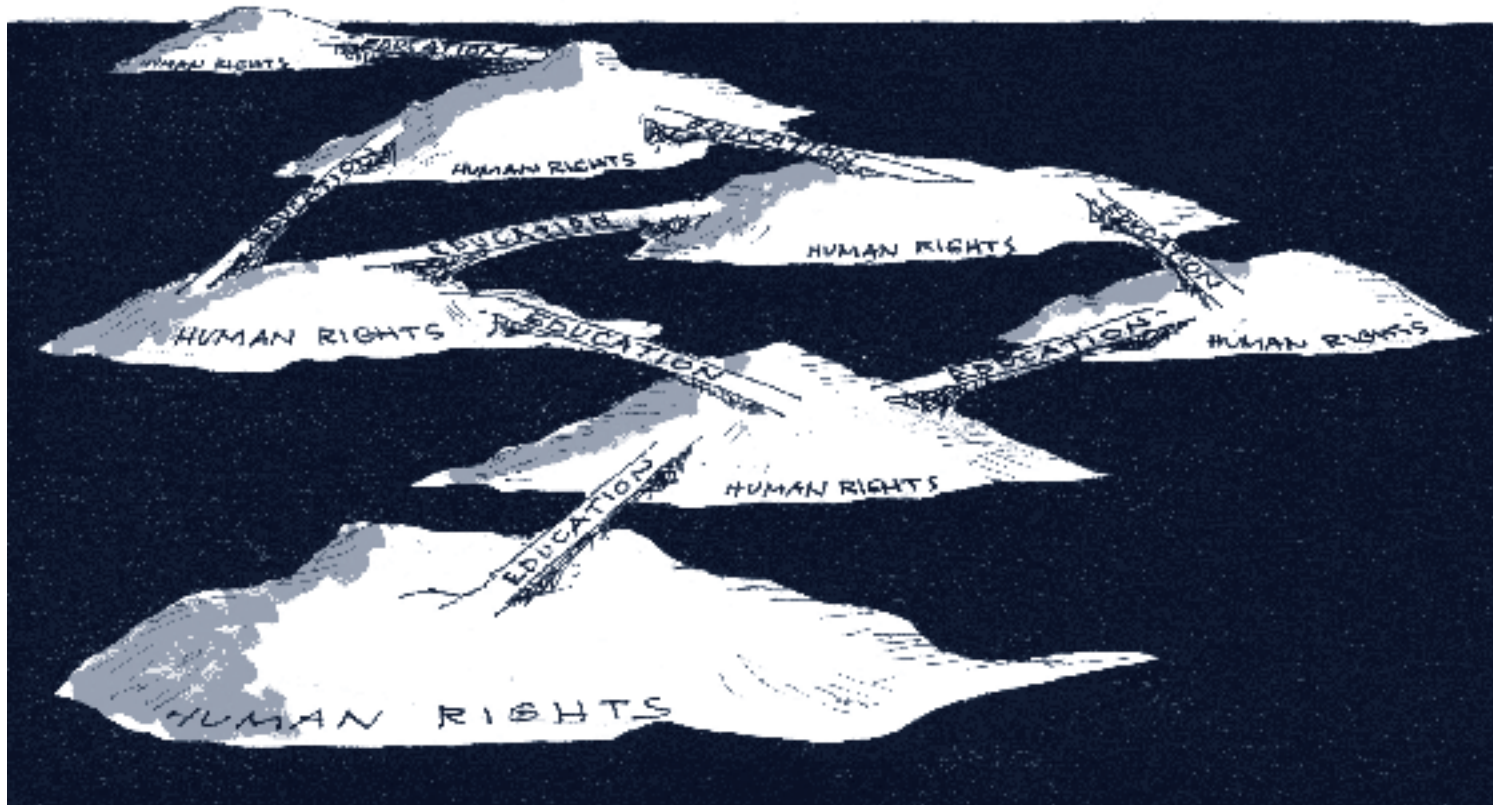
**Abstract** – *In this analysis, we will be sharing some reflections on how education and the Education for All (EFA) framework contribute to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), drawing on the debates currently taking place regarding the post 2015 agenda. From our perspective, the contribution of education and EFA to the MDGs takes place first and foremost given the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, whereby the human right to education is a right in itself and one that enables access to other human rights. But the extent to which education and EFA actually contribute towards MDGs depends on the vision and understanding one has on development as well as the sense and purpose attributed to education.*

## The indivisibility of human rights

Education is a fundamental human right, one that enables access to other human rights. As pointed out by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations, the right to education, “has been variously classified as an economic right, a social right and a cultural right. It is all of these. It is also, in many ways, a civil right and a political right, since it is central to the full and effective realisation of those rights as well. In this respect, the right to education epitomises the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights.” (CESCR 1999a).

This core characteristic of the right to education, summing up the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, must be increasingly recognised at national, regional and international levels. It impacts the content and direction of policy-making both in education and policies that go beyond. Within the current debate on the post 2015 development and education agendas, recognising the right to education as a social, cultural, economic, civil and political right is of huge importance.

As the fulfilment of the right to education fosters the fulfilment of all other human rights, we should see education placed centre stage in the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals. This is true both for the current goals and for the set of goals being debated for the post 2015 scenario. As Education International rightly puts it, there can be no credible global development framework without the right to education at its core.



“The right to education epitomises the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights.”

The above-mentioned Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights also points out that apart from being a right in and of itself, “as an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalised adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. Education has a vital role in empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitative and hazardous labor and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy (and) protecting the environment.” (CESCR 1999b).

In this sense, the fulfilment of the right to education responds to and fosters the realisation of all current MDGs: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development. Similarly, it will have a crucial role in promoting the fulfilment of the post 2015 MDG goals, which are still under debate, but which currently point to a set of 12 goals: end poverty; empower girls and women to achieve gender equity; provide quality education and Lifelong Learning; ensure healthy lives;

ensure food security and food nutrition; achieve universal access to water and sanitation; secure sustainable energy; create jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth; manage natural resource assets sustainably; ensure good governance and effective institutions; ensure stable and peaceful societies; and create a global enabling environment and catalyse long-term financing.

“There can be no credible global development framework without the right to education at its core.”

Having said this, as important as recognising education as an empowering right of all others, and precisely because of the assumption that understands human rights as indivisible and interdependent, it is important to have in place legal and political frameworks that are enabling all rights, including education. That is to say, education will foster the realisation of all other rights, but the realisation of the right to education will flourish in a context where other human rights are fulfilled. For this reason, at the same time as we must seek to guarantee the realisation of the right to education, we must also struggle for the protection, respect and realisation of all other rights, with sound structural legal and policy frameworks in place to support this. In this sense, countries must adopt policies that structurally impact the social, economic and po-



litical scenario towards social and environmental justice and human dignity, such as progressive taxation, redistributive policies, affirmative action that combats historic discrimination, policies that foster social participation in decision-making, policies geared towards the strengthening of public systems, including sound financial budgeting for the realisation of rights.

### The vision of development

Debating the means and extent to which education can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals not only implies an understanding of the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, but also a reflection on what vision of development and of education underpins the MDG as well as the Education for All framework. Before reflecting on the different views in dispute regarding the understanding of Education and its purpose, let us look at an important debate that regional sister organisations have put forward in Latin America and the Caribbean.

“Education must promote the full potential of human beings, respect for all human rights and freedoms, it must value difference and diversity, it needs to overcome all forms of violence and discrimination, it shall promote citizenship and peace as well as harmonic relations with the environment.”

In this region, the Education Working Group (GTE for its acronym in Spanish)<sup>1</sup>, that animated the debate in preparation for the Rio + 20 conference, has challenged the very notion of development and have put forward the concept of environmental and social justice as a horizon more in tune with the principle of human dignity and sociocultural diversity. The vision that inspires this draws from the indigenous people’s paradigm of well living, which compared to the notion of development, is more complex, less linear, allows for contextualised patterns and benchmarks, is inextricably related to the environment and recognises difference and diversity. Well living implies aspects that go way beyond the economic dimension, to include all aspects of human life.

### Education as a fundamental human right

Finally, education will contribute decisively to the realisation of all other rights and of broad development goals as long as it is conceived and implemented as a fundamental human right. To understand education this way you must

recognise its purpose broadly, the way it is spelt out in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other international human rights instruments that followed, with citizens of all ages being right bearers and States being responsible for its fulfilment. In this sense, education must promote the full potential of human beings, respect for all human rights and freedoms, it must value difference and diversity, it needs to overcome all forms of violence and discrimination, it shall promote citizenship and peace as well as harmonic relations with the environment.

Recognising education as a fundamental human right also implies that education be universal, compulsory and free at least at primary and increasingly at all other levels. It implies understanding what the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights established in 1999: that the fulfilment of the right to education requires all its four dimensions be satisfied: its availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. Finally, it implies recognising that the right to education begins at birth and is lifelong, therefore placing at the forefront of debates and decisions the need to put in place educational policies that are geared towards all age groups, from early childhood to adults.

Currently, in the debates that revolve around the post 2015 agenda, there are different conceptions of education in dispute, with most civil society organisations defending education as a fundamental human right, but with important social actors fostering a reductionist vision of education, economist in nature, narrowed to responding to market needs and taking as core indicators measurable learning outcomes, especially around mathematics, reading and writing. In this latter instrumental vision, the focus is on children and to some extent adolescents, but with little or no room for recognising adults as rights bearers. In this sense, civil society has been highlighting the crucial need of attributing increased visibility and importance to adult learning and education, as well as to adult literacy, both in the education and in the development agenda.

Already at the UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education, CONFINTEA VI, civil society from across the world called for increased priority to adult learning and education and to adult literacy. Unfortunately, there has been an overall neglect of these dimensions in the implementation of the current EFA framework and an absence of these issues in the current MDG framework as well as in the post 2015 MDG debates, despite the fact that Adult Education is a core dimension of the human right to education and, as argued at the beginning of this article, has a direct impact in the accomplishment of all human rights. The current neglect in recognising adults as rights bearers and the absence of Adult Education and literacy from the current post 2015 debates is a grave flaw that must be overcome, with civil society, international organisations, Member States and other social actors giving it due priority.



## Note

1 / That includes the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), the Latin American Adult Education Council (CEAAL), Latin American Women's Network (REPEM), the World Education Forum, the Journey on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility, the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO, Brazil, [www.flacso.org.br](http://www.flacso.org.br)) and Education International (EI, [www.ei-ie.org](http://www.ei-ie.org)).

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### About the Author

**Camilla Croso**, Master in Social Policy and Planning in Developing Countries from the London School of Economics, is general coordinator of the Latin-American Campaign for the Right to Education and President of the Global Campaign for Education. She integrated the Writing Committee of the Dakar Framework for Action during the EFA World Education Forum in 2000 and actively participated in CONFINTEA VI. She currently integrates various international and regional advisory Boards on the right to education, including the EFA and the Education First Global Initiative Steering Committees.

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# Key Document

## 1948: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights



### Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore **THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY** proclaims **THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS** as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

## Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

## Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

## Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

## Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

## Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

## Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

## Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

## Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

## Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

## Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

## Article 11

1 / Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

2 / No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

## Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

## Article 13

1 / Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

2 / Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

## Article 14

1 / Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

2 / This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

## Article 15

1 / Everyone has the right to a nationality.

2 / No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

### Article 16

- 1 / Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- 2 / Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- 3 / The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

### Article 17

- 1 / Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
- 2 / No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

### Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

### Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

### Article 20

- 1 / Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- 2 / No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

### Article 21

- 1 / Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- 2 / Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- 3 / The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

### Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

### Article 23

- 1 / Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- 2 / Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- 3 / Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- 4 / Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

### Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

### Article 25

- 1 / Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
- 2 / Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.



## Article 26

**1** / Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

**2** / Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

**3** / Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

## Article 27

**1** / Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

**2** / Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

## Article 28

**1** / Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

## Article 29

**1** / Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

**2** / In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

**3** / These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

## Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

# What research will show us – and what we need to understand about Competencies in Later Life



From left to right:

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**Abstract** – *The International PIAAC study has collected data on competencies of adults in three domains in 25 countries, in many of them for the first time ever. The article provides an overview of central terms, main aims and the methodological approach of this OECD study. It also discusses its potentials and limitations. One limitation is the focus on the labour force, excluding adults older than 65 years, a fast growing part of many populations in times of demographic change. To remedy this limitation, an extensional study in Germany was carried out with 1339 adults in the age group 66–80, using the PIAAC instruments and complementing them with additional qualitative inquiries.*

The Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals are all set with measurable targets. This helps when we want to assess the success rate of the ambitious programmes. Within Youth and Adult Education one problem is that we lack a lot of hard data to back up our claims and suggested targets. If the Adult Education community is to succeed in influencing the post 2015 agenda, we need more research results to underpin our claims. One interesting research project comes out of OECD. It is called PIAAC. Rather than counting the number of enrolled students or the percentage of women and men in education, PIAAC takes another approach. It looks at what skills and competencies we have to get by in life.

The discussion on skills and competencies in adulthood, their meaning for different fields of life, and their development after leaving schools and vocational training is – at least in Germany – quite new and not yet very intense. This might change when the PIAAC results are discussed.

It is important to understand that the discussion on which competencies are meaningful in adulthood has been driven by pragmatic reasoning and the availability of assessments. As a result, only a few skills and competencies have been taken into account in assessment studies so far. These are skills which seem to be important for participation in modern societies. At the same time we must remember that considerably more skills and competencies exist. Only three of them are part of PIAAC.

## 25 countries compared

OECD initiated and organised the international survey PIAAC – Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies – in 25 participating countries (Schleicher 2008). International comparative studies are intended to produce basic information about competencies and educational activities of adults and to support political decision-makers to handle challenges stemming from demographic change. PIAAC consists of household surveys using a representative sample of the working age population (aged between 16-65). The international study is directed by a board of participating countries. A consortium of research institutes led by ETS (Educational Testing Service) is responsible for organising data collection and for the evaluation of the international dataset.

PIAAC is based on two international surveys of adult skills. These predecessors are known under the name of “International Adult Literacy Survey” (IALS) and “Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey” (ALL).

The understanding of competencies is based on the OECD project DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competencies), initiated in 1997, entrusted with the task of finding a definition of competency which can be used for further international surveys. Several experts and stakeholders already involved in PISA and ALL worked together to identify key competencies necessary for living in modern society. They came to the following definition: “A competence is defined as the ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context. Competent performance or effective action implies the mobilisation of knowledge, cognitive and practical skills, as well as social and behaviour components such as attitudes, emotions, values and motivations” (OECD 2003: 2).

The project is divided into three Competency Categories. The first one “Using Tools Interactively” (OECD & Statistics Canada 2005: 10) is important for PIAAC. The relevance of using texts and language, also described as literacy, to interact with others and to deal with information and knowledge, is shown. Technical skills enabling a person to use technical tools to get information are also mentioned as important in order to participate in modern society (Rychen & Salganik 2003).

PIAAC includes two parts, a background questionnaire and the assessments to identify competencies. In its first part, the survey paints a picture of the social situation. Respondents are not only asked for their socioeconomic status but also for their educational biography, their current and previous jobs, and their reading, calculating and media use in everyday life.

### What competencies do we need for a good life?

The second part is dedicated to assessing competencies in three central domains (OECD 2012). Three basic skills were found and considered relevant for “effective and successful participation in social and economic life”

(OECD 2012: 10). PIAAC compares literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in a technology-rich environment. Literacy is defined as “understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written texts to participate in society, achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (OECD 2012: 20).

The definition of numeracy is derived from the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey and encompasses the “ability to access, use, interpret and communicate mathematical information and ideas, in order to engage in and manage the mathematical demands of a range of situations in adult life” (OECD 2012: 34).

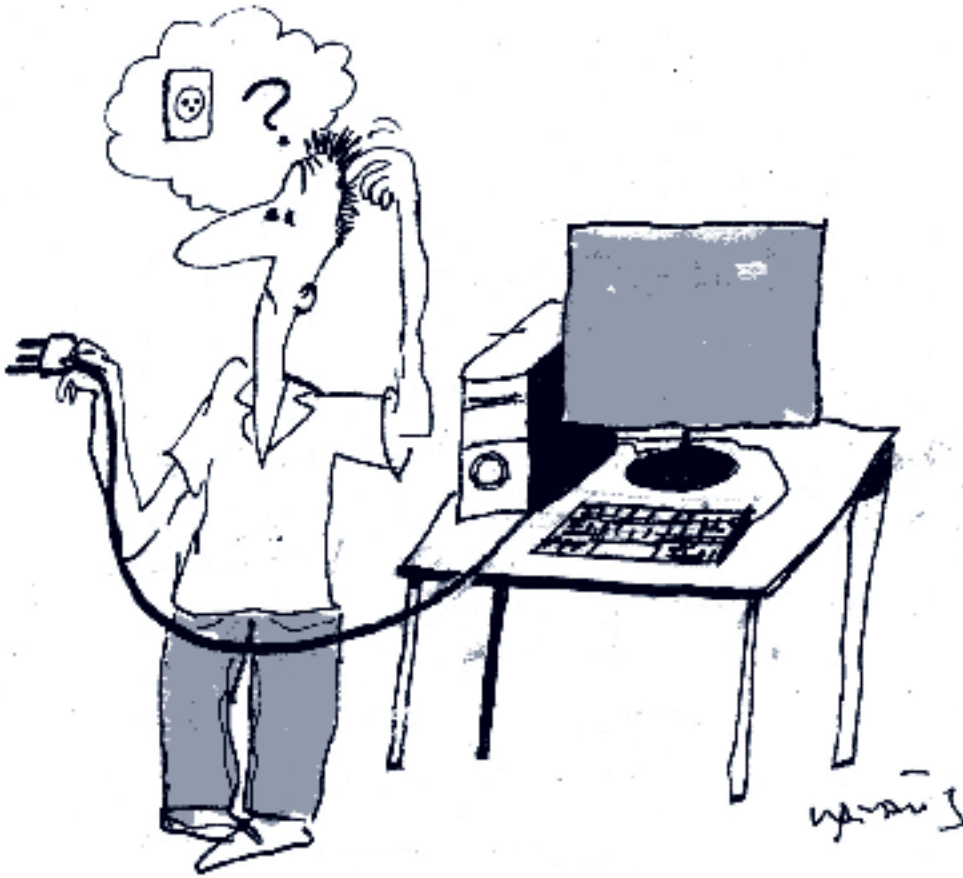
The domain of problem solving has a particular importance, because it combines at least two different skills, as it provides information on problem solving skills on the one hand and additional information on key competencies in dealing with computers and the world wide web on the other. PIAAC defines problem solving in technology-rich environments as “using digital technology, communication tools and networks to acquire and evaluate information, communicate with others and perform practical tasks. The first PIAAC problem-solving survey focuses on the abilities to solve problems for personal, work and civic purposes by setting up appropriate goals and plans, and accessing and making use of information through computers and computer networks” (OECD 2012: 47).

Both problem solving and reading skills takes the digital environment into account, the latter through the use of websites and emails. In order to fully review the investigation procedure scientifically, it is necessary to publish the complete issues. But up to now, the OECD only intends to announce the results applied to social groups and some selected items.

The interviews of the main study were conducted in the years 2011/2012 and the first results were published in October 2013. On the basis of the PIAAC study, there will be an international ranking in the field of adult competencies. So far it remains unknown how results will be interpreted and how far there will be hints on deficits in school systems, vocational training systems or in Adult Education. However, it can be expected that the results point to future challenges for Adult Education and further vocational training in the participating countries. A specific challenge for the international consortium was to identify a suitable investigation programme for all countries involved.

### But where are the older learners?

Germany is one of 25 OECD member states to participate in the PIAAC study. As Germany was not included in the IALS and ALL studies, for the first time a set of adult core competencies within an international assessment is measured in Germany to allow for an international comparison. However, the international sample includes only the economically active population up to 65 years of age. This



seems deficient, looking at the demographic development in modern countries, not only because the number of people older than 65 is rising and more and more of them are still at work.

Fortunately, Germany has made an extensional study called “Competencies in Later Life” (CiLL), researching the competencies of elderly people between 66 and 80 years old, applying the same investigation programme as PIAAC (Friebe & Schmidt-Hertha 2013). The interviews took place from May to September 2012. This study was conducted by the German Institute for Adult Education in Bonn in cooperation with the Ludwig-Maximilian-University Munich and the University of Tübingen. It was financed by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

Germany is – like many other OECD states – an ageing society. Three factors have important effects on demographic change in Germany: low birth rates, increasing life expectancy and declining immigration. This will change the German population structure in the coming years, thus affecting the lives of individuals as well as the organisation of social life (Federal Statistical Office 2006). In the future, potentially fewer middle-aged people may support the older people in Germany. According to the German Federal Institute for Population Research, in 2006 the average life expectancy was 82 years for women and 77 years for men (Federal Statistical Office 2006: 38). Forecasts predict a declining population in Germany,

including one third of the population at the age of 60 and older by 2050.

### A third age?

The increase in “healthy life expectancy” (WHO 2002) is changing the possibilities of creating the third age. Older people wish to be increasingly active and engaged in society, they are still in employment or give family support. The fifth report of the German Federal Government concerning the situation of older generations states: “There is a strong relationship between a stronger use of the potentials of older people in the after-vocational life phase and the participation in further training” (BMFSFJ 2005: 344). Results of neuropsychological research show that learning in later life promotes the mental capacity of individuals, increases our ability to reflect on our actions and improves communication in groups (see Scheich 2006).

### Who are these old people anyway?

But the elderly do not constitute a homogeneous group from an educational perspective (Strobel, Schmidt-Hertha & Gnahs 2011). Talking about training elderly people already raises questions related to the complexity of the topic. First of all, it must be clarified who the older ones are and which educational needs are to be discussed.



## PIAAC compares adult competencies in three central domains

### 1 Literacy

“understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written texts to participate in society, achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential”

### 2 Numeracy

“ability to access, use, interpret and communicate mathematical information and ideas, in order to engage in and manage the mathematical demands of a range of situations in adult life”

### 3 Problem-solving in a technology-rich environment

“using digital technology, communication tools and networks to acquire and evaluate information, communicate with others and perform practical tasks”

The common definition for the group of older workers covers the age-group 50 plus. But the answer to the question of when people are to be considered old or feel old is essentially based on social conventions. These conventions have cultural roots and change historically (see also Kruse 2008). Gerontologists differentiate between chronologic, biomedical and psychosocial age. Following practical research facts and scientific research that is already available for this particular age group (e.g. Tippelt et.al. 2009), the CiLL study expanded the PIAAC survey to the age range 66-80. On the other hand it is still possible to measure competency in this age group due to a low influence of disease and handicaps.

The CiLL interviews were conducted by the survey institute TNS Infratest in Munich. 3,600 senior citizens in 111 municipalities were randomly selected from lists held at German registration offices. 90 TNS Infratest interviewers were active nationwide. 1,339 interviews were conducted which equals a response rate of 40%. The data for CiLL was collected by using the elaborate PIAAC background questionnaire, which covered socio-demographic data and information on educational and qualification processes as well as labour status or previous employment. Subsequently, the three central adult competence domains, literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments, were tested. Respondents with computer skills answered the test questions by use of a laptop; all other respondents were issued

test booklets. Almost 30% of the elderly respondents chose the computer for answering the questions. The prepared data will be completed by the international coordinator ETS and supplemented by test results and weightings. The results of the study will be presented to the public in 2014.

### The results are coming

The CiLL research programme also includes qualitative research on competencies of the elderly in the context of their specific life situation. Until today, around 50 qualitative interviews have been completed. These interviews contain self-assessments of competencies and background information on the environment of the life situation. In this way the data of the PIAAC study were supplemented, examined closely and critically evaluated (Friebe & Schmidt-Hertha 2013).

With the PIAAC results published in October 2013 and CiLL results in 2014, some relevant information on the state of adults’ competencies in different countries and for the elderly in Germany will be available, which may lead to even more unresolved issues. The quantitative database does not detect reliable causes for competency differences between countries and social groups, nor do the results provide instructions for the development of competencies in adulthood. Nevertheless, more or less the same applies to the PISA study, which was

followed by many additional studies and innovations in the educational system. Even if public and political reactions on PIAAC results are probably more reticent in comparison to PISA, the international assessment of adult competencies might provide important impulses for further research and good arguments for the significance of Lifelong Learning and the necessity of public funding of Adult Education.

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# Literacy in Africa: It's in our own hands



Gorgui Sow  
Education specialist, Senegal

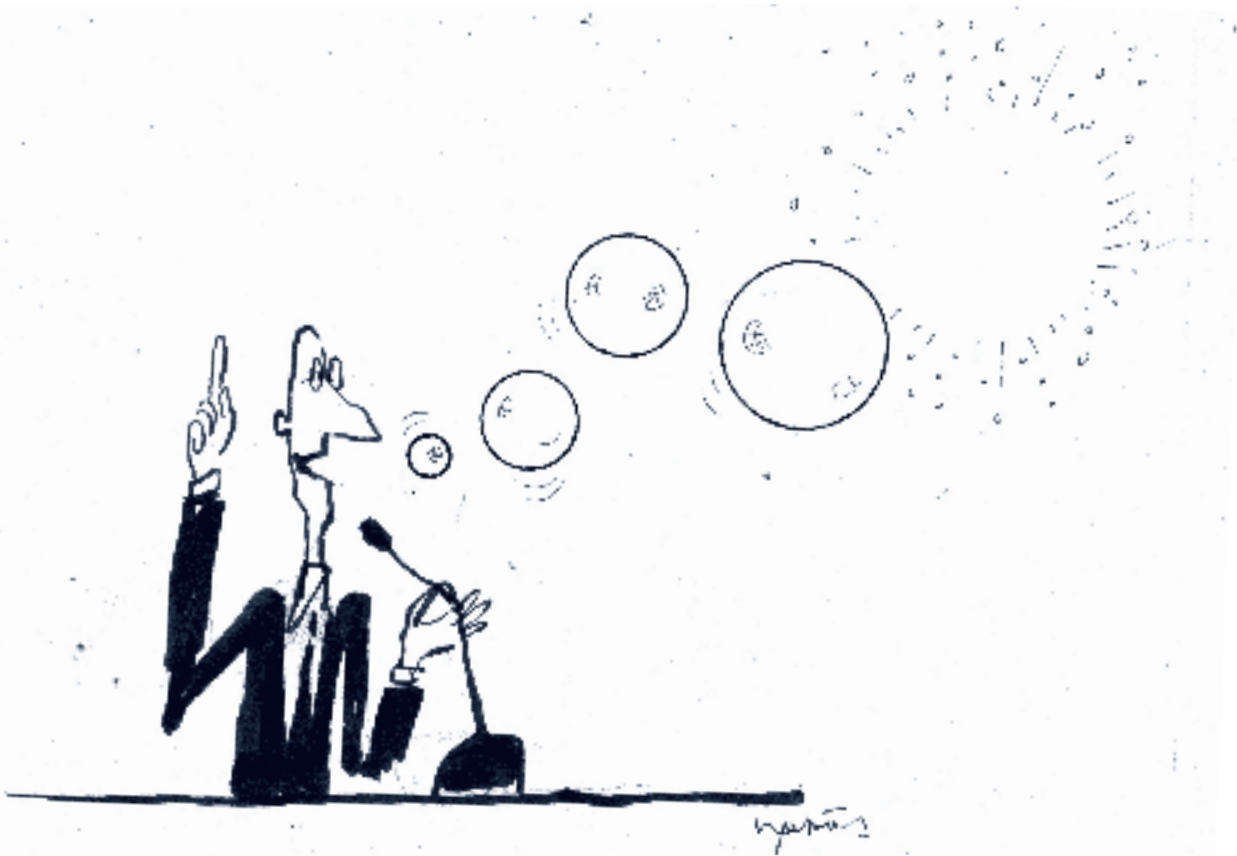
**Abstract** – *In this article, the author presents a fundamental problem, which is the lack of interest on the part of many African governments vis-à-vis the literacy of their young adult population. This is a population where more than 50% is usually illiterate. It is not only a problem of lack of political will, but a lack of political consciousness: African leaders must be conscious of the fact that illiteracy in youth and adults is the most formidable obstacle to growth and sustainable development of African nations.*

*For the author, the discussion on what should happen after 2015 shows that the attention of education providers on the issue of successful learning in primary school may make adult literacy even more of a problem. For a long time to come, Africa is likely to remain one of the richest continents with the poorest people.*

Illiteracy is one of the biggest challenges for Africa. First of all because it is one of the largest regions of the world burdened with the highest illiteracy rate – over 40% of the population over 15 years of age. Africa is also where the factors contributing to illiteracy are most present: the highest proportion of children who do not have access to primary education or leave school early (40%), or who have not even mastered basic skills at the end of primary school (50%), with a high risk of falling into illiteracy.

The United Nations declaration Literacy Decade (2003–2012) reaffirms the role of literacy at the heart of the fundamental human right to education. The human right has a number of key characteristics: It is inseparable from the recognition of human dignity and, therefore, it is universal in that it is acknowledged for all people irrespective of social origin, gender, race, ethnicity or age.

These principles of inseparability and universality remain empty words when the law is ineffective. Mr. Mamadou N'doye, the former Executive Secretary of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), reminded us of this during the first ADEA triennial in February 2012 in Ouagadougou. The ethical obligation of States is therefore not just about formally recognising these principles but above all to create the conditions for effective literacy for all.



### Africa's rendezvous with 2015

The year 2015 will be a very critical rendezvous for governments and the partners of education in Africa. Two important processes will eventually meet their deadline (the agenda of Education for All – EFA, and the Millennium Development Goals – MDG). 2015 will also be the midpoint after the last UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI and the Belém Framework for Action).

In the same year, Africa will also rendezvous with a large number of political and budgetary deficits in literacy for youth and adults. This situation is the result of several factors, some of which are endogenous (economic hardship, political and institutional instability, civil war, etc.), and others which are exogenous (marginalization of EFA Goal 4 of the Dakar Framework for Action in favour of universal primary education).

In February 2012 the first ADEA Triennial in Ouagadougou attracted over 1,000 education stakeholders from the national and international level. I had the privilege to ask a question to the panel of three heads of state – Burkina Faso, Niger and Ivory Coast – invited to this event.

My question was: “Excellencies, as you so well reaffirm, education is a fundamental right, and if you consider that the basic education of citizens in your countries is a priority for your governments, why then do you all put so little money into literacy for youth and adults?” (Less than 1% of the education budget.)

Jeff Koinange, the famous Kenyan journalist enlisted by the ADEA to animate this unusual panel, had a smile on his lips and seemed surprised to see the three heads of state look at each other and writhe with embarrassed laughter in the face of the applause from an audience that apparently shared my concerns.

We remained hungry for an answer even after the responses given successively by our honourable guests.

Indeed, the three countries mentioned above are among those with the most illiterate youth and adults in West Africa. We see the slowest rate of political struggle against illiteracy in those countries, and as a result they will not even reach EFA Goal 4 in 2020 (that of reducing the adult illiteracy rate by 50% in 2015).

Ivory Coast has a population of nearly 22 million, of whom nearly 50% are illiterate (or nearly 11 million). Even if the government was capable of bringing literacy to 500,000 adults per year through projects funded by the Ivorian state and by donors, it would mean that the Ivory Coast would not reach Goal 4 until 2023.

Regarding Niger and Burkina Faso: despite the bold policies of the last decade to fight against illiteracy, the two countries will not meet Goal 4 before 2025, unless these states triple the resources allocated to this sector by 2015.



## The promotion of literacy for the people – political consciousness of African leaders.

Prioritisation of literacy for youth and adults in the context of poverty and socio-political crisis goes beyond political will, but it is a constituent part of the political consciousness of African leaders. A democratic and egalitarian Africa will be created only with well educated African citizens, aware of their rights and responsibilities. In the words of Professor Cheikh Anta Diop: “The African citizen should be armed to the teeth with science” in order to make Africa a sovereign and developed continent.

Unfortunately the scarce resources allocated to the literacy sector show the willingness of African governments to relegate literacy for youth and adults to the background.

### A lot has happened since Dakar

During the last two decades, NGOs and some African governments have done a lot of useful things in the sub-sector LNFE (Literacy and Non-Formal Education). Take for example Burkina Faso, where the foundations have been put in place to promote LNFE. In Mali, YELEMBOU, a large popular movement, was launched to eradicate illiteracy among youth and adults. In Senegal, the so called “Faire-faire” policy (working through partners) was able to mobilise all the civil society stakeholders, the communities and the state to reduce the illiteracy rate by 5% each year.

It is unfortunate that very little has been documented in an attractive way or otherwise used as examples. This inability to sell LNFE products to the communities and to the education partners makes the financing of quality literacy increasingly uncertain. The noted lack of transparency in the implementation of certain LNFE projects and the lack of certification doesn't exactly help either.

In Africa, even if we have managed to make early childhood development a priority for the Decade of Education in Africa (launched by the African Union), we have so far not been able to do the same for LNFE. The African Union is a showcase of the realities and priorities of member countries. We hope that the efforts made in this field by ADEA, UNESCO, the African platform for literacy, the African Network Campaign on Education For All (ANCEFA), Pan African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (PAALAE), African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), African Reflect Network (PAMOJA) and many other stakeholders regarding the right to education will not be in vain.

In its advocacy strategy to make Education For All a priority in the agenda of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) beyond 2015, ANCEFA, in partnership with national coalitions and partners like ADEA, UNESCO, Save the Children, Plan (Promoting child rights to end child poverty), OSISA (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa) and ActionAid, managed to pass a declaration at

the last Conference of Ministers of Education of the African Union (COMEDAF) in Abuja asking African governments to make education inclusive and LNFE a priority for 2015 and beyond.

Many governments do not prioritise literacy for youth and adults. This makes it even more difficult to get adequate funding from education donors. Multiple and often uncoordinated interventions by NGOs are like “the tree that hides the forest”, making state financing even more insignificant.

### Education disappearing from the agenda?

The wake-up call will be very difficult in 2015, and after 2015 may result in an even more unjust treatment of youth and adult literacy since:

- Education itself in this sector is already struggling to be heard in the consultative process on the post 2015 agenda, not to mention literacy and non-formal education in general.
- The new global trend towards Education For All, supported by “think tanks” for measuring learning and effective preschool and elementary learning, will push more African countries to be even less attentive to LNFE. For the activists and researchers of this new dynamic it is considered better to eradicate the evil at its root in the name of efficiency. This means to invest more in the learning of the very young (children 6 to 14 years old) before they join the ranks of the illiterate youth and adults.
- Current research on the quality of education that uses fairly original methodological approaches inspired by Pratham, the Indian NGO, (assessment of skills in reading, mathematics and general knowledge, not at school level but at household level) in connection with the work of the Brookings Institute and other agencies, will constitute a formidable critical mass which will easily convince donors of the new priorities for the post 2015 agenda.

The strategic priorities of the new Global Partnership for Education (GPE) have already identified areas in which the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America must invest in order to gain access to international funding. *[For more on GPE, see the article on page 58, Ed.]*

Governments wishing to benefit from external resources for LNFE after 2015 will have to rethink their strategies for fundraising for this sub-sector by integrating literacy programs in their development policies for early childhood, schooling of young girls or the promotion of education and employability of young people excluded from national education systems.

## Africa has the resources for its education

The African industrial and mining sector, which is boiling with billions of dollars each year, should not fear an income tax whose sole purpose is to pull the men and women who daily earn them this wealth out of poverty and ignorance. African countries have an urgent duty to fund the development of the basic technical and vocational skills of their citizens from the revenues that emanate from natural resources.

Beyond the bounds of the political consciousness of this particular time, it will be a source of pride for Africans and all activists in a free Africa!

i

### About the Author

**Gorgui Sow** is a psychologist by training; he worked as a researcher and trainer in the field of evaluation and monitoring of learning, the use of national languages at school. Later he became one of the most famous defenders of the right to education in Africa. Mr. Sow headed the African Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) for ten years where he organised and supported several campaigns for literacy for youth and adults with UNESCO, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE).

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# Artists of this issue

## Claudius Cecco

Cartoonist

### What's so funny about education?

Perhaps the fact that in a society that doesn't know how to change course (the present one leads to an environmental Armageddon, a Titanic sailing full speed ahead into a huge iceberg) everyone asks educators to give answers, without providing them with the necessary resources to do it – and when they do give answers, society won't listen.

### What is funnier, politics or education?

Politics...

### Why?

...because politicians take themselves so seriously.

### What, if anything, is it not possible to do a cartoon about?

In principle, humour is here to unveil the hidden aspects of any human activity, so there shouldn't be any subject that should escape its subversive action. In Umberto Eco's *Le nom de la Rose*, humour is the great enemy of religion (in one monk's vision), and at least one recent cartoon raised angry reactions from Islamists. I'd say that religious people and politicians generally lack a sense of humour. That's why it is so rewarding for a cartoonist to criticise politicians and make fun of pastors, priests, the Pope and so on. By the way, the present Pope Francis seems to have a great sense of humour, which reveals a very bright and intelligent person – just like a cartoonist is!



### Claudius Cecco

Brazilian of Italian descent, Architect, Graphic Designer, post graduate studies in Urban Planning (Italy, The Netherlands), Cartoonist. Executive Director of CECIP (People's Image Creation Center) a not-for-profit NGO that produces educational audio-visual and printed toolkits, conceives public interest campaigns (on racism, domestic violence, health and educational issues, etc.) and organises training courses and seminars for educators and other social actors, empowering them to qualify their action in bringing about necessary changes in our societies.

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# Where are the men?

## These are the reasons they are not interested in literacy



From left to right:

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**Abstract** – *The study “Factors Leading to Low Level Participation in Adult Literacy Programmes Among Men of Namwala District” looks at why men will not participate in adult literacy programmes.*

*Reasons for not participating include shyness, a feeling of being too old for any learning, or the feeling that participating in adult literacy programmes will be a sheer waste of time. The study recommends that the government should provide an infrastructure specifically for adult literacy programmes and that the providers should sensitise the community regarding the benefits of participating.*

Most Southern African countries are struggling with the challenge of how to deal with growing levels of illiteracy and particularly illiterate adults. Although it is well established that Adult Education is a powerful tool for sustainable development, it is obvious that specific and deliberate policies need to be put in place for its effectiveness (Caffarella 2001). However, in most African countries, policy has been considered unimportant when combating adult illiteracy. Take Zambia, where efforts have been made towards a policy on Adult Education since gaining independence in 1964. To date, no such policy exists. Instead Adult Learning and Education is guided by a number of different policy documents, for example “National Policy on Community Development, Educating our Future, National Youth Policy, National Agriculture Policy, National Gender Policy, National Employment and Labour Market Policy” (MoE 2008). The result is a haphazard approach in the provision of Adult Education, as there is no guiding document to the providers of such programmes.

Zambia also lacks a clear policy on non-formal education (Mumba 2000). Despite the multiplicity of providers of adult literacy programmes (which include government ministries, parastatal organisations, church organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations), there are no benchmarks, and this makes it difficult to co-ordinate and monitor the sector. Following the “World Conference on Education For All” in Jomtien in 1990, Zambia held a National Con-



ference which stated that there was a need to reassert the political commitment to providing education as a human right. The fact that no policy still exists shows that there has been a lack of political will.

In addition, funding of adult literacy programmes in Zambia, and the world over, is usually inadequate, inconsistent and uncoordinated (Aitchison & Hassana 2009). In Zambia, Adult Education programmes are not funded as stand-alone programmes but are under the umbrella of education in general. This has been exacerbated after the shifting of adult literacy activities from the Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health, where it received more attention, to the Ministry of Education (MoE 2010). The latter, being more concerned with the education of children and youths, have so far not provided the necessary support and funding that Adult Education deserves. Funding entails a clear need for the investment in capacity development and having sufficient and well qualified professional staff to take an interest in such programmes (Aitchison & Hassana 2009). Under-funding poses a threat to the sustainability of adult literacy programmes. In 2010, most African countries spent 0.3% to 0.5% of the education budget on Adult Education. In Zambia, 0.2% of the total budgetary allocation to education was spent on Adult Education activities.

Another challenge in the provision of adult literacy programmes has to do with tailoring the programmes for women. The reason is that there are more illiterate females than males. Therefore, most programmes are designed to meet the needs of female illiterates.

### Namwala District situation analysis

Namwala is a rural district situated in the Southern Province of Zambia. It shares boundaries with four districts: Monze to the southeast, Choma to the south, Kalomo and Itezhi-tezhi to the northwest. It covers an area of about 10,000 square kilometres.

According to the 2002 census, the population of the district is about 83,000 (49% males, 51% females) mostly living in major settlement areas (CSO 2003).

Most of the land in the district is covered by plains and is used for the grazing of cattle (Namwala District Development Plan 2006–2010).

200 persons are included in the study. Some were selected because of their official role in adult literacy programmes (for example the District Commissioner), others were either participants or non-participants in literacy programmes.

The study identifies a number of reasons why men do not enrol in adult literacy programmes. First, it was discovered that generally, literacy levels in Namwala District are far below expectations, mainly due to a lack of commitment by the government to alleviate illiteracy. But the main problem is elsewhere. The major factors have to do with culture and tradition. Men are expected to fend

and provide for their families; engaging in any adult literacy activity is not a priority. Instead, they devote most of their time to income-generating activities. As a result, even young boys are withdrawn from school at an early stage (as early as primary school) so that the older men can prepare them for adult life. Secondly, the pride of men in the district is determined by how many head of cattle a man has, number of wives a man married and the number of children one has. Therefore, men work tirelessly in an effort to acquire as many herds of cattle as possible. After that, they can marry as many women and have as many children as they desire. Acquisition and possession of the above was and is still considered as evidence of being rich.

### Traditions in the way

Traditional leaders also play a role in discouraging men from attending adult literacy programmes. These leaders still hold on very strongly to archaic traditional beliefs and practices. As a result they encourage their subjects to engage in early marriages and other traditional practices which do not place priority on education or adult literacy activities. One recommendation is therefore to get traditional leaders to unlearn some of the archaic practices which may not be relevant for this generation. In its place new trends can be suggested, trends which may even bring about development in their chiefdoms. Traditional ceremonies, such as “Shimunenga” in the Maala area, are also cited as major deterrents. This ceremony is about “showing off” how many herds of cattle a man has. Men are, therefore, preoccupied with preparations for such ceremonies for most part of the year leaving no room for adult literacy programmes.



Cattle rearing is the main economic stay of the local people.

Why then, do some men still enrol in adult literacy programmes? Simply to learn how to read and write. This, they state, will open up opportunities for them, like land a job or write letters and fill out relevant documents, for example at the bank. Some participants also feel that by being literate, they will improve their farming and livestock management skills. This would lead to an improved livelihood.



The pride of an Ila man lies in how many cattle he has, after which he can marry as many women as he would like thereby commanding respect in the society and being considered wealthy. The picture shows an Ila man with his five wives.

### Types of adult literacy programmes being offered

Both basic and functional literacy are being offered in Namwala District. In basic literacy, participants appreciate the fact that they are able to read and write and even calculate simple arithmetic. Functional literacy enables them to make their environment respond to their needs.

#### *Basic literacy*

The basic literacy programmes enable adults who may or may not have had the opportunity of accessing formal education to be able to understand the problems of their immediate environment. It also sensitises participants to their rights and obligations as citizens and individuals. Kleis (1974) notes that this type of education enables participants to participate more effectively in the economic and social progress of their community. Basic literacy provides a platform for adult learners as it provides the minimum knowledge and skills which are an essential condition for attaining an adequate standard of living.

#### *Functional literacy*

Functional literacy combines reading, writing and simple arithmetic and basic vocational skills directly linked to the occupational needs of participants. The skills acquired in functional literacy classes are believed to be important for

survival. Similarly, Burnet (1965) states that literacy or being literate goes beyond merely being able to read and write but being able to apply the skills acquired by such an individual to improve their lives. However, this has been viewed purely from an economic perspective. The participants are engaged in learning only to become more efficient and productive. They have no chance to impact the learning process. The type of functional literacy currently being offered simply leads to further oppression because it doesn't offer participants the chance to develop themselves sustainably. The skills acquired are only adequate for carrying out activities required of a person by society.

Freire (1974) suggests a kind of "functional literacy" that liberates learners from the culture of silence and frees them in order to reach their full potential. The ideal, therefore, is one where learners are not treated as objects but as subjects, capable of working to change their social reality (Grabowski 1994).

In other words, such an individual is able to make the environment respond to his/her needs. A variety of skills are taught in the district, ranging from agricultural management skills to business management skills. Learners are also taught bricklaying, carpentry and joinery as well as gardening. These adult functional literacy programmes are offered to a cross section of men of various age-groups.

## Why men do come

Although men are hard to reach, a growing trickle of male participants have been coming to – in particular – functional literacy classes.

One reason is that men view adult literacy programmes as their window of hope in improving their well-being. Participants argue that a literate person is able to improve his health, sanitation, production and even home management. In addition, the study reveals that men view adult literacy programmes as a modern way of understanding their environment and making them able to adjust to its dictates.

Almost 92% of the respondents indicate that their lives have improved after acquiring skills through the adult literacy programmes.

The study notes that a literate person is able to meet civic rights and obligations by knowing about and observing regulations, participating in group discussions and in the efforts to ensure civic improvement and voting without help. These include satisfying religious aspirations through reading sacred literature and participating in various religious activities. These ideas are also echoed in focus group discussions, where discussants state that those who are literate are able to read the Bible and acquire leadership positions in both their communities and Christian communities.

King and O'Driscoll (2002) state that as adults grow in their ability to read and write, they also acquire an understanding of their world. This understanding is key to acquiring a keener insight, more rational attitudes, and improved behaviour patterns for their own development. This is why we see a slight increase in male participation in adult literacy programmes as compared to a decade ago where adult literacy programmes were considered to be a woman's affair only.

## Why men do not come

On the other hand, there is still a myriad of reasons why men in the Namwala District do not attend literacy classes. Notable among them is an individual's feelings, thoughts and attitudes toward himself and to any learning activity. For many reasons, the majority of men are very difficult to attract into a structured learning environment.

Respondents clearly state that participation depends on an individual's confidence and interest and that lack of confidence and low self esteem are key dispositional barriers to male participation in adult literacy.

The study shows that men feel shy to engage in adult literacy programmes mainly because they want to protect their ego. In addition, the physical environment, administrative and pedagogical practices of education and training do not fit their age and status in society.

Another barrier has to do with current life situations. Respondents point out that they are usually busy with other activities and they see no reason to participate in adult literacy programmes as they are expected to provide for their families.

Lack of opportunities after involvement in adult literacy programmes is also suggested as a deterrent to prospective male participants. Clear and accurate information and clear guidance to facilitate the appropriate choice of programme is suggested as being a factor which would encourage male participation. In other words, men want to know, from the initial stage, what opportunities will be opened up for them after attending adult literacy programmes.

Looking at the skill sets of facilitators, the study establishes that a variety of methods are used which are appreciated by learners. Findings show that facilitators are knowledgeable in conducting adult literacy programmes. The majority have adequate education. Usually facilitators take up that role after the community has chosen them. However, their delivery is hampered by a lack of developed infrastructure and a lack of teaching aids as well as funding.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The study investigates factors inhibiting men's participation in adult literacy programmes. In doing so, the study also delves into the details of what motivates adult males to participate. The study finds a variety of adult literacy programmes helping people to raise their knowledge levels in managing their lives.

The study therefore makes the following recommendations:

- 1 The Zambian government should formulate a policy on adult literacy. This would guide, regulate and enhance possibilities for more adult literacy activities. In spite of the fact that literacy activities have been going on in Zambia since 1965, there is no coherent policy in place.
- 2 The Zambian government should develop an infrastructure to cater for adult learning programmes. The lack of such infrastructure is one of the major reasons why men avoid participation. Because of the strong ego in men, they are not comfortable engaging in learning that takes place in the same classroom as their wives.
- 3 Finally, providers and facilitators of adult literacy programmes must engage in more sensitisation campaigns so that more potential participants can appreciate the relevance of adult literacy programmes for them as individuals and their communities at large.

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## About the Authors

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# Story of my life

## Part III



### Alemtsehay

Ethiopia

#### At what age did you learn to read and write?

Now, I am a 42 year old woman. I started to read and write properly two years ago at the age of 40, when I joined the Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme (IWEP). While I was a young girl working as a housemaid for different families, I made several attempts to get an education. None of them were successful because I was not attending continuously.

#### Why did you not learn as a child?

I was born in the countryside where there were no schools nearby. Besides the education of girls was not given that much attention. I was married when I was 12 and my husband brought me to Addis Ababa. I found out he drank and was polygamous. I escaped from him and started working as a housemaid in different houses. As a young girl, I tried several times to get educated. I was unsuccessful because of the nature of my work. After some time, I got married again. My husband was a member of the military. I gave birth to my daughter and I became a housewife, taking care of my daughter.

#### What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?

Learning as an adult has lots of challenges. I often forget what I learnt yesterday or before yesterday. The facilitator has to repeat things several times. Besides, I had a health problem, my hand was broken and it was difficult for me to write letters correctly.

#### Why did you want to learn?

I am an active participant in local social settings like idir' 'iqub' (local social groups/clubs), etc. There I realised my limitations as an illiterate. Because of my communication skills and active participation in the local social settings, including in the women's association, I was given the chance to participate in the IWEP program. I am a leader of my group.

I was very eager and interested to join the literacy programme. I took it seriously and was never absent from class. As a result I am now able to read as much as I can and write and take note of important events.

#### What has it meant for you? How has your life changed?

Sure, I have seen a lot of change in my life. I can use my mobile phone for my purposes. I can call and also save important numbers in a way I can remember. I also started to learn the English alphabet by myself. When our group treasurers are away, I make records of our group's income-generating activities, I also record savings.

My literacy skills added to my social value. Because I can read and write, I am able to participate actively in women's affairs. I have received many awards for my active participation and contributions in the women's' associations too.

#### What would you like to say to other adults who cannot read and write?

No matter the circumstances, adults, especially women, should learn. When you can read and write, you will not be cheated. When you become literate, you will have better chances in life and live a better life. You can be an active participant in your social life and you can get promoted.



## Sonia

Kabul, Afghanistan

### What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?

As English is my second language and computers are a new technology in our country, it was very difficult for me to learn in the beginning, because I did not study them in my childhood. However, as time went by all my problems were solved with my dear teachers' assistance and ANAFAE services.

### Why did you want to learn?

I started school after a lot of problems and long consideration; our teachers had encouraged me a lot. They advised me to learn English and computer skills. They reasoned that they are our fundamental needs. They said that even if we were to graduate from school or university, we wouldn't be able to find a job unless we study computer skills and English. I studied and graduated from an English Interchange curriculum after 16 months. Besides that, I also joined some special conversation classes, grammar and news and MS Office computer software classes. I did this to fulfil mine and my family's needs and to save myself from poverty and being unemployed.

### What has it meant for you? How has your life changed?

My life changed miraculously after I learned English and computer skills. In two years I fulfilled my expectations and hopes. After I graduated from school, I started working part time. In the meantime, I go to university. I can pay the expenses of my university and feed my family through working as an office assistant and data entry clerk in a USAID funded project called Afghan Rule of Law (ARoLP) in the Supreme Court of Afghanistan. I love to help the forlorn people of Afghanistan and the young generation of my county so that they will have a bright future.

### Based on your experience, what would you like to say to other adults?

My message to other adults is this: I never accepted a hand-out, but I accepted a hand-up. Your future success is up to you – *why not you?* There will never be a change unless you make a change. Reprogram yourselves to focus on who you want to be. The past is the past. The present will pave the road of your future and you should attempt to find a fruitful future.

### At what age did you begin learning English and computer skills?

I was 22 years old when I began studying English and computer skills near our house in district 10 of Kabul city. This was in 2010, when the Afghan National Association for Adult Education (ANFAAE) opened the Adult Learning Centre (ALC) offering different sections and learning subjects.

### Why did you not learn English and computer skills as a child?

When I was 9 years old, the English language and computer skills were not essential subjects to learn. They were not required to be used in the offices too much. Also, there were not many learning centres. Besides, while the Taliban regime held the reins of power for 5 years, they allowed women neither to exit from their houses nor to study. After the Taliban regime had been toppled, English and computer skills became a fundamental and integral part of government and foreign institutions. For these reasons, I began to learn when I was not too young.



*Tony*  
Ireland

#### **At what age did you learn to read and write?**

I began learning to read and write three years ago. I am now 56 years of age. Three years ago I was offered six hours free tuition in the evenings as part of a job I was doing locally. I signed up for a computer course in Youghal Adult Education Centre and that was really the start for me. A tutor noticed that I had difficulty reading and spelling, so with her support I decided to do one-to-one literacy classes.

#### **Why did you not learn as a child?**

I was born in Blackpool, Cork in the south of Ireland and I was the youngest of six siblings. I was only seven years old when my father died in the 1960s. Like many of my generation, I got left behind in primary school as there were 57 children in the class. I left school early and got an apprenticeship as a painter and decorator. I had originally applied for a job with Pfizer in Cork and made it to the second interview but lost out because of my literacy difficulties.

#### **What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?**

The first step in the door was most difficult. At first I was terrified as I thought I was the only one with problems or that I was the worst.

#### **Why did you want to learn?**

I had a constant fear that I'd be caught out. When I worked as a taxi driver, I was expected to jot down addresses and directions from the radio. That wasn't an option for me so I bought a Dictaphone to get around this – recording the message the minute it came in and playing it back to myself. If I couldn't read signs, I'd ask someone. Before long I'd memorised all our customers and addresses. I also worked in the pub business for a while but always found the paperwork difficult. I was nearly teaching myself to read at that stage – comparing the labels on bottles with the names in order forms. But dealing with solicitors and banks or anything official was always nerve-wracking. It hung over me like a huge fear in case I'd be asked to read.

#### **What has it meant for you? How has your life changed?**

I no longer have a fear of saying to others: 'I'm sorry I can't read or write that. Can you do it for me?' Since attending Adult Education classes, everything has changed. Going back to education has inspired and empowered me. I can't praise the tutors in the local Adult Education Centre enough. They've given me the confidence to try anything. And now I'm even representing other learners on the National Adult Literacy Agency Student Sub-committee and am proud of that. I hope that others will have a chance to return to education and that cutbacks will not affect education and training.

#### **What would you like to say to other adults who cannot read and write?**

Go and get help. Find out where the agency is that can help. Tuition is a great opportunity that has made a huge difference to my life. After a year and a half working with my tutor, I joined a group class with ten other adults. It is fantastic. We have been together two years and are now all on FETAC Level 3 at the moment – everyone has similar stories and is helping each other out – it's great fun.



## Edmilson

João Pessoa, Brazil

### At what age did you learn to read and write?

I was 30 years old when I learnt to read and write. I was working on the building of the Val Paraíso condominium, in the Bessa district in João Pessoa, in 1995, when the Zé Peão School Project opened two literacy classrooms.

### Why did you not learn as a child?

My first contact was with an aunt of mine who taught some children in her house: that was where I learnt to copy my name. Nothing was easy. My father was an alcoholic and was always on the move. When my parents separated, he left with the two oldest children. My mother looked after the other four children. I remember like it was today when we came walking from the Jardim Itabaiana district to Mandacaru, starving hungry. My mother had the youngest in her arms, another one was hardly walking – sometimes crawling sometimes being carried – and me and the other one walking. We stayed in the house of some of the family. Then my mother went to work in someone's house. Soon after I started carrying crates in the market, then unloading lorries and then when I was 17 I started work as a brick-layer's mate on a building site in Maria Rosa Street in the district of Manaira.

### What was the most difficult thing about learning as an adult?

To deal with other people who didn't want to learn and went to the classroom for other reasons; the sound of the letters 'ss', 'x', 'ch' and 'ç'. Obviously I don't forget the times when I had to stand at the back of the classroom so as not to fall asleep and not to miss the teacher's explanations. During another period my wife was in hospital and I had to go from work, to home, to school and then to the hospital. And, of course, always depending on public transport.

### Why did you want to learn?

I took part in a young people's group called "Art and People" in which other people had to read so that I could memorize the texts. I learnt to play the guitar by ear and composed my first songs: *Completely certain* and *I went to Juazeiro*, and the group's hymn. I dreamed about going to the Conservatory at the University and I wanted to write my story so I was faced with the necessity to learn to read and write.

### What has it meant for you? How has your life changed?

My life changed in an inexplicable way, surpassing all my expectations; I can help others, interpret laws and codes and gestures. I became president of my category's branch of the trade union and today I am vice-president. I am certain that reading and writing are tools which give us a great deal of power!

### What would you like to say to other adults who cannot read and write?

For those who aren't interested, wake up; if you are interested, go after it. Believe and try. Certainly, your tomorrow will possess a stronger light than the sun and the heat of knowledge will help you to understand other dimensions of life.



# The silence around Education for Sustainable Development must be broken



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**Abstract** – *A review of two key reports prepared for the UN Secretary-General in the process of identifying the post 2015 sustainable development agenda has identified a silence. Neither report mentions Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). While this may be alarming, especially for those who have contributed to advancing ESD practice as part of the UN Decade of ESD (2005–2014), the article argues that at least the core principle of ESD – that any sustainable development agenda needs to acknowledge the interrelationship between the economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions of society – is identified in both reports. However, the article also argues that a truly global sustainable development agenda requires that we go beyond acknowledging that these dimensions are related. We must act to transform the very context that perpetuates unsustainable development. From the perspective of adult educators, any sustainable development agenda will need to be explicit about quality Lifelong Learning for all as a right. This can only be achieved through a truly global partnership approach. This is a learning and action agenda we cannot afford to be silent on.*

In September 1962, Rachel Carson published her monumental book entitled *Silent Spring*. This book established how pesticides moved up the food chain, poisoning bird and fish populations and eventually also posing a threat to human life. This was one of the key books that helped to establish one of the key tenets of modern ecology: that all parts of our environment are inextricably interlinked. Her experience of having to face politicians and corporations to defend her findings was a further demonstration of how this ecological tenet extends to the social, economic, and political dimensions of society as well. Five decades on, we are unfortunately still relearning this very same lesson, but on a more global scale.

There are two recently released reports which have been presented to the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the lead up to the UN General Assembly that appear to be “silent” when it comes to what I describe as a globally significant educational philosophy and practice. The silence is worrying, as this is the UN General Assembly that will confirm the post 2015 sustainable development agenda.

A quick word search across both reports for the phrase “Education for Sustainable Development” (ESD) brings about the same result – “No matches found”.

## The two reports I am talking about are:

- 1 The Report of the High Level Panel (HLP) of Eminent Persons on the post 2015 Development Agenda, entitled A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development (May 2013) and
- 2 The Leadership Council of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) report, entitled An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report for the UN Secretary-General (6 June 2013).

Both reports acknowledge the need for one unified post 2015 development agenda if we are to achieve sustainable development. Both reports are the product of extensive consultations across the globe with the aim of developing a unified vision and roadmap, rather than the often separate attempts to address global issues like poverty and climate change, to name just two key issues.

**“The idea is to integrate the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability.”**

### Separation has blocked progress

The HLP Report acknowledges that while there has been a growing recognition of the interrelationships between the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainable development, seldom have these truly been addressed within an integrated and comprehensive approach. A good example is the separate goals and targets we see in the Millennium Development Goals. The HLP report states that “the result was that environment and development were never properly brought together.” As a reaction to this, the HLP report notes that one of the key transformative shifts aspires to “put sustainable development at the core” of the post 2015 “universal agenda”. The idea is to integrate the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability.

The SDSN Report adds a fourth dimension. It acknowledged “the Rio+20 vision of sustainable development as a holistic concept addressing the four dimensions of society:

- 1 economic development (including the end of extreme poverty),
- 2 social inclusion,
- 3 environmental sustainability,
- 4 good governance, including peace and security.”

The report argues for the need to move away from a “business-as-usual” approach and called for an “operational sustainable development framework that can mobilise all key actors (national and local governments, civil society, business, science, and academia) in every country.”

## Silence is not good

This is a worrying “silence”, because as we attempt to develop a new set of sustainable development goals on the eve of the end of the MDGs, the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005–2014) is also coming to a close. The DESD, adopted by the UN General Assembly through Resolution 27/254, was one of the outcomes of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. The UN Resolution specifically recognised that the DESD was linked to the need for education, public awareness, and training from Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 from the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and the goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015 from MDG2. Clearly, the General Assembly acknowledged the links across these different key documents.

Despite the ongoing calls for a more integrated approach based on global partnerships, this “silence” is not new. The mid-decade review prepared by Arjen Wals for UNESCO, entitled Review of Contexts and Structures for Education for Sustainable Development 2009, the lead agency of the Decade, concluded that, “at the mid-point of the Decade, however, it is too early to speak of ‘one concerted UN response’ to ESD and there remains much work to be done.” (UNESCO 2009: 39)

Indeed, as adult educators committed to sustainable development, there is much work to be done. But I would argue that there is as much work that needs to be acknowledged as well.

### The Web of Life

The committed work of adult and community educators have often addressed the issues of adult literacy, poverty, health, and environment through innovative, culturally sensitive, and holistic approaches to education. Locally-based educators have often recognised the interrelationships between these local social, economic, and environmental issues and often addressed them together with the need to establish and strengthen community-based civil society organisations. Early environmental education efforts to make these relationships more explicit through innovative activities, like the “Web of Life”, has been documented in many adult and community education manuals.

The “Web-of-Life” is a popular environmental education activity that physically visualises, with string, the interrelationships between different parts of the environment and how maintaining these web-like interrelationships is essential to sustaining the delicate balance of the environment. However, the activity has also been used to illustrate other interrelationships between social, economic and environmental elements of society.

More recently, the challenge to develop awareness and an understanding of the interrelationships of these local issues to more national and global issues has become more apparent. Climate change and its impacts in different

parts of the world have helped to make this global connection tangible. But there is still too often a tendency to focus only on carbon dioxide as the culprit, instead of connecting climate change to the inherently inequitable use of limited resources and the corresponding production of waste, one result of which is carbon dioxide.

### Back to the roots

Therefore, as adult and community educators, I would argue that we need to revisit the foundations of the work we have done. Yes, the problems seem to have escalated, but without the foundations of the locally relevant and culturally sensitive work we have done, it would have been more difficult to make the otherwise invisible relationships visible.

But as the HLP Report itself said, the weakness has been in bringing this holistic and integrated understanding to bear in our actions.

### The global level

At the global level, agreements such as the MDGs and the soon to be Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide us with a shared goal, while acknowledging the need for locally contextualised responses. These global agreements help facilitate conversations about our own educational practice. But more importantly, they highlight for us how the most local issues are linked to global issues and therefore must be simultaneously understood from both local and global dimensions.

**“But the danger again is the narrowing of the educational goal to merely addressing the needs of the economy.”**

The approach to simultaneously understanding the local and the global, together with taking a holistic and integrated approach to the social, economic, environmental, and governance dimensions of society are the hallmarks of Education for Sustainable Development.

While both the HLP and SDSN reports acknowledge the need to provide equitable access to quality education as a right, there continues to be an emphasis on education for children and young people, often at the expense of valuable resources needed for even basic literacy within the context of Youth and Adult Education. The multiple global economic, social, and environmental crises have often been blamed for the need to retrain young people and adults for the new “green economy”, but the danger again is the narrowing of the educational goal to merely addressing the needs of the economy. Even the so called “green economy” can all too often be a narrow interpretation of the environment, as we see in campaigns designed to save water, energy, or reducing pollution.

### Some promise

However, the goal in the HLP report to “Provide Quality Education and Lifelong Learning” provides us with some promise. It allows us who work with adults and local communities an entry point for engaging with our governments on broadening the post 2015 educational agenda. It acknowledges the value of social inclusion, not just environmental sustainability and economic growth. It places quality education within the perspective of human rights. Similarly, while the SDSN report recommended what may seem a narrow goal – “Ensure Effective Learning for All Children and Youth for Life and Livelihood”, it does expand this goal to include the need for “all youth and adults (to) have access to continuous lifelong learning.”

As we approach the eve of the MDGs, the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and also the Education for All (EFA) goals, I argue that we need a new way of transforming this globally connected and interrelated understanding into interconnected action. The call for a truly global partnership extends beyond learning how these issues are related to transforming the very essence of how we can work with each other. But until such time that global partnerships exist within a context of an equitable and just society, this idea of equitable partnerships may continue to be a difficult challenge to overcome.

In the meantime, ESD efforts in the context of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development have taken root in some parts of the Asia Pacific, where the interconnections have often been acknowledged in the practice of relevant adult and community education. The Asia-South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) as a Centre of Excellence in ESD, together with other partners in the region, like the Asia Pacific Centre for Culture of UNESCO (ACCU), will continue to advocate for the principles of ESD that acknowledge the interconnections of the different dimensions. Even more importantly, ASPBAE will point out how this understanding itself requires perhaps rediscovering different ways of thinking and learning.

**“As adult and community educators and education advocates, we can no longer afford to be silent about the contribution that our education practice has had.”**

### The silence must be broken

The silence about ESD as an educational practice is initially alarming for those of us who have invested time and resources for achieving the goals of sustainable development through education. Like Silent Spring, shall we interpret this silence as lack of acknowledgement and recognition of such a valuable educational practice?

I would argue that it is unfortunate that ESD as an educational practice within the UN community is not better recognised. But I believe the principles that underpin ESD, in terms of the interrelationships between the economic, social, and environmental and governance dimensions of society are explicitly identified in both reports. Both reports also acknowledge that such an understanding needs to find its way into action.

As adult and community educators and education advocates, we can no longer afford to be silent about the contribution that our education practice has had. We must engage in the fight for resources and political recognition needed to achieve quality education and Lifelong Learning for sustainable development – as a right for all!

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# Two roads ahead for education – which one should we take?



Sobhi Tawil  
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**Abstract** – *There are two parallel strands of the current global discussion on the future of education. The first relates to the role of education in the international development agenda beyond 2015. The second relates to the implications of global societal transformation for the way in which we approach education and learning. While both strands of the discussion are complementary, the very different contours of these discussions offer substantially varying perspectives on the future of education.*

## The international education and development agendas

The first strand of global discussion has to do with the international development agenda as defined by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, in the case of education more specifically, by the Education for All (EFA) Framework for Action. Both of these international frameworks have set goals and targets for countries to reach by 2015. Within this strand of discussion about the future of education, the primary concern is with exploring the shape and scope of any agenda that may be proposed and adopted beyond 2015. In order to do so, the starting point has been to take stock of main trends as they emerge from the monitoring of progress towards international education goals since 2000. These main trends may be summarised as follows:

- There has been significant progress made in expanding access to basic education worldwide. Evidence of this can be seen through improved school enrolment ratios, the decrease in the number of out-of-school children, the improvement in literacy rates, particularly among youth, and the narrowing of the gender gap in both school enrolment and adult literacy.
- While there has been rapid progress made in expanding access to formal basic education worldwide, significant inequalities between countries persist, and national averages in many countries mask striking inequalities in levels of educational attainment and outcomes. Traditional

factors of marginalization in education such as gender and urban/rural residence continue to combine with income, language, minority status, and disability, to create “mutually reinforcing disadvantages”, particularly so in low-income and conflict-affected countries (UNESCO 2011).

- With the growing acknowledgment of the challenges of “reaching the unreached”, there is a need to better exploit more disaggregated data (such as household survey data) in order to better identify patterns and causes of non-enrolment and school dropout, in view of the design of more targeted strategies for the most vulnerable children, youth and adults.
- The expansion in access to basic formal education has also resulted in a shift from a quantitative focus on access and participation in formal education to a concern with qualitative aspects and the results of learning and their social distribution. *[For more on competences, see the article on PIAAC on page 86, Ed.]*
- Expansion of access to primary education has also resulted in the recognition of a growing demand for secondary and tertiary education and increasing concern for vocational skills development, particularly in a context of growing youth unemployment, and in a continuous process of qualification/requalification.
- Finally, there is a growing awareness of the pressures being placed on public financing of education and a resulting need to seek more efficient use of these limited resources, greater accountability in the investment of public resources for education, and ways in which to supplement them through greater fiscal capacity, new partnerships with non-state actors, as well as through advocacy for increased official development assistance.

Such stocktaking of successes and challenges in progress towards internationally agreed-upon education development goals constitutes the foundation for the diverse proposals made thus far for a global education goal beyond 2015. (UNESCO-UNICEF 2013; Commonwealth Secretariat 2012; Save the Children 2012; UNESCO 2013; HLP 2013). These proposals appear to be based on a consensus that international goals will not be reached by the target date set, that the agenda shall remain unfinished; that despite progress made, the current agenda remains unfinished in delivering on its promise to provide equitable and effective opportunities to meet “the basic learning needs” of all children, youth and adults. Any future agenda will thus be a continuation of goals set in the past, presumably with some refinement and adjustment (Tawil, in press). The scope of the agenda will also be expanded beyond the narrow confines of primary schooling that has been associated with the MDG framework, to include lower secondary education and some reference to (vocational) skills development among youth.

“Paradoxically, while we acknowledge that the world has changed significantly since 2000, the nature of education goals being proposed beyond 2015 remains fundamentally unchanged.”

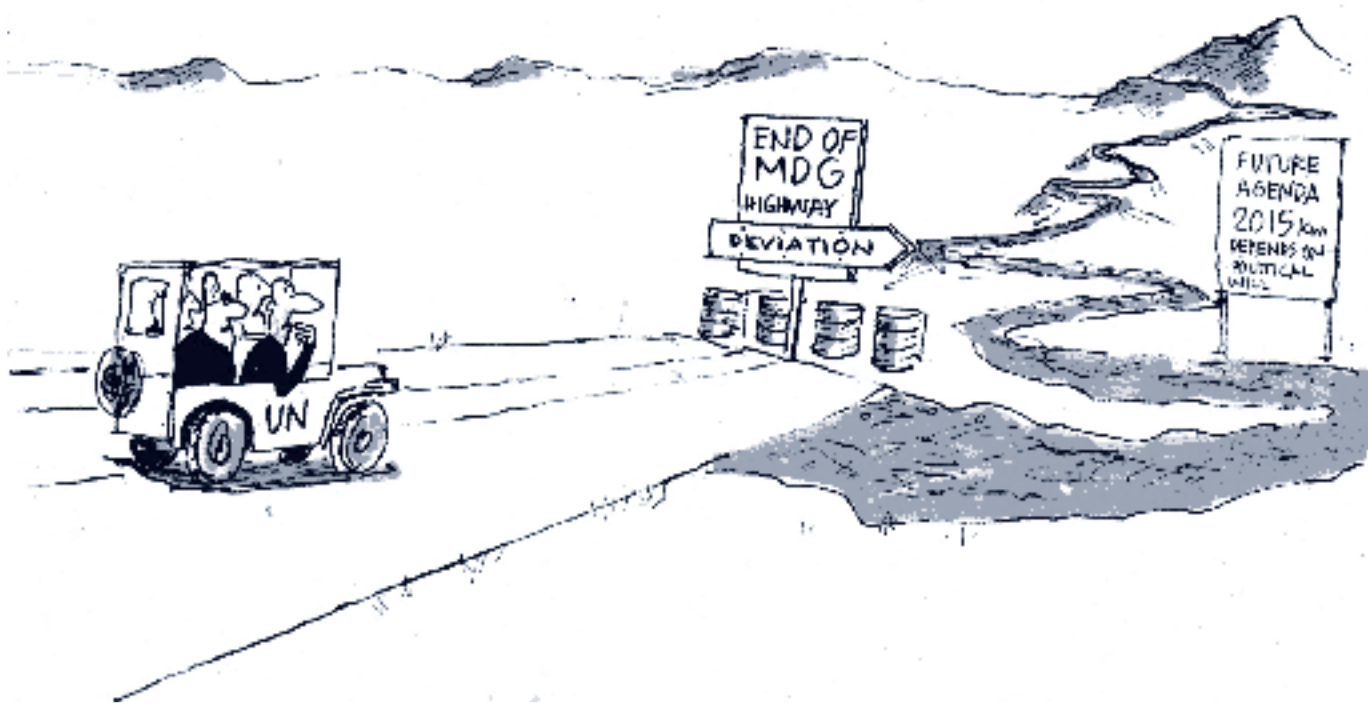
Whatever the nature of the proposals made, however, they all reflect the current architecture in terms of goals and targets, albeit with greater concern for reducing disparities, and ensuring that learning is effective in terms of skill acquisition. Despite an examination of wider development trends in current post 2015 debates at the global level, the proposals made remain within the constraints of the existing architecture of the international education and development agendas. Paradoxically, while we acknowledge that the world has changed significantly since 2000, the nature of education goals being proposed beyond 2015 remains fundamentally unchanged.

#### “Thinking outside the box” of education

This brings us to the second much broader strand of the global discussion on the future of education. Indeed, beyond concerns directly related to the international development and education agendas, experts, policymakers and practitioners are rethinking the interrelation between education and the multiple dimensions of development in an increasingly complex and uncertain world. This has to do with examining societal changes at the global level, and the way in which these are affecting our understanding of development in general, and of education in particular. Rather than a framework of goals and a timeline to achieve them, this second strand involves the critical re-examination of the paradigms that frame our thinking of development and the creation, dissemination, appropriation, and impact of knowledge, skills and values. This strand of discussion has to do with thinking “outside the box” of education, understanding emerging trends that are shaping global development, re-examining dominant models of economic development, of international cooperation, and the possible implications of these trends for education and learning.

#### Emerging development patterns in a changing world

In exploring perspectives for the future of education, we must consider emerging development patterns and the possible impact that these may be having on education worldwide. We see an increasing interconnectedness and interdependency of all societies in the wake of intensified globalisation in its social, economic, technological and environmental dimensions. This new phase of globalisation is also spurring multifaceted crises evident in widening inequalities observed in most countries (UNDP 2013), as



well as in growing youth unemployment and rising vulnerable employment. The result is an increased social exclusion and the undermining of social cohesion. At the same time increasing pressures on natural resources, environmental degradation and climate change associated with unsustainable patterns of consumption and production are calling for a re-examination of our conceptualisations of progress and dominant models of economic development. As new information and communication technologies rapidly develop there is a greater access to information through the multiplication and diversification of sources of information. The result is the emergence of new forms of civic and political socialisation and mobilisation in the context of diverse expressions of a crisis of governance at the local and global levels. [For more on global citizenship, see the article on page 14, Ed.]

**“Increasing pressures on natural resources, environmental degradation and climate change associated with unsustainable patterns of consumption and production are calling for a re-examination of our conceptualisations of progress and dominant models of economic development.”**

Finally, shifting multipolar global geopolitics are also modifying the dynamics of international cooperation with emerging donors introducing new patterns of South-South

and triangular cooperation. Such changes in global patterns of development have a number of implications for education and learning.

#### **The exponential growth of information and its changing nature**

Indeed, with the continued development of knowledge societies, the influence of new technologies on the creation of knowledge is growing. Not only is the rate of production and the volume of information continuing to grow exponentially, but the nature of information is changing as well. Information is becoming less and less dependent on text-based transmission and increasingly includes audio, graphic, and visual supports through a variety of media. The exponential growth in the volume of information and its changing nature are questioning the role and the authority of traditional bodies of knowledge controlled by legitimate educational institutions and an elite corps of specialists.

#### **Redefining functional literacy in an evolving knowledge society**

Despite progress in reducing illiteracy worldwide, it continues to represent a persistent challenge with an estimated 800 million illiterate youth and adults (UNESCO 2012a). Such figures do not account for the millions of semi-literate people across all societies who are unable to function properly in societies where information and knowledge are increasingly text-based. Indeed, notions of what constitutes a minimum threshold of functional literacy are evolving as a result of progress in science and technology

and the development of the Knowledge Society. As the skills associated with the use of new digital media in our everyday lives evolve and become more complex, it is important to consider the various forms of information and media literacy required for full integration into our contemporary knowledge society. Beyond traditional definitions of literacy and numeracy skills, adequate information and media literacy must be an integral part of foundation skills in the digital age.

### **A shift away from teaching to an increased focus on learning**

With formal education traditionally emphasising teaching more than learning, education systems have focused on the transfer of information and knowledge from the teacher to the learner. Such a teacher-dependent education system is also “time-dependent, location-dependent, and situation-dependent” (Frey 2010). With the multiplication of new information and communication technologies and digital media, sources of information and knowledge are becoming more diversified and accessible beyond the confines of formal education systems. Beyond the traditional curriculum-related questions of what to teach (learning content) and how to teach it (teaching/learning methods), the question of when and where learning is taking place is increasingly important.

### **Greater recognition of the multiple pathways to skills acquisition**

The schooling model surprisingly continues to associate learning essentially with classroom teaching, when a great deal of learning actually takes place at home and elsewhere in the form of homework, reading, writing of papers, and preparation of examinations. The physical space defined by the classroom as the main locus of learning – or what Frey refers to as “classroom-centric learning” (Frey 2010) – remains a central feature of formal education systems at all levels of learning. This classroom-centred paradigm is being increasingly challenged with the current expansion of access to information and the emergence of learning spaces beyond classrooms and schools (CISCO 2011; Taddei 2009). Recognising that learning and relearning is increasingly taking place beyond formal education and training settings, at different times and locations, implies that the role of teachers will also have to evolve from dispensers of information and knowledge to facilitators and enablers of learning. There is, however, a growing recognition of the importance of learning and relearning taking place outside the formal education and training systems.

### **Towards the assessment and validation of vocational skills acquisition**

Such recognition raises the issue of the assessment and validation of skills and competencies acquired through

self-learning, peer-learning, work-based learning (including internships and apprenticeships), on-the-job training, or through other experiences of learning and skills development beyond formal education and training. It is therefore important to envisage new approaches to education and skills development that capitalise on the full potential of all learning settings. From a traditional focus on the content of learning programmes and teaching/learning methods, the focus is now shifting to the recognition, assessment and validation of knowledge and skills, regardless of the formal, non-formal and informal pathways through which they were acquired. In terms of skills development, “there is [also] evidence of increasing attention paid to the measurement of skills levels and the efficient matching of these skills with those required by the world of work. This is being done either through the development of outcome-based national/vocational qualifications frameworks, or through large-scale assessments of skills levels among adults.” (UNESCO 2012 b)

### **Towards flexible Lifelong Learning systems**

This is perfectly in line with the Lifelong Learning framework. “Encompassing formal, non-formal and informal learning, Lifelong Learning emphasises the integration of learning and living – in life-wide contexts across family and community settings, in study, work and leisure, and throughout an individual’s life.” (UIL: 2012) While the paradigm itself is not new, recent societal developments are reinvigorating the relevance of education that is life-long and life-wide. In addition to the challenges of the continuously quickening pace of technological and scientific development, the exponential growth and changing nature of information, the Lifelong Learning framework is critically important in the context of the increasingly challenging task of forecasting the emergence of new professions and associated higher levels of skills needs. “There is a need to develop more responsive education and skills policies that include greater diversification and flexibility and that allow for the adaptation of skill supply to rapidly changing needs and ensure that individuals are better equipped to be more resilient and can learn to develop and apply career adaptive competencies most effectively.” (UNESCO 2012 b)

### **Rethinking education in a complex world**

It is precisely in this perspective that UNESCO is currently undertaking a process of re-visioning education in light of global societal transformations underway. In rethinking education in an increasingly uncertain and complex world, the aim of the process is twofold: (1) To examine the implications of multifaceted societal transformation on education, and on the way in which knowledge, skills and values are created, transmitted, appropriated, and validated; and (2) To rethink the fundamental principles on which our approaches to education and learning are founded in light of the new parameters of globalisation. Such analysis can



also broaden the current global debate on education post 2015 through an interdisciplinary approach of education that provides a more coherent framework for understanding education in the current context of global development (Aubin/Haddad 2013).

## Notes

**1** / In particular, through the annual Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Reports. Available at <http://bit.ly/gmw82T>

**2** / With almost 75 million young people under the age of 25 years of age out of the total of 200 million unemployed persons, global unemployment is clearly mainly affecting youth. Furthermore, vulnerable employment is on the rise mainly in sub-Saharan Africa (22 million persons) and in South Asia (12 million persons). ILO (2012): Better Jobs for a Better Economy. World of Work Report. Geneva.

**3** / This was already articulated, for instance, as early in the early 1970s in the landmark report Faure et al. (1972): Learning to Be: The world of education today and tomorrow. Paris: UNESCO. Available at <http://bit.ly/d4fOVt>

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# SGWEDA

## (Survival Guide to the World of Education and Development Abbreviations)

The world is full of them. Abbreviations. Maybe they were once meant to simplify our lives. By now they have created a jungle of thorny word bushes, efficiently closing the door to anyone not skilful enough to decipher the cryptic letter-combinations. But don't worry, *Adult Education and Development* is here to help you with a Survival Guide to the World of Education and Development Abbreviations, or SGWEDA for short.



### Documents and Events

**Agenda for the Future** – The action plan approved at CONFITEA V in Hamburg, Germany 1997.

**Belém framework for Action** – The action plan approved at CONFITEA VI in Belém, Brazil 2009.

**CONFITEA** – The UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education, held every 12 years.

**GMR** – Global Monitoring Report, Annual World Bank-IMF reports on progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

**GRALE** – The Global Report on Adult Learning and Education. The first-ever GRALE was published in 2009 and was based on 154 National Reports submitted by UNESCO Member States on the state of adult learning and education, five Regional Synthesis Reports and secondary literature. The latest GRALE report was published in 2013.

**ICAE World Assembly** – The assembly of the members of the International Council for Adult Education, held every 4 years.

**PIAAC** – An OECD study in 25 countries looking at adult competences. PIAAC stands for Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies. PIAAC was launched in October 2013.

**PISA** – PISA is an international study that was launched by the OECD in 1997. It aims to evaluate education systems worldwide every three years by assessing the competencies

of 15-year-olds in the key subjects: reading, mathematics and science. To date over 70 countries and economies have participated in PISA.

**The Delors Report** – The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by former European Commission President Jacques Delors, proposed in *Learning: The Treasure Within* that, building on the four pillars that are the foundations of education – learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together – all societies aim to move towards a necessary Utopia in which none of the talents hidden like buried treasure in every person are left untapped.

### General abbreviations

**ALE** – Abbreviation for Adult Learning and Education (UNESCO-approved terminology).

**EFA** – Education for All was a result of 1,500 participants of the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar in the year 2000 agreeing on six goals covering early childhood, primary education, youth and skills, adult literacy and continuing education, gender equality, and improving quality.

**ESD** – Education for Sustainable Development

**INGO Accountability Charter** – The INGO Accountability Charter is an initiative of international NGOs demonstrating their commitment to accountability and transparency. It is now the world's most widely used cross-sectoral accountability framework for INGOs, covering all major areas of work and being compatible with and complementary to existing codes.

**LDCs** – Least Developed Countries

**LLL** – Lifelong Learning

**MDG** – The Millennium Development Goals were a result of 193 member states meeting at the 2000 Millennium Summit of the United Nations in New York, agreeing to achieve eight goals set towards reducing poverty, child mortality, HIV/AIDS, and improving primary education, gender equality, maternal health, environmental sustainability and partnership for development.

**NGO/CSO** – Non-Governmental Organisation/Civil Society Organisation

**PPP** – Public Private Partnerships

**Rio+20** – United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD)

**RTE** – Right to Education

**SCP** – Sustainable Consumption and Production

**SDG** – A proposed name for the UN goals after the MDG expire in 2015 is Sustainable Development Goals, SDG.

**SIDS** – Small Island Developing States

**SME** – Small and Medium Enterprises

**TVET** – Technical Vocational Education and Training

**UNGA** – United Nations General Assembly

**QAE** – Quality Adult Education

**10YFP** – Ten Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production.

## Actors, Organisations

**ActionAid** – International organisation combatting poverty. Founded 1972 in England.

**ANCEFA** – African Network Campaign for Education for All. ANCEFA is a regional network consisting of independent coalitions or networks in 23 countries of Anglo-phone and Francophone Africa. ANCEFA exists to promote, enable and build capacity of African civil society to advocate and campaign for access to free quality education for all.

**ASPBAE** – The Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education, the umbrella for non-formal Adult Education in Asia, and a regional member of ICAE.

**CEAAL** – Consejo de Educación de Adultos de América Latina is the umbrella for non-formal Adult Education in Latin America, and a regional member of ICAE.

**DVV International** – Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V., DVV), cooperating with more than 200 partners in over 35 countries, Publisher of AED.

**EAEA** – The European Association for the Education of Adults is the umbrella for non-formal Adult Education in Europe, and a regional member of ICAE.

**ECOSOC** – United Nations Economic and Social Council

**HLPF** – High-level political forum

**HLP UN** – High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

**ICAE** – The International Council for Adult Education, the global non-formal Adult Education umbrella organisation.

**IMF** – The international Monetary Fund

**OECD** – The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

**Oxfam** – International confederation of 17 organisations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty.

**UIL** – UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg, Germany.

**UNESCO** – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Its purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the UN Charter.

**WB** – The World Bank

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### Issue 81

New authors are always welcome in our journal and we invite all our readers to write for us. Our Editorial Board will choose one topic for each issue and all submissions should be related to that major topic. The topic of the next issue (81/2014) of *Adult Education and Development* will be published in February 2014 on our website [www.dvv-international.de](http://www.dvv-international.de) together with a call for submissions.

Call for submissions  
*Get Involved!*



# Artists of this issue

## *Oswaldo De León Kantule*

*Cover artist*



Oswaldo De León Kantule tells us how he went about making the piece and what inspired him.

“In order to create this piece, I developed a sketch after reviewing the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. My goal was to create a painting that was not realistic but represented the Millennium Goals – such as the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The other elements of the painting such as the book, the corn cob, the woman and child, the crops beside a clean river are also representative of the goals. The sunrise in the background is meant to represent hope for all human beings.”

Oswaldo De León Kantule (also known as “Achu”) was born in Guna Yala, Panama, in 1964. He holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Visual Arts from the University of Panama. He has participated in more than 18 individual shows and many collective shows in the Americas and Europe.

In 1996 Oswaldo won First Prize in Panama’s National Painting Competition. In 2004, he received a research grant for visiting artists from the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, and has participated in a number of Art Biennials: Panama (2002), 2nd Biennial of Indigenous Arts (Quito, 2010) and the first Biennial of Contemporary Indigenous Arts (Mexico, 2012).

Oswaldo has also curated various exhibitions and illustrated a number of publications. He currently lives and paints in Panama and Canada.



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2013

# Adult Education and Development

## Post 2015

The international journal *Adult Education and Development* is a forum for adult educationists from all over the world.

The main target groups are practitioners, researchers, activists and policymakers in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Transformation Countries in Asia and Europe. The journal is specifically designed to facilitate exchange and discussion around practical and theoretical issues, innovative methods and approaches, projects and experiences, as well as political initiatives and positions. In this respect, *Adult Education and Development* is a tool for South-South exchange.

The journal also seeks to provide opportunities for readers in Europe, North America, and other industrialized parts of the world such as Japan or Australia to acquaint themselves with current sector developments in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Transformation Countries in Asia and Europe, so as to contribute to their becoming more effective partners in practical and intellectual cooperation. As such, *Adult Education and Development* also serves to foster North-South and South-North exchange.

*Adult Education and Development* is published once a year in English, French and Spanish. Each volume is dedicated to one major topic.

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