

Regional Meeting of
Arab LIFE Countries

3-6 December 2007, Marrakech



Regional Meeting of Arab LIFE Countries,
3-6 December 2007, Marrakech, Morocco.

1. Literacy programmes
2. Empowerment
3. Arab Region

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Published by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong
Learning
Feldbrunnenstraße 58
20148 Hamburg
Germany

ISBN 978-92-820-1158-4

Chief editor: Ulrike Hanemann
Design/Layout: Christiane Marwecki
Photo credit: © UIL

Printed in Germany

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Executive Summary

The second Regional Meeting of the six Arab LIFE countries took place from 3 to 6 December 2007 in Marrakech, Morocco. It was jointly organized by the UNESCO Cluster Office in Rabat, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and the UNESCO Regional Bureau in Beirut. The national focal points for LIFE, together with the LIFE focal points of the UNESCO Offices, met to review progress, and to exchange and learn from prior experiences. They also examined the LIFE implementation strategy (in particular the preliminary situation analysis, and monitoring and evaluation measures), and discussed innovative approaches to literacy and NFE that could enrich existing policies, strategies and programmes. The meeting was attended by 22 participants from Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen as well as from the respective UNESCO field offices, UIL and the Regional Bureau in Beirut. Egypt and Morocco were also represented by a number of civil society organizations.

The meeting contributed to a deeper understanding of LIFE as a platform for collaborative action to accelerate literacy efforts in the countries in which it operates by placing literacy high on political agendas, mobilising resources, strengthening capacities and intensifying South-South cooperations. As an overarching framework rather than a stand-alone or

separate new programme, LIFE will build on existing literacy initiatives in the country, giving them a larger scope and a new sense of urgency. It was emphasised that countries do not have to wait for “their turn” to start the LIFE process. All six Arab LIFE countries were invited to take up the literacy challenge they are confronted with immediately, irrespective of resources allocated by UNESCO.

Discussions during the meeting centred on sharing experiences from Egypt, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen – first-round LIFE countries. As Egypt and Morocco are benefiting from extra-budgetary-funded LIFE projects as part of UNESCO’s Capacity Building for EFA Programme (2006-2008), participants from these two countries were already able to report that the various capacity building activities had had a visible impact, and, in the case of Morocco, had resulted in a closer partnership between the government and civil society. Overall, the meeting provided an excellent opportunity to exchange and learn from one another’s experiences, including those from Mauritania, a second-round country, and Iraq, a third-round country.

The presentations on the literacy situation in each country revealed both common and different challenges in the region, as well as elements that gave grounds for optimism. In most countries, one of

the main obstacles is still the weak political will and commitment to addressing the challenge of literacy, which leads to an insufficient allocation of resources. Significant school drop-out rates observed across many Arab countries need to be seen as part of the literacy chain and require holistic and systemic approaches. Another common challenge is the low quality of literacy provision; this is linked to the availability of quality learning materials, on the one hand, and to the difficulty of motivating potential learners to enrol in literacy programmes, on the other. A lack of qualified human resources, poorly paid teachers, outdated teaching methods, and weak monitoring and evaluation processes are all part of this problem. Weak partnerships and coordination, particularly between governments and civil society organizations, also constitute a major challenge in most countries.

However, in those LIFE countries which see literacy as an indispensable component of sustainable development and poverty reduction, there are also signs of a political and societal will to prioritise literacy. There are also examples of cooperation between government and civil society. Substantial technical support provided through UNESCO's extra-budgetary-funded LIFE projects have succeeded in further developing capacities for boosting literacy efforts.

Literacy involves a learning continuum that enables individuals to achieve their goals, develop their knowledge and potential, and participate fully, both in their community and society as a whole. Participants recognised the need to use an operational and broader concept of literacy within a lifelong learning framework. Hence, the long-term goal was seen not as the "abolition" or "eradication" of illiteracy, but rather the development of sustainable literate societies. This requires more flexible approaches to learning and the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning within an integrated education system. A culture of learning has still to be strengthened in the Arab societies, starting from the most basic levels of education.

Much can be learned in this regard from experiences in the region, in particular in the context of non-governmental projects, and also from effective practices and innovative approaches developed in other regions. The experiences that were analysed

during the meeting included: the creation of synergies between formal and non-formal education established through equivalency and family literacy approaches; women's empowerment achieved by linking literacy with income-generating activities and community learning centres adapted to local settings; and the development of literate environments and advocacy measures through the use of different media.

One of the meeting's highlights was a one-day field visit to selected literacy sites in rural and urban areas. It demonstrated how literacy provisions can be implemented in a decentralised way by cooperating with an umbrella association of local NGOs. It provided opportunities to ask literacy facilitators and (female) learners how they would rate the strengths and weaknesses of the programme in terms of its delivery. Of special interest were the attempts to link literacy with income-generating activities and make these economically profitable and sustainable. The field experience helped to gain a clearer understanding of the context and conditions in which literacy learning opportunities had to be delivered.

The meeting furthermore provided an opportunity to explore possibilities for South-South cooperations, in particular within the Arab region. Financial and technical support is also expected from UNESCO. In addition, the way forward will require a well-designed support strategy and strong partners capable of implementing LIFE successfully. A strong commitment by all parties is required to intensify literacy efforts. All this should take place with the longer-term objective of building national systems of education and learning that are integrated, sustainable and incorporate a lifelong learning perspective in which literacy is the keystone.

Introduction

Background

Together, the UNESCO Cluster Office in Rabat, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and the UNESCO Regional Bureau in Beirut organized a Regional Meeting on LIFE for the six LIFE countries in the Arab Region – Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen – that took place from 3 to 6 December 2007 in Marrakech, Morocco.

This was the second regional meeting on LIFE in the region after the initial launching of LIFE in Sana'a, Yemen, in March 2006. The objectives were to agree on a LIFE Regional Follow-up Strategy to assure Literacy for All based on country and regional priorities for the implementation of first-round LIFE countries, and to develop a framework for undertaking Needs Assessments, LIFE Country Papers and Country Plans. This meeting addressed the issues of political commitment; advocacy; policy; organizational structures; programme design and implementation approaches; common challenges; the needs assessment process; and a draft strategic framework.

The second meeting brought together the national LIFE focal points from each of the six countries and the LIFE focal points from the respective UNESCO Offices. They met to review progress, exchange on and learn from prior experiences, examine a refined LIFE implementation strategy and concrete activities,

and to analyse innovative approaches to literacy and NFE that could enrich existing policies, strategies and programmes.

LIFE is being implemented in 35 countries – six of them in the Arab Region – with a literacy rate under fifty per cent and/or an illiterate adult population (15+ years old) of more than 10 million people. It was initiated by UNESCO as a ten-year key operational mechanism (2006-2015) within the United Nations Literacy Decade in order to accelerate literacy efforts in those countries which are at risk of failing to reach EFA Goal 4 by 2015 (i.e. 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). However, LIFE also aims to contribute towards each of the six EFA (or Dakar) Goals and supports the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on poverty reduction, women's empowerment, HIV and AIDS prevention, and sustainable development.

According to the definition laid out in the LIFE Vision and Strategy Paper (3rd edition, September 2007), LIFE is

- a framework for collaborative action to enhance and improve national literacy efforts;

- a process in support of literacy which is country-led and country-specific;
- embedded in national policies and strategies;
- a mechanism for technical support services and facilitation by UNESCO in the areas of policy, advocacy, partnership building, capacity-building and innovation.

In other words, LIFE is not a project or a programme, and as such is not geared towards replacing government policies and programmes in LIFE countries.

The overall goal of LIFE is to empower people, especially women and girls, who have inadequate literacy skills and competencies. The immediate objectives of LIFE are to:

- reinforce the national and international commitment to literacy through advocacy and communication;
- support the articulation of policies for sustainable literacy within sector-wide and national development frameworks;
- strengthen national capacities for programme design, management and implementation; and
- enhance countries' innovative initiatives and practices in providing literacy learning opportunities.

From 12 to 14 March 2007, UNESCO held a Regional Literacy Conference for the Arab Region in Doha, Qatar in support of UNLD, LIFE and Global Literacy, and in cooperation with national partners. In recognition of the particular challenges that the Region is facing – approximately 58 million illiterate adults – the Conference came up with relevant conclusions and recommendations. These provided the basis for the second Regional LIFE Meeting.

This second meeting, which took place at the end of the first biennium (2006-2007) of implementing the UNESCO LIFE initiative, was part of a series of three regional meetings attended by representatives from the 35 LIFE countries in the Arab, Asia and the Pacific, African and Latin America and the Caribbean Regions.

Objectives of the Regional Meeting on LIFE

1. To build a common understanding of LIFE and how it can contribute to the effective implementation of literacy policies, strategies and programmes at the national level;
2. To allow participants from Arab LIFE countries to share experiences of and lessons learned from LIFE, related literacy initiatives, and extra-budgetary-funded Capacity-building for EFA LIFE projects;
3. To discuss a monitoring and evaluation strategy to be based on situation analyses and incorporated into national LIFE processes;
4. To share experiences of and explore strategies for effective literacy advocacy;
5. To learn about the identification, analysis and scaling up of effective and innovative policies and strategies for literacy and NFE; and
6. To network and plan the way forward.

Expected Results

It was hoped that participants would:

- 1) gain a common understanding of LIFE as a strategic framework;
- 2) achieve an overview of the progress and challenges related to literacy and LIFE by analysing country reports;
- 3) gain experiences (“lessons learned”) on literacy and LIFE-related activities;
- 4) be introduced to strategies for situation analyses, monitoring and evaluation, and other support mechanisms for the implementation of LIFE at the national level;
- 5) become aware of the importance of developing effective advocacy strategies;
- 6) gain a broader understanding of sector-wide and innovative approaches to the development of literacy and NFE policies and strategies; and
- 7) agree upon ways of working together in the region in the field of literacy and NFE (networking and South-South cooperations).

Strategies

The meeting, which lasted four days, was conducted through plenary sessions and small group discussions. On the first day, the sessions focused on building a common understanding of LIFE, presenting country reports, and exchanging experiences, particularly those of first-round LIFE countries (Egypt, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen). The second day was devoted to analysing current trends, issues and challenges in literacy policies and strategies. Furthermore, participants looked at strategies and mechanisms (in particular situational analyses and monitoring and evaluation tools) for implementing LIFE at the national level. Morocco's pilot project using UNESCO's Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) was also reviewed. A field visit to literacy learning centres run by the Moroccan Literacy Department was scheduled on the third day. The final day was spent examining effective practices and innovative approaches to literacy, networking and planning the way forward.

Prior to the meeting, relevant documents on LIFE were circulated (see list in Annex 3). Each national focal point was asked to compile a country report. UNESCO participants and resource persons provided quality inputs on the relevant themes. Participants were asked to bring with them all documents related to their LIFE and literacy activities. These documents were displayed in an exhibition area to enhance inter-country exchanges.

Participants

Twentytwo participants attended the meeting, namely:

- a) national LIFE focal points (Directors of Literacy Offices in Governments) from Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania (2), Morocco, Sudan (2) and Yemen;
- b) LIFE focal points from the UNESCO Offices in Amman, Cairo and Rabat;
- c) a regional LIFE focal point (UNESCO Beirut);
- d) LIFE coordinators (UIL, Hamburg, 2);
- e) literacy experts and key partners from NGOs and multilateral partners invited by the host country, Morocco (including the UNESCO Chair for Literacy and Adult Education and DVV International); and
- f) one resource person representing an Egyptian NGO.

Whereas the Ministries of Mauritania and Sudan decided to send two representatives each, it was unfortunate that the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) could not be represented. Due to prior work commitments, the LIFE focal point from the UNESCO Khartoum Office was also prevented from attending.

The agenda of the meeting, the list of participants and the related background documents and presentations are included as Annexes to this report and on the attached CD-ROM.





Mr Philippe Quéau, Director of UNESCO Cluster Office in Rabat, and Mr Abdelouhab Benajiba, Director of the Regional Academy for Education and Training in Marrakech, during the inaugural session of the meeting.



Day 1: December 3, 2007

Inaugural Session

The meeting was officially opened by Mr Philippe Quéau, Director of the UNESCO Cluster Office in Rabat, and Mr Abdelouhab Benajiba, Director of the Regional Academy for Education and Training in Marrakech on behalf of the Minister of Education. Both emphasized the importance of and the need to accelerate literacy efforts in the framework of LIFE in order to achieve the literacy Goal 4 of EFA.

Ms Ulrike Hanemann of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) provided an introduction to UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), which supports the UN Literacy Decade and contributes to the achievement of EFA and the MDGs. She emphasised a broad concept of literacy as the foundation of basic education in the context of lifelong learning. Furthermore, an overview was provided detailing what has happened so far with regard to LIFE and what has been achieved in the key strategic areas of a) advocacy and communication; b) policy for sustainable literacy; c) capacity-building; and d) innovation. The key challenge lies in identifying how LIFE can make a difference to learners. Other challenges relate to implementation,

research and knowledge, the building of partnerships and synergies, and South-South cooperations. The emphasis of LIFE is on concrete action at the national level. This requires high levels of coordination, flexible responses and innovative approaches to literacy. The main priorities for the new biennium 2008/09 include: setting up committed teams and sustainable LIFE processes at country level; enhancing advocacy; strengthening partnerships; mobilising additional funds; disseminating examples of good practice; strengthening national capacities; facilitating South-South cooperations; sharing knowledge and inspiring innovations; and monitoring and evaluating LIFE effectively.

Agenda Item 1: Presentations and Exchange of Experiences

Presenters:

Mr El Habib Nadir,
Director of Literacy, Morocco

Mr Mohammed Belghazi,
Professor, DVV International, Morocco

Mr Abdellatif Kissami,
LIFE Project Coordinator, UNESCO Rabat

Mr Mohamed El Mokhtar Ould Mohamed,
Director of Literacy, LIFE Focal Point Mauritania

Mr Moktar Ould Gjay,
Director of Education and Training Projects, Mauritania

Mr Jawad Abdul Khathem Elewe,
Advisor of the Director of Literacy and Adult Education, Iraq

Mr Said Abd Algowad,
Egyptian Adult Education Authority, Egypt

Mr Essam Assaad,
Adult Literacy Technical Advisor, Egypt

Mr Mohamed Mutahar Ahmed Al-Mudwahi,
Literacy and Adult Education Organization, Yemen

Mr Abdulhafiz Mohamed Salah,
General Secretary of the National Council for Literacy & Adult Education, Sudan

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The first day was dedicated to reviewing the literacy situation and experiences of all participating countries with regard to literacy developments, and both general and LIFE-related strategies and policies. Each presenter provided a summary of the country report that each national LIFE focal point had been asked to compile in preparation for the meeting. The guidelines sent out with the invitations requested that the focal points include the following elements in their presentations:

- a) brief background information on the country in question;
- b) an overview of the LIFE process in that country;
- c) LIFE process-related efforts and results for that country (advocacy and communication, policy, capacities and innovation); and
- d) an overall assessment of the LIFE process and future directions the country could take.

The presentations revealed many common challenges in the region, but also many differences and a number of elements that gave cause for hope.

The shared challenges were:

- high rates of illiteracy. All countries were invited to participate in UNESCO's LIFE initiative because their adult literacy rates were lower than 50 per cent and/or their illiterate population consisted of more than 10 million young people and adults;
- high rates of school drop-out that contribute to the reproduction of illiteracy among youth. As one of the main reasons for drop-out was identified to be poverty, literacy should be linked to poverty alleviation strategies within the framework of EFA and LIFE;
- weak instruments for adult education and insufficient financial and material support;
- inefficient local governments;
- the need for more effective partnership mechanisms and experiential exchanges;
- inadequately qualified human resources;
- a lack of tools for carrying out assessments, recording results, and monitoring and evaluating progress;
- the poor quality of literacy instruction. Teachers are inadequately trained and poorly paid;
- local (spoken) languages that need to be taken into consideration in order to understand the transfer difficulties experienced by learners when they are learning literacy skills in standard Arabic; and
- the difficulty of motivating adult learners to enrol and stay in the literacy courses. Learner motivation is an issue in the Arab States because people can not see that their lives and job perspectives will improve if they learn to read and write. There was a lot of discussion about the application of incentives (in kind or monetary) as a means of encouraging learners to attend literacy programmes.



Plenary Discussion Highlights

MOROCCO

Political commitment and recent trends:

Mr El Habib Nadir, Director of the Moroccan State Secretariat for Literacy and NFE, gave a presentation on the achievements and challenges in literacy in Morocco. In 2002, a new State Secretariat for Literacy and NFE was created under the Ministry of Education. King Mohammed VI has on several occasions confirmed Morocco's commitment to addressing the literacy challenge in letters and speeches that included a Royal Letter addressed to the nation in October 2003 (as a working paper on literacy) and his announcement of the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) in May 2005. Since Morocco's independence in 1956, the country has undertaken many efforts to eradicate illiteracy (the adult illiteracy rate in 1960 was approximately 90 per cent). However, it is only recently that these efforts have achieved considerable success. In the last two years, the illiteracy rate – estimated at 43 per cent – has dropped by 4.5 per cent. More has been achieved in the last two years than in the last 20 years. Yet although the pace of literacy work has increased, many believe that it will be unable to keep up with the potential demand for literacy skills.

Strategic areas of intervention:

Morocco's strategy to increase literacy rates combines four levels of intervention: 1) a decrease in school drop-out rates; 2) a "second chance" learning system to reintegrate adolescents who have dropped out of school or have never been to school; 3) literacy learning that is linked to income-generating activities; and 4) monitoring and evaluation measures to follow up on the newly literate. In addition, the governmental strategy states the country's aim is to reduce illiteracy rates a further 20 per cent by 2012. Meanwhile, school drop-out rates in Morocco are the highest in the Arab world, with around 50 per cent of pupils failing to complete primary school. The government has set itself the ambitious goal of reducing the drop-out rate in primary schools to 2 per cent by the year 2010. The ten priority areas of the governmental strategy comprise: an information and database system; partnerships; sponsorship; organization; educational programmes; training; international cooperation;

mobilisation and communication; monitoring, evaluation and control; and integrated social development.

Mobilisation of funds:

The goal of the government is to enrol one million beneficiaries in literacy courses per year. However, the quality of the provision is low, and more funds must be invested. Despite the commitment of the government, only 0.4 per cent of the education budget (which equates to a mere 0.1 per cent of the overall state budget) is spent on literacy, and 80 per cent of this is used to fund salaries and utilities. There is a need for improved budget management within the Ministry. Possibly each Ministry should allocate funds to literacy. A positive recent development with regard to the mobilisation of funds is the European Union's promise to invest EUR 17 million in literacy and NFE in Morocco.

Instructional materials:

As for didactic tools, new approaches are being used. Textbooks are being improved and diversified across the sectors as well as at the regional level in order to adapt them to the multiple needs of various groups. Morocco has a general interest in multi-purpose programmes. It is also considering establishing e-learning courses for learners who are unable to join normal programmes. Partnerships with civil society are being enhanced (with an increase from 120 partners in 2002 to 800 partners in 2007). The use of national languages in the classroom will be encouraged prior to the introduction of standard Arabic. Literacy contests have been organized to identify the most effective programmes.

Literacy for the empowerment of women:

Morocco benefited from a UNESCO grant (the extra-budgetary-funded LIFE Project "Literacy for Empowerment of Women in Morocco" within the Capacity-building for EFA Programme) and has developed a comprehensive programme that: supports national efforts to improve literacy levels; strengthens non-formal education by implementing an advocacy and communication strategy; develops literacy programmes through international experiences; supports the development of an NFE-MIS; boosts the socio-economic integration of learners; and promotes the area of post-literacy. In particular, this programme is

improving the situation of women by mobilising local organizations. 4,500 women are currently participating in a literacy programme that has been implemented in the context of LIFE. This programme involves the implementation of four Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in two of the most disadvantaged rural provinces. This is the first experience of its kind in Morocco. Of these 4,500 women, 400 will be selected to receive further training on income-generating activities. Furthermore, the project supports the national literacy and NFE strategy and the implementation of the pilot phase of the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP). In addition, a Monitoring and Evaluation Programme has been introduced to follow up on literacy and NFE efforts.

DVV International:

Mr Mohammed Belghazi, a university professor, informed participants that DVV International, which is based in Germany and has over 1,000 offices worldwide, had recently opened an office in Morocco. He introduced Ms Rokia Sairi, a colleague with international experience in the fields of literacy and NFE who is working with him as a consultant for DVV International in Morocco. DVV International would like to be involved in LIFE cooperations and be fully integrated into LIFE activities. It is currently building a network for adult education in the Arab countries, based on a Plan of Action approved and financed by the German Foreign Ministry. DVV's work complements UNESCO's activities in Morocco.

South-South cooperation:

Mr Abdellatif Kissami, LIFE Morocco Project Coordinator, shared UNESCO Rabat's experiences with South-South cooperations. The launching of LIFE has allowed Morocco and Mauritania to establish a close cooperation in the field of literacy. Both LIFE countries have high illiteracy rates, significant school drop-out rates, and about 15 per cent of school-aged children who are not in school. A preventive and demand-driven approach is required. In the past, both countries have experienced major literacy campaigns that were launched with insufficient budgets, unclear targets, weak capacities and no clear vision. Many of the activities were ineffective because they did not meet the target group's needs. Both countries have now started new programmes based on renewed commitment and using new approaches. These programmes view literacy as an important component of socio-

economic development and as they are both run by the government, they are open to fresh partnerships. For example, when Mauritania decided to launch a national programme, it received support from Morocco. The South-South cooperation succeeded in:

- setting up new programmes for out-of-school children;
- designing national strategies (and conventions) for literacy;
- conducting a needs assessment/situation analysis (monitoring and evaluation being a major field of cooperation);
- ensuring capacity-building through the training of trainers;
- building partnerships; and
- entering into a process of decentralisation.

The actions of the various stakeholders and donors must be harmonised and coordinated. As a result of the new literacy strategy developed within the LIFE framework of South-South cooperation, the Spanish Government has shown interest in financing the Mauritanian literacy programme. In Morocco, UNESCO has provided technical advice to the European Commission during the preparatory stages of an EC-funded programme for the period 2008-2011 (with a potential budget of EUR 17 million) that will support literacy and non-formal education.

MAURITANIA

Political commitment and recent trends:

In Mauritania, there is a new "democratic wind blowing" and a fresh commitment with regard to literacy. Mr Mohamed El Mokhtar Ould Mohamed, Director of Literacy and LIFE focal point for Mauritania, explained that this is due to the fact that responsibility for literacy has recently been transferred from the Ministry for Islamic Orientation to the Ministry of Education (with the exception of the Koranic schools). As a consequence, specific funding for literacy is integrated into the national plan and allocated to the Ministry for Education (100 million Ouguiya = around USD 400,000). This is a new and positive development, as prior to this, literacy funds had to be collected in a piecemeal fashion. However, this shift also creates problems. The staff that worked on literacy prior to the change-over is no

longer available. There is a lack of coordination between the various stakeholders involved in literacy work and a lack of experience with regard to bridging the formal and non-formal sectors.

Strategic areas of intervention:

The Ministry of Education is committed to all the sectors and is attempting to coordinate the work of different departments that are involved either directly or indirectly in the field of literacy. Its priority areas of action consist of carrying out advocacy work and using media campaigns to change people's mentality. There is a need for capacity-building, especially in the area of strategic planning and management, and for the training of trainers. To attract donors, important actors must be identified and trained. The last national census revealed that 47 per cent of the Mauritanian population is illiterate. However, there is a need to map the number and distribution of the illiterate population more precisely. A survey must be carried out to find the exact number of people who are illiterate, followed by a national convention to fight illiteracy across the country. The objective of the literacy programme that has been launched is to "eradicate" illiteracy in adults aged 14 and over by 2015 (800,000 people in total).

New curricula are being developed for literacy programmes. In 2006, attendance requirements for literacy programmes were raised from 200 to 300 hours. Using a two-pronged approach, additional programmes will be developed for children who have never been to school. Post-literacy programmes will also be developed. A monitoring and evaluation system must be developed and set up. Cooperations with civil society and NGOs have already been integrated into the programme, but these still need to be enhanced. Their input will help to improve the quality of literacy provisions.

Radio-based pilot programme:

Funded by the Government of the Canary Islands, Mauritania piloted an initiative to promote literacy through the use of a broadcast educational programme (Radio ECCA), which was simplified and adapted to the Mauritanian context. This programme is now used in the framework of the new policy and there are plans to expand the pilot countrywide.

Koranic education:

The area of Koranic education requires special attention. There is an obvious disparity in Koranic education today between language education, which is promoted, and numeracy, which is neglected. An assessment of this educational sector must be carried out. Mr El Mokhtar Ould Mohamed also requested institutional support to develop the national policy.

Challenges and the way forward:

Mr El Mokhtar Ould Mohamed's colleague from the Mauritanian Ministry of Education, Mr Mokhtar Ould Gjay, Director of Education and Training Projects, emphasised the existence of strong political will in Mauritania to improve literacy levels. He also made it clear that this fresh commitment does not mean that the financial aspect has already been solved. Private-public partnerships could represent the way forward. Another challenge yet to be addressed is the need to upgrade the professional status and attitudes of the human resources involved. Among other things, they need to work towards political goals and against set indicators.

During the discussion, participants stressed the need to link literacy to development and poverty reduction strategies. They also analysed the links between formal and non-formal education as a means of preventing premature drop-out. The role of Koranic schools as an access point for the acquisition of literacy skills needs to be further explored (and exploited). It was said that Koranic schools are more flexible than formal schools, and that vocational skills training should be integrated. Another issue discussed was how to harmonise the work of different stakeholders.

IRAQ

Political commitment and recent trends:

Mr Jawad Abdul Khathem Elewe, Advisor of the Director of Literacy and Adult Education, shared Iraq's experiences of literacy. He indicated that the country had once enjoyed the highest literacy rate in the region with fewer than two million illiterates following a literacy campaign in 1979 that involved a wide range of sectors and partners. Two categories of "illiterates" had been addressed: a) school drop-outs; and b) 15-45-year-old adults. Although the country ran 103 schools catering for around 9,000 school

drop-outs and operated 468 special classes in formal schools after 1990, the literacy rate dropped to one of the lowest in the Arab region in the span of two decades. This can be attributed to the war with Iran during the 1980s, the first Gulf War of 1991, the embargo and sanctions that followed during the 1990s, the launch of the second Gulf War in 2003 and the current war.

Today, there are 418 adult education centres in Iraq. These centres attract learners in spite of the difficult situation in the country. In Mr Jawad Abdul Khathem Elewe's view, the programme currently in place is as good if not better than the one established in 1990. However, due to security problems, the literacy rate is declining dramatically, especially among women and girls. A 1999 law tried to attract people to literacy centres, which are flagged with a special banner. People who enrol have a strong will to learn and prefer to attend a literacy course than stay at home. Today, Iraq has a committee to reduce illiteracy. It is currently developing a literacy programme for 100,000 learners for the period 2007/2008. With the support of the US Embassy, it also plans to set up a literacy programme for prisoners.

UNESCO's support strategy:

Ms Nour Dajani-Shehabi, LIFE focal point at the Iraq UNESCO Office, reported that the UNESCO Iraq Office based in Amman has promoted a two-pronged approach involving quality formal education to prevent drop-outs and address those who are already literate. In cooperation with UNICEF, an accelerated learning programme for out-of-school children has been developed that allows them to complete the basic education cycle in four years instead of six years. UNESCO coordinates the adult literacy strategy, which involves literacy competencies, life skills and income-generating skills, supported by micro-credits. Five community learning centres have been created. Once women have attended a programme, their skills must be maintained, and measures to ensure this are needed. After UNESCO's national partners in Iraq mapped the greatest literacy needs, a number of curricula were developed that focused on different life skills areas, such as agriculture, vocational training and so. Advocacy materials are being provided at the grassroots level to advocate for literacy in the community. The guiding principle of the literacy programmes is to bring peace, order and reconciliation to the people.

In the discussion that followed, Mr Qutub Khan, Regional focal point for LIFE and former focal point for Iraq at the UNESCO Iraq Office, explained that most of the non-formal programmes in the region are for out-of-school children, with the exception of Morocco. Many of them are aiming at bringing children back to the formal system. Adult literacy generally focuses on developing functional and income-generating skills. He also informed participants that five Community Learning Centres (CLCs) were set up in Iraq after mapping illiteracy pockets nationwide. These CLCs offer diversified curricula for the development of vocational skills. Participants saw the combination of functional literacy and income-generating activities as a valid means of making adult learning relevant to learners. As well as addressing the issue of preventive versus curative approaches to literacy and the complementary roles of formal and non-formal education, participants discussed the role that LIFE could play in countries in (post-)conflict situations, such as Iraq and Sudan.

EGYPT

Political commitment and recent trends:

Mr Said Abd Algowad, representing the Egyptian Adult Education Authority, addressed participants on the literacy situation in Egypt. One third of the Egyptian adult population (around 16.8 million people) is illiterate, of whom two thirds are women. In 1991, a law was issued to eliminate illiteracy. In 1993, a Higher Committee on Adult Education was established country-wide at the city, province and state levels. Five million people took part in literacy programmes and 800,000 adults became literate. As in other countries, the high rate of school drop-out and the fact that newly literates receive no verification pose major challenges. Among the other challenges faced by the Egyptian literacy and adult education programmes are:

- a gap between discourse and reality;
- traditional pedagogical approaches;
- no records of learners' participation and achievements;
- poorly trained facilitators; and
- low budgetary allocations for literacy provisions.

In the last four years, the illiteracy rate has dropped by one million. Political will is stronger than before and much more support is being provided by society as a whole. President Mubarak has deemed the fight against illiteracy to be a national priority.

Strategic plan and areas of intervention:

Last year, work started to implement a new literacy plan that aims to reduce the number of illiterates by eight million in four years. Using a decentralist approach, the responsibility for literacy programmes has now been transferred to the provincial governors. It is expected that states will add to the literacy budget with their own allocations. The budget for literacy is 118 million pounds (around USD 21.5 million) of a state budget totalling 23 billion pounds. The country also has around 20,000 NGOs whose activities include literacy. The Koranic schools represent a further entry point for literacy classes. However, more needs to be done to encourage illiterate adults to enrol in literacy courses.

In the short term, the Committee for Literacy aims to tackle the issue of illiteracy by:

- introducing laws that require different Ministries (e.g. Defence, Interior, etc.) to cooperate in advancing literacy efforts;
- improving the status of teachers who are poorly paid. The teacher should be the moderator and no longer the sole focus of knowledge;
- involving learners more by adopting a participatory approach and using modern textbooks;
- considering the introduction of incentives to motivate people to attend a literacy programme;
- restructuring the literacy committee to involve more committed people;
- maintaining a record of all learners in archives so that they can be better monitored; and
- increasing the budget for literacy.

A sensitisation campaign has been started. It sensitises stakeholders through the media (e.g. TV), caravans, house-to-house calls and visits to schools with high drop-out rates. Furthermore, literacy programmes are linked to health or other relevant issues, and classes have been set up for specific target groups, e.g. 14-19-year-old girls. Cooperations have been established with NGOs, philanthropic organizations and civil society to reach out to learners.

University students are mobilised for periods of three to six months as part of the “each one teaches one” scheme.

Strategy for adult education and NFE proposed by Egyptian civil society:

Mr Essam Assaad, who works as an Adult Literacy Technical Advisor to the Egyptian consulting firm CID, presented a strategy for adult and non-formal education proposed by Egyptian civil society. He reported that many non-governmental associations work in the area of education. However, to achieve more at scale, they need to cooperate with the government. Hence, there is a need for a public-private partnership. Women and girls as well as marginalised people in rural and remote areas need special attention. Hence, literacy programmes not only focus on reading and writing; but are also linked to issues such as health, water, the environment, and individual rights (e.g. how can people start a small business, how do they deal with the authorities, how do they vote in elections, and so on). Inspired by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, CID is concerned with the impact of education on people’s everyday lives. The firm aims to bring about environmental, economic and social change, and to enable people to act and interact with others for a more just society. For this to happen, an encouraging environment must be established, as well as instruments for both learners and facilitators that are compatible with the reality of the learners. There is a need for follow-up strategies (e.g. self-assessments) as well as systemic and societal approaches.

YEMEN

Political commitment and recent trends:

Mr Mohamed Mutahar Ahmed Al-Mudwahi of the Literacy and Adult Education Organization presented the situation in Yemen, which is a very special one due to the fact that the country’s 19 million inhabitants are spread out across a large number of varied and widely dispersed communities. The people in remote and rural areas are difficult to reach, and it is not easy to attract well-trained teachers, particularly in the mountainous regions. Retention rates are very low. A census carried out in 1994 showed an illiteracy rate of 56 per cent (5.3 million); ten years later, the illiteracy rate had dropped to 45.7 per cent, but the number of illiterate people had actually increased to

6.25 million. The poverty rate in Yemen is very high (34.8 per cent in 2005/06 according to the World Bank Yemen Poverty Assessment Report, November 2007), making it the most impoverished of the Arab countries.

Men are not motivated to attend literacy classes as they fail to see their relevance (literacy skills do not add to their social status in the rural areas). Only two to three per cent of men are enrolled in literacy classes. Men are interested in obtaining certificates as these are valued by society, but they are not encouraged to obtain them because of the low quality of provisions of offer. An equivalency programme has been established, but there is no money to produce the textbooks needed.

Linking literacy and skills training:

No expertise is available with regard to monitoring and evaluation. Special programmes are needed to integrate adults into public and professional life, as well as into learning programmes. Textbooks must be reviewed in order to address the needs of the learners and decrease the drop-out rates. There is also a need for appropriate strategies to approach the armed forces. Some training and qualification programmes have been set up (e.g. for mechanics, plumbers, electricians) and women are trained in traditional crafts (e.g. knitting, embroidery).

The funding challenge:

Although funders such as USAID, the World Bank, ISESCO, the Islamic Bank and others are already investing in Yemen, the implementation of programmes remains problematic. The overall lack of funds means that the existing demand for literacy training cannot be met. Although a literacy discourse is underway at the political level, no means have yet been allocated for the implementation of public programmes. Local governments that are under the obligation to provide learning opportunities are failing to provide the help required of them, with the result that educational services are not available in remote places. Action is needed, for political discourse alone does not necessarily translate into action on the ground, and the media are not contributing towards mobilising people in favour of literacy.

SUDAN

Political commitment and recent trends:

The case of Sudan was presented by Mr Abduehaziz Mohamed Salah, General Secretary of the National Council for Literacy & Adult Education. Sudan is essentially divided into two parts due to a long-lasting conflict, which ended with a peace agreement in 2005. The Government of Southern Sudan was not represented at the meeting. The country has 33.5 million inhabitants. The rate of illiteracy stands at 57 per cent. Twenty-five per cent of children under the age of 9 and 80 per cent of the population aged over 45 are unable to read and write.

Initially, Sudan was not categorised as a LIFE country until 2006, as prior to this, it had reported an illiteracy rate of 41 per cent and hence did not fulfil the basic criterion for inclusion. Following this date, a national plan was developed and the LIFE implementation phase was launched with a workshop held in January 2007, attended by participants from the governorates, universities, NGOs and the Shendi Training Centre. Two earlier LIFE workshops had already been held in August and October 2006 in Juba, Southern Sudan.

Partnerships for literacy:

According to Mr Salah, the country has developed a new vision of literacy that is based on the needs of the people and that has been reinforced through LIFE. New sectors, partners and instruments such as ICTs and the media are being involved to address illiteracy. Cooperations in support of literacy and life skills training (health, HIV and AIDS, peace education, and so on) and post-literacy activities have been established with the Ministry for Social Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Sudanese Union of Students, the Association of Sudanese Women, NGOs (e.g. SOLO, the African REFLECT network PAMOJA).

The Ministry of Social Development has also developed a post-literacy guide. ISESCO has cooperated with the UNESCO Chair in Women, Science and Technology to support a programme for rural women. A UK-based university is providing assistance to a programme of literacy in local languages. The Islamic Bank of Development is supporting six technical centres for computer-based literacy training. Special attention is being paid to teenagers' education.

The funding challenge:

Today literacy is one of the government's main priorities. There are plans to introduce evening classes to be held in schools and taught by school teachers, with the aim of establishing a bridge between formal and non-formal education at primary and secondary education levels although very little funding is available for literacy and training courses. This lack of funding has had a negative impact on achievement, which did not meet expectations at a mere eight per cent. Much more must be invested in literacy provisions.

Other challenges:

Sudan is very rich in languages. This multilingual context needs to be addressed by carrying out more research into the impact that multilingualism has on literacy programmes. There is also a need to develop programmes and methodologies to cater for the large number of refugees (internally displaced people) and the nomads. Another challenge is to build more effective partnerships and organize exchanges on and the dissemination of effective practices and success stories. Mr Salah emphasised the value of this kind of regional meetings in terms of the opportunities it offers for participants to learn from one other. Sudan is currently observing the Mauritanian experience closely as both countries share similar features which pose similar challenges (nomadic populations and multilingualism).

In the discussion that followed, participants asked about the literacy situation in Southern Sudan, whose LIFE focal point was unable to attend the meeting in person. Other issues that were raised were how LIFE has helped with the implementation of the measures described, and how far LIFE has developed into a framework and tool for literacy at the country level.

Agenda Item 2:

Synthesis of the Issues, Challenges and Lessons Learned

Mr Essam Assaad from the Egyptian consulting firm CID was invited to summarise the issues, challenges and lessons learned that had been identified during the first day's sessions. He started his synthesis by observing that the experiences presented were drawn from a wide range of activities in the field of literacy. While they offered signs of hope, they also spoke of the pain, suffering and challenges that are faced by so many, and raised many questions. He summarised the common issues and challenges from the country presentations as follows:

- Increasing numbers of new illiterates, mainly as a result of school drop-out;
- Lack of clear roles and responsibilities in partnerships between governments and NGOs;
- Corruption that often arises as a result of the involvement of local governments in decentralisation schemes;
- Weak funding, structures and tools for implementing quality literacy provisions;
- Inadequate investment in literacy statistics and accurate recording of learner participation and achievements;
- Lack of ways of motivating adult learners and keeping them engaged in learning for longer (preventing dropout);
- Need for capacity building and professional development at all levels (including management and teaching levels) and for higher-quality provisions;
- Potential challenges posed by local languages and multilingual contexts.

The presenter also identified positive and encouraging elements:

- Despite the problem with weak budgets, there is still a political and societal will to prioritise literacy and NFE in many countries;
- Literacy is seen as a means of promoting sustainable social development;
- Literacy and NFE strategies are increasingly being implemented as long-term strategies;
- In some cases, clear-cut statistics are already available;

- Literacy programmes are now more learner-centred and address learners' needs rather than implement a pre-defined curriculum;
- It is becoming increasingly common for programmes to combine literacy with life skills and income-generating activities;
- Partnerships with civil society and NGOs are making some progress;
- Teachers employed by other departments are helping with literacy provisions;
- Funding is coming from new sources;
- Experiences have been taken from other sources and adapted to local contexts;
- Success stories have been used as role models;
- Literacy is now a societal rather than a political back-up measure and has thus succeeded in creating a demand;
- Monitoring and evaluation measures have been developed further.

However, there is still a long way to go in order to increase quality of teaching/learning and retention rates among adult learners. Mr Assaad made a very strong case for the need to address learners in literacy courses as adults. He took the stand that learners "seek respect, not money" (i.e. material incentives). He also stressed the need for solid partnerships based on clear criteria and rules in order to accelerate literacy efforts. Furthermore, he called upon participants to learn from one another's experiences.

Day 2: December 4, 2007

Agenda Item 3: Current Trends, Issues and Challenges in Literacy Policies and Strategies

Presenters:

Mr Essam Assaad,
Adult Literacy Technical Advisor, Egypt

Mr Abdellatif Kissami,
LIFE Project Coordinator, UNESCO Rabat

The first session of Day 2 was used to take a closer look at the trends, issues and challenges that are emerging with regard to literacy policy and strategies from the perspective of civil society in Egypt and from the broader and comparative regional perspective.

Mr Essam Assaad presented a conceptual and strategic proposal for addressing the literacy challenge in Egypt. This proposal had been developed by a number of NGOs with the involvement of the private sector. It focused primarily on young people (the literacy and life skills they need to improve their lives), and girls and women (the development of professional capacities and life skills linked to motherhood). Inspired by Paulo Freire's "conscientization approach" that proposes "to read the world", the literacy strategy foresaw a "bottom-up" approach that would reflect and integrate learners' everyday reality. The strategy also favoured public-private partnerships and the creation of literate environments in support of sustainable literacy.

Mr Abdellatif Kissami summarised the results of a comparative study of literacy policies and strategies in the Maghreb conducted by the UNESCO Cluster Office in Rabat. In his presentation, he focused on two LIFE countries, Mauritania and Morocco, both of which are characterised by: a) widespread illiteracy; b) a wide gender gap and urban/rural divide; and c) a high degree of illiteracy among youth due to the failure of the formal school system (in Mauritania, 50 per cent leave school before completing their primary school education, while Morocco has the highest school drop-out rate in the Arab world). Both countries' strategies included a preventive approach designed to reduce early school drop-out. Whereas Mauritania currently

allocates just 0.6 per cent of its state budget to literacy (and 80 per cent of this is spent on salaries and utilities), Morocco spends a mere 0.3 per cent of its education budget on literacy. There is a need for strong advocacy in favour of an increase in the education budget. However, there is also a need to manage the available funds more efficiently. Strategic choices must be made in order to strengthen formal and non-formal basic education (no attempt is currently made to link the two and no recognition mechanisms are in place).

The main challenges identified in the case of Mauritania were: coordinating the different actors in the field of literacy and NFE and identifying the complementarities between them; clearly describing the roles and responsibilities of each; assuring the quality and quantity of provisions; sensitising and mobilising learners through campaigns; creating post-literacy learning opportunities; providing adequate funding; generating reliable statistics on the size of the literacy challenge; and setting up an effective monitoring and recording system. In the case of Morocco, the main challenges were: addressing the quantity of learners (one million per year) and quality of literacy provision; ensuring adequate funding; preventing school drop-out; developing a strategy to inter-connect formal and non-formal education (to address the question of what comes after literacy); and using and improving existing tools as effectively as possible.

In the discussion that ensued, participants expressed their conviction that the strategy proposed by Egyptian civil society could be adapted for other Arab countries. Literacy should be turned into a global effort that involves all ministries and governmental institutions (see, for example, the French funding model in which multiple ministries are involved). The need to build and develop lifelong learning systems further was emphasised in the face of a persistent literacy challenge. Rather than aiming to wipe out illiteracy, future strategies should focus on continuously upgrading people's literacy and skills levels according to the technical, societal and economic trends that emerge. Literacy is made up of a set of key competencies and foundational skills, and must be seen as a continuous process that takes place within the framework of lifelong learning.

The debate also raised the issue of the unit cost of literacy programmes per learner and the minimum number of learning hours needed to guarantee the development of a sustainable level of basic literacy. Impact studies have demonstrated that the returns on investment in literacy are 10 times higher than for primary education. It was emphasised that the (external) funding of literacy programmes alone is not enough to address the literacy challenge: to move forward, political will and decisions are indispensable. Furthermore, participants believed that a "centralised decentralisation model" would succeed best in boosting local initiatives and turning literacy into a collective community effort. They agreed that literacy is clearly a government responsibility and that strong advocacy is required in order to convince decision-makers of its importance.



Agenda Item 4: Issues Related to the Implementation of LIFE in the Arab Region

Presenters:

Ms Ulrike Hanemann,
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, UIL, Germany

Ms Ghada Gholam,
UNESCO Cairo

The situation analysis – recommended as a preparatory step for LIFE – would provide in-depth information on national literacy and allow for a fresh look at the strategic gaps that urgently need to be addressed. In her presentation, Ms Ulrike Hanemann emphasised that the aim of a situation analysis is to find ways of improving current plans and strategies and does not necessarily entail the development of a new plan of action. The term “situation analysis” has now replaced the term “needs assessment” in order to ensure that countries focus on identifying strategic gaps rather than on pinpointing literacy needs, which could prove misleading. Countries that carried out needs assessments (i.e. before the term “situation analysis” was introduced) did so in very different ways: in Bangladesh, examples of best practice were gathered country-wide and published as a collection, whereas in Haiti, a national workshop was held that adopted a strategy to boost literacy in the country.

Ms Ghada Gholam from UNESCO Cairo shared her office’s experience of the LIFE needs assessment in Egypt, which took around one year to complete and was designed as a capacity-building exercise. The study was prepared by the UNESCO Office together with the Adult Education Authority and conducted by the American University in Cairo, in cooperation with the UNESCO Office. The study, which is available in Arabic and English, looked at the use of literacy and people’s attitudes towards it. It showed that the different actors involved share no common vision or perception of literacy. The recommendations which the study proposes – including a change of policy, flexible delivery mechanisms, community participation and capacity-building, as well as research, monitoring and evaluation systems – will inform the LIFE Country Support Plan and pinpoint the strategic areas in which further action is needed.

This presentation was followed by a lively debate on the choice of methodological approach and the need to obtain a more quantitative picture of the literacy challenge before reaching conclusions as to how literacy policies and strategies might be improved. A number of participants took the view that any research undertaken should be based on as large a sample as possible, to ensure that it is representative. Furthermore, they believed that universities and specialised research institutes should be involved in such an endeavour. It was also emphasised that it would be necessary to measure people’s literacy skills directly in order to gain a true picture of the size of the literacy challenge, which would also entail higher costs.

The session continued with a presentation by Ms Ulrike Hanemann on UIL’s proposal for a Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy as part of national LIFE processes, which had been developed in an international workshop attended by LIFE country representatives and experts from specialised organizations. The aim of this strategy is to build on the LIFE countries’ existing monitoring and evaluation systems. The reports that the national LIFE focal points were asked to compile for this meeting took into account the proposed strategy for monitoring the implementation of LIFE.

Participants generally agreed with the proposal as it stood. However, UIL emphasised its interest in improving and adjusting the structure to reflect evolving processes. Some participants suggested developing standardised monitoring and evaluation indicators, while others took the view that only necessary data should be selected. Ms Hanemann cited a number of existing indicators that could be used as references (some of which are listed in the LIFE brochure). The NFE-MIS manual produced by UNESCO and the guide on Monitoring and Evaluation produced by the Bangkok Regional Office also contain a range of EFA indicators.

Agenda Item 5: Literacy Assessment and Monitoring

Presenters:

Mr Mohammed Bougroum,
Professor, LAMP Project National Coordinator, Morocco

Mr Abdellatif Kissami,
LIFE Project Coordinator, UNESCO Cluster Office in
Rabat

Mr Mohammed Bougroum presented the Moroccan pilot experience of the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP). The objective of LAMP – which has been developed by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics – is to monitor and assess literacy skills levels in developing countries. The pilot countries were Kenya, El Salvador, Mongolia, Niger, Palestine and Morocco (where the programme has been running for three years). Traditionally, literacy statistics have been based on a narrow definition of literacy (yes or no) and on individuals' self-assessment. LAMP's objective is to explore the meaning of literacy (definition), identify the target groups involved and examine their socio-economic characteristics. LAMP consists of a household survey targeting people aged 15 and older that aims to assess the skills levels of the people tested. The methods were inspired by the IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey) and ALL (Adult Learning and Literacy). This project will enable developing countries to shed some light on populations with a very low level of literacy. It will use direct measurement to provide policy-makers with information on people's skills levels. It can also be used to: 1) monitor the quality and efficiency of adult learning programmes; 2) relate formal education to non-formal education; and 3) strengthen advocacy for literacy.

The Moroccan LAMP experience has shown that a project can be adapted to suit a local context. It opens up all of the black boxes through which capacities can be built, thus offering an excellent opportunity to build capacities at the national level (through a multi-disciplinary team). It has also opened up resources and drawn on the technical and political support provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). Yet if an in-built and permanent monitoring and evaluation system is to be developed,

LAMP represents just one of several steps that must be taken. To achieve the best results, it must also be paired with an NFE-MIS and a monitoring and evaluation system.

To ensure a good balance of national and regional representation, the LIFE pilot in Morocco drew on a sample of 600 households (one member of each household was interviewed) in different areas from different backgrounds. The costs for this project are high, especially because this was the first experience of its kind and has thus incurred additional development costs. Training costs must also be taken into consideration. Whether these costs are justified is a political question and depends to a large extent on the type of information that is needed. If the data currently available is satisfactory, there is no need to introduce further changes. LAMP would be applied only once every five or ten years to set a number of benchmarks for the period thereafter. The process is a time-consuming and long-term one. The Moroccan experience will be of use to other (Arab-speaking) countries, as costs can be reduced once the pilot project has been completed.

A lively debate followed, during which participants raised many questions with regard to the pilot project's costs, duration, sampling, transferability to other countries, comparability among countries and compatibility with existing monitoring and evaluation approaches. It was explained that LAMP has established standardised criteria to measure literacy, and that it is precisely this that makes it so innovative. In Morocco, LAMP has been very costly because decision-makers wanted to test people with the lowest skills level. It is hoped, however, that the (adapted) tools may subsequently be used in other Arab countries and at a lower cost.

Contrary to LAMP, which aims to assess people's literacy skills, the NFE-MIS system assesses the existing capacities of non-formal education systems. Mr Abdellatif Kissami gave a presentation on the NFE-MIS project developed by UNESCO, explaining that it started to be implemented in several countries in 2005. That date coincided with the introduction of a new policy by the recently-elected government in Morocco; hence the political will to monitor and evaluate NFE and literacy was in place. The goal of the information system proposed by UNESCO is to gather

a variety of statistical information. The programme standards were adapted to the Moroccan environment and the needs of the country's decision-makers. It was decided to examine existing literacy programmes, as well as a programme for drop-outs (children aged between 9 and 15). These programmes are run by different bodies, governmental authorities, civil society and the private sector. The quality of programmes was also assessed, as were the number of learners, teacher-pupil ratios, funding, the use of textbooks and documents, and the total number of programme hours required.

The project is still in the experimental phase and covers the whole country. A decentralised system of management was developed. Prerequisites for setting up a NFE-MIS system are political will, a culture of information exchange, and appropriate scientific tools. Experience has so far shown that the NFE area is highly complex, and developing a management information system involves dealing with a number of challenges such as: coordination; the multiplicity of actors involved; the diversity of the indicators in use; existing systems; overlaps and redundancies; the difficulty of tracking and tracing individual learners; and high expectations.

In the discussions on LAMP and the NFE-MIS system, there were calls for measures to establish a balance between the cost of information systems, on the one hand, and the expected outcomes, on the other. There is still a need to develop a culture of sharing data and information, particularly when it comes to funding. The indicators used for NFE are known. But it is still unclear how they should be interpreted in order to identify policy implications. The main challenge is to build a culture of monitoring and evaluation at all levels. If people remain unconvinced of the usefulness of the monitoring and evaluation exercise, they will simply check questionnaire boxes without reflecting on their responses. The in-built monitoring and evaluation component is a learning opportunity in itself and ways must be found to make the process as participatory and user-friendly as possible.

It was also suggested that the NFE-MIS should be integrated into the management information systems for formal education that most countries have already implemented. This is far more cost-effective than introducing a new system such as the proposed

NFE-MIS. However, the Director of the Moroccan Literacy Department expressed his conviction that both systems – the NFE-MIS and LAMP – are important for addressing the literacy challenge. He also made it clear that the funds for developing LAMP in Morocco are provided by UNESCO, World Bank and others; i.e. no existing public funds are being diverted from literacy programmes to finance the programme.

Agenda Item 6: Synthesis of Issues, Challenges and Lessons Learned

Once again, Mr Essam Assaad summarised the issues, challenges and lessons learned during the sessions of Day 2. As on the previous day, the main challenges that had been analysed related to the high rates of illiteracy and the problem of school drop-out. Other challenges addressed in the presentations and debates were: funding; the need to scale up literacy efforts; the need to assure the quality of provisions; and the need to set up effective monitoring and evaluation systems.

Furthermore, there is a need to develop effective strategies that achieve higher retention rates. Literacy and NFE work urgently requires adaptation to ensure that it responds to adults' needs. There is also a need to intensify research on the potential benefits of literacy, and on the direct and indirect impact that literacy and NFE may have on learners' lives. Longer-term strategies are required in order to address literacy as a foundational element within lifelong learning policies.

LIFE should encourage countries to develop methods of direct measurement that enable them to assess national literacy levels and rates. Furthermore, countries should set up effective NFE-MIS – or alternatively, integrate the literacy and NFE component into existing management information systems – in order to plan, implement and monitor the national literacy policy and strategy more effectively.

In addition, Mr Essam Assaad invited participants to comment on the Egyptian strategy proposed by civil society organizations and help to improve it.

Day 3: December 5, 2007

Agenda Item 7: Field Visit

A full day was dedicated to a field visit to literacy classes and income-generating programmes in the Marrakech Tensift Al Houz region that are run by the government and NGOs, and managed by groups of local women.

The field visit was arranged in order to enable participants to see how the LIFE project “Post-literacy and economic integration of women in the Ouarzazate and Zagora Provinces” is being implemented. Morocco has received a one million USD grant from the Nordic countries through UNESCO to set up this project, which is being developed in several provinces across the country. One of the main project components aims to improve the situation of women in the poorest area of the country through post-literacy work and income-generating activities that aid their economic integration. The project also focuses on building the capacities of local NGOs who play a major role in local development. Finally, four pilot Community Learning Centres (CLCs) have been set up in the most disadvantaged area of Morocco to provide education and training skills for all within the lifelong learning perspective.

In the morning, the group travelled to a community centre for NGOs (Espace Associatif Provincial de Tahanaout), where it was received by the King’s provincial representative for Marrakech. The centre was very well-equipped with Internet facilities, several meeting rooms and dormitories for groups attending training workshops who require overnight accommodation. The purpose of the centre is to allow NGOs to meet and coordinate their activities in the province, as well as to organize and receive training. The group also had the opportunity to learn about the activities of a local cooperative of women (Amazmiz) dealing in agricultural products and handicrafts. Members of the cooperative also attend literacy classes. The women are entitled to participate in the income-generating programme provided that they first attend a literacy course and that they send their children to primary school.

In the afternoon, the group visited a number of education and literacy programmes in the city of Marrakech, most of them funded by the government, and all of them for women. The visitors then attended a “General Literacy” class at Al Khalid Ibn Al Walid public school.

The field visit ended with a meeting with members of a local NGO (Al Noor Wa Al Irfaan) that offers all kinds of services for children, young people and adults.

The discussion about the study visits (Day 4) focused on the sustainability of the income-generating projects and the additional need to invest in marketing to ensure their profitability. The markets are highly competitive and products must be relevant to the local community. Egypt shared its experience of training learners in the production of handicrafts – an endeavour which ultimately failed because the products were too expensive. The example of Bangladesh was cited, where a system is in place whereby Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) collects all of the products generated by an NGO and offers them for sale in a single shop (e.g. to tourists). To ensure that learners remain in the project, they should be offered around 80 per cent of the total income generated as an incentive. The remaining 20 per cent should be transferred to a separate bank account so that funds are available for the distribution of loans and micro-credits.

Mr Nadir responded that the Ministry for Social Affairs runs the programmes in partnership with the Associations of NGOs. Income-generating activities are funded by these institutions and other donors, and not by the literacy department. Morocco has 13 micro-credit institutions nationwide. Marketing is indeed problematic, and the choice and quality of the products is extremely important. Some malls and shops have agreed to act as vendors and people who see where the products are from are motivated to buy them. The Associations also receive support from the National Initiative for Human Development and other institutions. Occasionally, they introduce a new product, for example carpets that have attractive designs and are much in demand on the market. Sometimes, they also hire consultants to help to boost the quality of the products.



Visual impressions from the field visit: Community Centre for NGOs in Taha-naout, local cooperative of women in Amazmiz and literacy class in Marrakech.



Other observations referred to the sharing of school space so that it is occupied by children in the mornings and adults in the afternoons and evenings. Participants were impressed by the schools that they visited in which the Department of Literacy had already established effective cooperations with the headmasters. Resource sharing depends on the willingness of headmasters because although the Ministry sends an official letter requesting their cooperation, it cannot force them to open their schools to literacy classes. Many are aware of the importance of simultaneously addressing both children's and parents' learning needs and the positive effect that this has on the drop-out rate. In Egypt, however, headmasters rarely make classroom space available for adult literacy classes, and adults themselves feel ashamed to be attending "school".

One of the issues analysed in greater depth by the participants was that of funding. In the case of the projects which they visited, funding came from a public-private partnership. Through the National Initiative of Human Development, the government releases funds to the association (NGO), provided that certain conditions have been fulfilled (for example programmes are attended by a specific number of participants and the drop-out rate is under 20 per cent). The Associations then implement the income-generating projects or micro-credit schemes. In this way, Morocco has succeeded in involving civil society to a high degree. However, the initiatives are currently unable to keep up with demand and more funds are required to cater for all those wishing to attend. It is also proving difficult to find facilitators that are both accepted by the communities and have at least a minimum level of qualifications (high school).

Day 4: 6 December 2007

Agenda Item 8: Experience with the UNESCO-funded LIFE Project in Morocco

Presenters:

Mr Chaker Aziz,

Consultant for the Association Marocaine d'Appui aux Initiatives de Développement (AMAID)

Mr Abdellatif Kissami,

LIFE Project Coordinator, UNESCO Rabat

Mr Chaker Aziz has been working as a consultant for the Moroccan NGO network AMAID to aid the implementation of the LIFE project "Post-literacy and economic integration of women in the provinces of Ouarzazate and Zagora". AMAID works through a network of 30 local NGOs and is implementing the project in partnership with the Ministry of Education and UNESCO. The project, which started in 2007, provides training to 4,500 women after they have completed a literacy course. The training lasts 18 months and focuses on developing income-generating skills that are suited to the rural environment. Learning modules use a participatory and learner-centred approach based on a range of case studies and real-life experiences, and are currently piloted prior to validation. As a result of the South-South cooperation programme with the Asia Pacific Regional UNESCO Office in Bangkok, four pilot community learning centres (CLCs) have been set up. A participatory rural appraisal method was used to involve local people of all ages in the design of the learning centres, while UNESCO is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the pilot.

This particular project approach has been shown to help learners solve their day-to-day problems more easily. It has increased their (self-)confidence and encouraged their children to return to school because they now receive better support from their mothers, who have learned to value literacy and learning highly. Youth and other local partners have also become interested in establishing CLCs and new partnerships with other local, national and international actors could be developed on the basis of this project. Among the problems that these endeavours face, the

presenter listed the absence of certain NGOs, delays and shortcomings in the distribution of learner materials, equipment that could not be delivered on time, overburdened infrastructures, and a lack of training.

The discussion that followed revolved around the importance of providing newly literates with post-literacy and continuous learning opportunities that would ensure that they do not relapse into illiteracy over time. Sudan reported that the NGO SOLO is currently preparing a training kit to draw people back into learning. Egypt has also prepared a post-literacy strategy. Yemen stressed the need for village libraries to provide newly literates with books. Newly literates also would need appropriate information and counselling on further learning opportunities, in particular those that allow them to acquire vocational and income-generating skills. It was emphasised that this would be facilitated by establishing close cooperations between the different partner institutions. Female empowerment should be at the centre of related efforts to ensure that women can select learning options that are currently denied them.

The next presenter, Mr Abdellatif Kissami, followed on by asking whether initiatives such as the LIFE projects really succeed in empowering women. One of the challenges that women have to face is language, i.e. the use of local dialects. Hence, in Morocco, learners are offered a 20-hour special training course in local dialects before they start literacy classes in (standard) Arabic. The LIFE project aims to develop a set of specific skills that empower women by enabling them to earn an income.

Furthermore, Mr Kissami spoke about the Moroccan experience of the CLC-based approach, and described how it had had to be adapted to the local setting. Initially, it proved difficult to convince the communities that they would have to run the centres themselves (they had requested assistance from outside). However, this responsibility was eventually clarified and accepted through a series of advocacy meetings. Another challenge was to work towards establishing a bridge between formal and non-formal education. Arab State ministries do not usually consider NFE to fall within the scope of their activities. They needed to be convinced that literacy and NFE can be used as a catalyst for development, particularly in rural areas.

Agenda Item 9: Synergies between Formal and Non-formal Education

Presenters:

Ms Ulrike Hanemann,
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, UIL, Germany

Ms Maren Elfert,
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, UIL, Germany

UIL provided input on synergies between formal and non-formal education. Ms Ulrike Hanemann started her presentation on equivalencies with a short summary of the main findings (“illiteracy is receiving minimal political attention and remains a global disgrace”) of the 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report, and stressed the need for a systematic approach to EFA. She also emphasised the need to move towards a broader concept of literacy and learning: literacy should be merely the first in a series of steps designed to engage people in continuing and lifelong learning. It is therefore necessary to guarantee relevant learning opportunities for all, throughout life (for people of all ages), and in a variety of ways (formally, non-formally and informally). Examples of measures that bridge the gap between formal and non-formal education include accreditation and certificates, the creation of different entry and exit points in an education system that integrates NFE, and family learning programmes.

Furthermore Ms Hanemann cited examples of equivalency systems that included the “Education for Life and Work” model from Mexico, the National Qualifications Framework from South Africa, and the Centres for Recognising, Validating and Certifying Competences from Portugal. It was concluded that EFA can only be achieved if: education systems are adjusted to make them more open, flexible and permeable; more resources are made available and synergies between formal and non-formal education are established; and the overall perception of the contribution of education and learning to today’s globalised world is changed by integrating (and institutionalising) a lifelong learning perspective.

Ms Maren Elfert then gave a presentation on the family literacy approach, which focuses on intergenerational interactions within the family and community that in turn promote the development of literacy and related life skills. This approach links formal and non-formal education by involving parents in school and placing schools at the heart of the community. Research has shown that children's school attendance is strongly influenced by the literacy skills of their mothers. Longitudinal studies carried out in Turkey demonstrated that children who attended a family literacy programme went on to have longer school careers and were more likely to attend university than those who did not. Furthermore, research evidence on the impact of family literacy has shown that the immediate effects include benefits to children's literacy and an improvement in parents' ability to help their children. Side effects included increased self-confidence and an enthusiasm for further learning (which she referred to as "catching the learning bug").

Ms Elfert provided some examples of effective practice from Germany, Turkey, Malta, Palestine and England, where a broad range of different – and more or less formalised – family learning programmes have been developed. In England, school initiatives have started to involve parents as assistant tutors ("peachers"); once they have undergone the relevant training, they can then apply for accreditation through the London Open College. In addition, UIL is currently facilitating a North-South exchange on family literacy through a series of international seminars and publications. In conclusion, family literacy is a promising approach which is increasing recognition for non-formal learning. However, it requires long-term investment and support from policy-makers and cannot be considered a substitute for good quality primary education.

In the ensuing discussion, Mr Bougroum reported on a family literacy pilot experience in Marrakech, during which university students carried out literacy training in their own homes in the company of their parents and/or family members. This idea of "using" university students for literacy programmes is a relatively popular one in the region (e.g. UNILIT). However, little has been done so far to document the effectiveness of such programmes and to turn them into institution-alised components of university provisions in the region. The Egyptian participant reported a similar

experience. Family literacy programmes encourage parents to enrol in literacy learning who would not have done so had it not been for their need to support their children at school.

A further issue that was raised in the discussion was the cost of family learning programmes, which require long-term investments. There are costing models available that not only show how much it costs to make a person literate but also indicate what it costs if countries fail to invest in literacy. It must be demonstrated to donors that the return of investment for family literacy is equal to (or even greater than) the return of investment for primary education.

Agenda Item 10: The Experience of Sudan

Presenters:

Mr Abdelhafiz Mohamed Salah,
General Secretary NCLAE, Sudan

Mr Omer Abbass Alfaki,
Director of Projects, Ministry of Education, Sudan

Mr Salah and Mr Abbass Alfaki presented the National Council for Literacy & Adult Education's Five-Year Plan (2007-2011) for NFE in Sudan. Their presentation was preceded by an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current literacy situation carried out by a national committee representing a number of different stakeholders. The strengths include existing policies and legislation that prioritise and support literacy and education, provincial committees that have been established as a result of the new decentralisation policy, and human resources that have been made available through local societies and universities. The weaknesses include the language problem, insufficient funds, poor coordination, and a lack of accurate data and research.

Among the guiding principles of the strategic plan are: the consolidation of national identity through religious faith and the integration of Arabic and African cultures; the linkage of literacy with life skills and livelihoods; and the acquisition of literacy skills for lifelong learning. The strategic objective for the 5-Year Plan is to work towards broadening participati-

on in and mobilisation for literacy in order to eradicate illiteracy and boost development. The plan aims to provide literacy courses to around 8.6 million illiterates (aged between 15 and 45) by 2015, and to enable approximately 2.5 million adolescents to access basic education. This would reduce the illiteracy rate to 24 per cent (from 57 per cent) for those aged 15-45 and 10 per cent for those aged 9-14 by the year 2011.

The plan is divided in two stages. During the first stage, the main focus will be on densely-populated areas and areas inhabited by a large number of displaced populations. This will cover the whole country. At the same time, a survey will be undertaken in order to map the distribution of illiterates country-wide. During the second stage, literacy provisions will target the organized sectors (civil servants at national and state levels and the armed forces) and the non-organized sectors (farmers, pastoral workers, labourers, women, adolescents, people in difficult circumstances, and so on). In addition to basic literacy programmes, those living in difficult circumstances will be offered supplementary support programmes such as income-generating projects, initiatives for the development and empowerment of women, and programmes for the development of local crafts. The planned activities will be coordinated at the national level and implemented at the state level.

A family learning centre in Marrakech



Agenda Item 11: Experiences with Advocacy

Presenters:

Ms Ghada Gholam,
UNESCO Cluster Office in Cairo

Mr Qutub Khan,
UNESCO Regional Bureau in Beirut

Ms Ghada Gholam started her presentation with the questions: 1) do we need more advocacy in the region in order to advance literacy efforts? and 2) if this is the case, which methodology should be selected? As LIFE is a means of supporting and organizing related activities, the UNESCO Cluster Office in Cairo incorporated it into its work plans and budgets. After the first regional meeting in Sana'a in March 2006, the UNESCO Cluster Office in Cairo had held a brainstorming meeting attended by a variety of partners, stakeholders and media representatives. This meeting came up with ideas on how LIFE could be promoted in Egypt. Several other activities followed, including a national training workshop on planning NFE provisions. In Yemen, LIFE was launched at a national meeting attended by major partners, media representatives and a number of NGOs.

The Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy, which took place in March 2007 in Doha, Qatar, was a major advocacy event. Ms Gholam stressed the importance of exploiting the link between EFA and literacy for the purposes of advocacy, and provided some examples which should be disseminated as good practice: the emphasis on literacy during the annual EFA week celebration, the development of training manuals for NFE planners (which were used in Egypt and Yemen), and the involvement of the media through the production of TV advertisements which were broadcast both regionally and nationally, and a film centring on a newly-literate individual which was disseminated on CD.

Mr Qutub Khan based his presentation on his experiences of literacy advocacy in Iraq. He shared very detailed information on how to plan and implement an effective advocacy strategy successfully. Key questions, he said, must be addressed (why, who, what, where, when and how), in order to make the

messages simple and ensure credibility. The central message must relate to the reasons that motivate people to enrol in literacy courses. Mr Khan offered to distribute a CD-ROM to participants containing the tools and advocacy measures used.

Agenda Item 12: Planning the Way Forward

The concluding session was devoted to working together to plan the way forward for LIFE in the Arab Region. The principal questions addressed were as follows:

- What must your country do in order to make LIFE operational?
- What are your country's needs and what can you offer to others?
- What kind of support is expected from UNESCO?
- How can we network with one other?

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The national LIFE focal points of each country summarised their responses in the following way:

1) In the case of Sudan, numerous challenges were reported, including migration, the displacement of individuals affected by war, and cultural and ethnic diversity. Efforts must focus on addressing gender issues, setting up an NFE-MIS, undertaking studies to find out why people are not in school, and identifying and analysing the literacy learning needs of the various Ministries. The support required from UNESCO includes capacity building, the development and publication of learning materials, and technical assistance to build national expertise. In addition to the 5-Year Plan, the 10-year Plan of Action is focusing in particular on gender issues. It is also attempting to link literacy with poverty reduction and development. Sudan needs regional and international expertise, in particular in the areas of evaluation, the training of trainers, the development of text books, the use of ICTs, and the creation of a literate environment.

The 10 per cent increase in the number of girls attending school reflects the success of the new direction that the education sector has taken. Six centres currently offer pilot programmes combining literacy courses with life skills training for women. There are

plans to expand these to a total of 30 centres. 25,000 trained literacy programme instructors are available, and will receive support from university students who will be required to work for the literacy programme as part of their Mandatory Civil Service. At the same time, the Sudanese literacy authority is working to improve adult basic education provisions. The main challenge will be to scale up literacy provisions over a short period of time. It is clear that this can only be achieved if the government enters into a strong partnership with civil society.

2) Iraq needs to deal more efficiently with illiteracy, which has been spreading rapidly. Life skills training and development projects cannot succeed without literacy. Social development centres have now been established at the national and provincial levels, but they are inaccessible to many and this is a challenge that must be addressed. Iraq requests greater flexibility and solidarity from UNESCO to help it overcome the huge challenges that the country is currently facing. However, it does not need to be treated differently (as a post-conflict country) because Iraq has the same problems as most of the other LIFE countries in the region. The representative of Iraq made a strong case for greater flexibility with regard to project implementation.

3) The Director of the Literacy Department of Mauritania reflected on what measures the country would take to enable LIFE to advance. First, the experiences, success stories and lessons learned from the first-round countries must be adapted to the Mauritanian context. Second, Mauritania needs to prepare to launch and integrate a new literacy campaign into its national education system. UNESCO Rabat had already started to work with the Mauritanian Literacy Department to implement the LIFE process, and the country's main request was that this support and accompaniment continue. The support needed centred primarily on technical assistance for capacity-building.

The social and political conditions in Mauritania now favour progress in the field of literacy. However, the government will need strong partners. There is a need to review the national literacy strategy and to link it to the LIFE strategy. The LIFE approach will be at the heart of the literacy campaign that the country is launching in 2008. One of the challenges that the Mauritanian Ministry of Education currently faces is the

general lack of data and historical records, which can be attributed to the fact that, until recently, literacy was in the hands of the Department of Islamic Affairs. With the help of UNESCO, the Ministry of Education will work to build the capacities it needs to tackle the literacy issue. In addition, Mauritania should be invited to participate in related international workshops. UNESCO Rabat was asked to inform Mauritania of available training opportunities and study visits (particularly in Asia) that would help them to learn from other countries' experiences.

4) The representative from Egypt cited two main challenges: first, the need for a political decision with regard to literacy and second, the need to convince illiterates of the value of education. Since poverty is a major reason for this lack of conviction, literacy training must be linked to income-generating projects. Many people are unaware of the literacy learning opportunities available to them. Egypt needs an NFE-MIS comparable to the one that Morocco has started to establish. Only then can the organizational structure and management of literacy and NFE function efficiently. There is also a need for an information campaign to encourage beneficiaries to attend classes. A close exchange between Morocco and Egypt would be desirable.

In addition, three issues were raised from the NGO side: (a) in order for an effective campaign to be set up in villages across the country, the support of decision-makers is required; (b) more comparative studies and outside support (UNESCO) are needed in order to put pressure on the government to take action and seek partnerships with NGOs; and (c) the experiences of other countries need to be taken into account in order to decentralise organizational structures and allow for greater flexibility. The system needs less bureaucracy and more transparency. Advocacy should be based on research, and the possibility of establishing new partnerships needs to be explored.

5) The main challenges in the case of Morocco are: advocacy at the political level; adequate training for facilitators; capacity-building that guarantees the high quality of literacy provision; and stable recruitment and salary conditions that encourage facilitators to remain in their posts. In order to add value to LIFE, the Director of the Literacy Department suggested

developing a regional work plan that includes a comparative framework addressing the six Arab LIFE countries' common challenges, similarities, differences, responses and strategies at the regional and the (individual) country levels. This would enable these countries to exchange experiences and share good practice. The need for capacity-building and high-level advocacy should be prioritised. This Plan of Action should then be monitored jointly by the six LIFE countries.

6) The challenges cited by the representative of Yemen were also numerous. Some reflected the issues encountered by other LIFE countries in the region, while others were unique to Yemen. These challenges include: employees' lack of awareness with regard to literacy; the low number of competent facilitators; the failure to implement political decisions; the low priority that decision-makers accord to literacy; the lack of long-term contracts and attractive salaries for facilitators; the unavailability of funds for the publication of post-literacy materials; and inadequate budgetary allocations that fail to cover existing needs. If literacy is to move forward at all in Yemen, the issue of fundraising must be addressed. In short, the majority of the country's needs relate to the quality of provisions, the training of trainers, advocacy and the production of learning materials.

During the discussion that followed, Morocco's proposal for a common Action Plan for the Arab LIFE countries was backed by the other participants. It was further suggested that the EFA Mid-term Review Meeting for the Arab Region – scheduled to take place in Doha in February 2008 – be used to advocate strongly for literacy and LIFE. UIL proposed developing national literacy dossiers for the purposes of advocacy. These would consist of a country fact sheet detailing the current situation with regard to literacy and a series of key messages based on research evidence that list the benefits of literacy and can be used for national advocacy and the mobilisation of resources.

Final Evaluation



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In the course of the final evaluation of the meeting, participants expressed their appreciation for having been offered the opportunity to exchange experiences and obtain information on literacy and LIFE from the region. They emphasised the richness of the discussions and the mutual understanding that these had fostered, and praised the efficiency with which the meeting had been organized. They agreed that one of the meeting's main outcomes had been to promote a better understanding of the need to broaden the concept of literacy by framing it in the context of lifelong learning and literate societies.

Other results achieved during the meeting included the shared understanding of LIFE that participants had reached, and their increased familiarity with the different strategies and support mechanisms used to implement LIFE at the national level. Furthermore, participants gained an overview of the progress made, challenges encountered and activities planned with regard to literacy and NFE in the different LIFE countries in the region. They also gained an insight into innovative approaches for the development of sector-wide and integral literacy and NFE policies and strategies. Their understanding of the importance of advocacy for literacy at different levels on the basis of empirical evidence was deepened. By interacting with one another during the meeting, participants were able to share experiences, views and information, and establish working relationships that could subsequently be exploited for the purposes of networking and South-South cooperations.

Closing Ceremony

In his closing remarks, Mr El Habib Nadir, Director of the Moroccan State Secretariat for Literacy and NFE, challenged his colleagues and participants to intensify their literacy efforts so that in ten years' time comparable regional meetings could focus on topics other than illiteracy.

Taking into consideration the growing complexity and dynamics of literacy as a continuous process that requires regular and sustained learning, however, it is quite possible that the issue of literacy will continue to keep educationalists occupied well beyond that time frame.

Participants of the meeting ready to go to the reception dinner offered by UNESCO



Annex 1: Meeting Agenda

Monday, 3 December 2007

- 9:00 Greeting and introductions (Mr Philippe Quéau, Director, UNESCO Rabat and Mr Benajiba, Director, Regional Academy For Education and Training in Marrakech)
- 9:30 What has happened within LIFE so far? (Overview: UIL)
- 9:45 Presentations and exchange of experiences from participating countries:
1a) Morocco¹
1b) Activities of DVV International within LIFE Morocco (Mohammed Belghazi)
1c) South-South cooperation in support of the national literacy strategy in Mauritania and Morocco (Abdellatif Kissami)
- 11:00 Tea break
- 11:30 2) Mauritania
3) Iraq
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:00 4) Egypt*
5) Yemen
- 15:30 Tea break
- 16:00 6a) Sudan
Synthesis of the issues, challenges and lessons learned (Essam Assaad).
- 17:45 End of session

* 45 minutes per country: 20 min. for presentations from national LIFE focal point, 10 min. for complementary information from UNESCO focal points, 15 min. discussion.

¹ Including experiences and lessons learned from extra-budgetary LIFE projects

Tuesday, 4 December 2007

- 9:00 1) Current trends, issues and challenges in literacy policy and strategies (Essam Assaad)
2) Emerging policy and strategy issues in the Maghreb (Abdellatif Kissami)
3) Discussion
- 10:30 Tea break
- 11:00 1) Situation analysis as a preparatory step for LIFE
a) Experience of Egypt with needs assessment (Ghada Gholam)
b) UIL proposal for a situation analysis
- 2) Introduction to assessment, monitoring and evaluation of literacy and NFE (Abdellatif Kissami)
- 3) Monitoring and evaluation strategy as part of national LIFE processes
a) Proposed framework (Ulrike Hanemann)
b) Exchange on country experiences of monitoring and evaluation
- 4) Agreement upon strategies for situation analysis, and the monitoring and evaluation of LIFE
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:00 UNESCO's Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP)
Morocco's pilot experience with LAMP (Mohammed Bougroum)
- 15:00 Tea break
- 15:30 1) Harmonising the assessment of learning outcomes in Morocco (Bachir Tamer, UNESCO Chair)
2) Literacy and NFE information management system in Morocco (Abdellatif Kissami)
Synthesis of the issues, challenges and lessons learned (Essam Assaad)
- 17:00 End of session

Wednesday, 5 December 2007

- 9:00 Departure for field visit
- Field visit to the Literacy Programmes (Literacy Department Morocco)
- Arrival at Marrakech
- Analysis of visit

Thursday, 6 December 2007

- 9:00 Policies and strategies to enhance literacy efforts and reduce illiteracy
- 1) Experiences in Sudan (Mr Abdelhafiz Mohamed Salah and Mr Omer Abbass Alfaki)
 - 2) Experiences in Iraq (Qutub Khan)
 - 3) Experiences in Yemen and Egypt (Ghada Gholam)
- 10:30 Tea break
- 38 11:00 Synergies between formal and non-formal education:
- a) Equivalencies (Ulrike Hanemann)
 - b) Family literacy (Maren Elfert)
- 12:30 Lunch
- 13:30 Experiences of and strategies for effective advocacy
- a) Introduction on issues, challenges and good practice examples (Qutub Khan)
 - b) Good practice example (Abdellatif Kissami)
- 15:00 Tea break
- 15:30 Where do we go from here: Planning the way forward
- 16:30 Conclusions and evaluation of the meeting
- 17:00 End of meeting
- Evening Reception dinner offered by UNESCO and held in a Moroccan restaurant

Annex 2: List of Participants

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Annex 3: List of Background Documents

Title of documents	English	Arabic	French
LIFE Vision and Strategy Paper (UNESCO, 3rd edition, September 2007)	X	X	X
LIFE Arab Region Country Meeting Report, Sana'a, Yemen, March 2006	X		
Literacy in the Arab Region: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches, Report on Regional Literacy Conference in Doha, Qatar, March 2007, UNESCO/ Qatar Foundation	X		
Biennial Report on LIFE 2006-2007 (UIL)	X	X	X
Guidelines for Situation Analysis (UIL)	X	X	X
The Monitoring and Evaluation of LIFE at the Country Level (UIL)	X	X	X
Agenda of Regional LIFE Meeting	X	X	
Preparatory Work requested from participants (UIL)	X		X
Information Note Regional Meeting of the Arab LIFE Countries (UIL)	X	X	
International Benchmarks on Literacy (Action Aid)	X	X	X
Literacy Policies and Strategies in the Maghreb: Comparative Perspectives from Algeria, Mauritania and Morocco (M. Bougroum et al., 2007)	X		
Opening speech by the Director of AREF, Marrakech, 3 December 2007		X	
Powerpoint presentations from participants	X	X	

