

# 2<sup>nd</sup> GLOBAL REPORT ON ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

## Rethinking Literacy

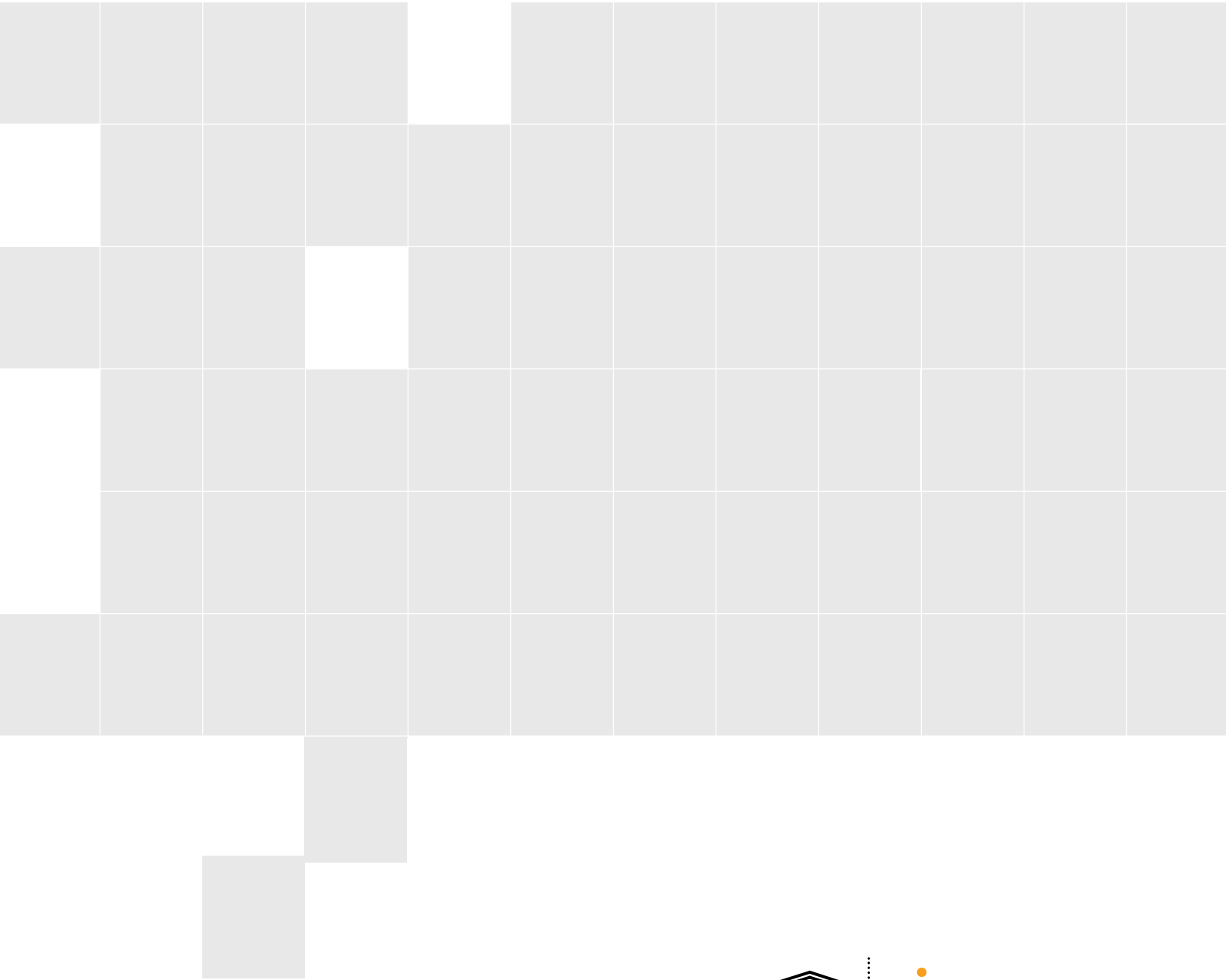


United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



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Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Institute  
for Lifelong Learning

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# FOREWORD

This *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* builds on strong foundations. Since the first *International Conference on Adult Education* in 1949, UNESCO Member States have convened every twelve years to discuss the state of adult education in their countries. In 1976, the UNESCO General Conference approved the *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education*, confirming that “access of adults to education, in the context of lifelong education, is a fundamental aspect of the right to education, and facilitates the exercise of the right to participate in political, cultural, artistic and scientific life.”

One of the first events I participated in as Director-General was the *6th International Conference on Adult Education*, held in Brazil in 2009. Approved by 144 Member States, the *Belém Framework for Action* highlighted the key role of adult learning and education for achieving the objectives of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals. Member States committed to reporting every three years on the development of adult learning and education, and they called on UNESCO to produce the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE) at regular intervals. This is the basis for this second *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*, drawing on data received from Member States.

The result is a mixed picture. Adult education policies exist in most countries, but understandings vary greatly. Some countries equate adult education with literacy, while others link it to technical and vocation education and training. These differences make it challenging to collect information on participation and financing. Without clear and comparable data on participants, it is difficult to assess the impact of adult education programmes. Many Member States have reported on a wide range of adult education programmes beyond literacy, but there is no comparable global data to identify the numbers of young and adult learners who are being reached. This is why countries need monitoring frameworks that serve national policies and that are also compatible with regional and global commitments.

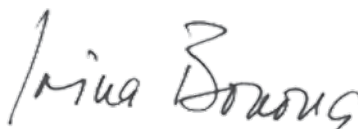
Governance of adult education is another stand-out issue. While some countries report regular capacity development programmes for governance in adult education, many others require additional public funding to local governments and/or non-governmental organizations to ensure the consistent provision of education and training at the local level.

The benefits of adult education are uncontested, for individuals and societies as a whole – but this Report shows that gaps remain in reaching many young adults, especially from marginalised groups. It is clear that adult education does not get enough investment, either at the national or international levels.

This *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* provides a platform to explore all of these issues, in order to strengthen the provision of adult education. It focusses on literacy as the foundation of lifelong learning. Effective programmes approach literacy as a continuum, where learning is a continuous process both within and outside educational settings, and throughout life. This calls for policies that cross sectoral boundaries, to create learning environments for learning societies. Literacy should be seen through the lens of lifelong learning – this Report shows that still too few countries have adopted this approach.

The *6th International Conference on Adult Education* met under the theme of ‘Moving from Rhetoric to Action’. This report shows that, while there has been progress, more resolute action is required – to provide all young people and adults with access to varied high quality learning opportunities. Learning and education is essential for the dignity of every woman and man – it is vital for healthy societies and inclusive, sustainable development.

Providing information and analysis, this second *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* is an important step forward. It comes out at the right time, when we are discussing a new global development agenda to follow 2015, including the goal of quality and equitable education and lifelong learning. Adult education and learning is part of the agenda for greater sustainability. I wish to thank the 141 countries who provided progress reports for this analysis. Strong data is the basis for better policy, at the national and global levels.



Irina Bokova  
Director-General of UNESCO

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Following the example of the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE), which was published on the occasion of the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2009, this second report is the product of a highly collaborative process and would not have been possible without the support of many individuals, organisations and institutions.

First and foremost, I would like to thank all of the 141 countries that submitted national progress reports to us. Given the lack of systematic data collection in adult education, this large number of submissions is an achievement in itself. These reports provide a significant source of information on the global status of adult education.

I would especially like to pay tribute to those governments that facilitated a consultation process, bringing together a range of stakeholders to prepare their national progress reports.

I would also like to thank all of our UNESCO colleagues in the Field Offices and National Commissions, who supported and facilitated the reporting process and offered helpful advice on country-level activities.

The GRALE Editorial Board, composed of Han Min, Veronica McKay, Cheryl Keenan, Rosa María Torres, Alan Tuckett and Ella Yulaelawati, provided invaluable guidance throughout the production of this report. The two board meetings, which were held in Hamburg in July 2011 and October 2012, and individual consultations, were instrumental in refining the data collection process, defining the Report's outline, and revising the chapters.

The contributions of Ella Yulaelawati and Cheryl Keenan were made possible through the respective support of the governments of Indonesia and the United States of America.

My utmost gratitude goes to our colleagues from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), UIL's main partner in monitoring the implementation of the *Belém Framework for Action*. The Director, Hendrik van der Pol, and his colleagues, Manuel Cardoso, César Guadalupe and Juan Cruz Perusia, played a vital role in drafting and finalising the template for the national progress reports. Juan Cruz Perusia also provided some initial results of a regional study on adult education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Albert Motivans and Friedrich Huebler contributed by examining the tables and related statistics and by providing advice on how to interpret them. Brian Buffett kindly facilitated the technical collaboration between the two sister institutes. We also benefitted from the input given by colleagues in the Section for Literacy & Non-Formal Education at UNESCO Headquarters.

The second *GRALE* was produced as an in-house research project at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, involving colleagues working under the supervision of the Deputy Director, Carolyn Medel-Añonuevo. I would therefore like to acknowledge their work in conceptualising and drafting the chapters, and their dedication as they analysed the national progress reports while working on other assignments. Ulrike Hanemann was responsible for the chapter on literacy, while Bettina Bochynek and Christine Glanz crafted the policy chapter.

The governance chapter was a collective undertaking by Werner Mauch, Peter Roslander and Angela Owusu-Boampong. Jin Yang and Raúl Valdés-Cotera worked jointly on the financing chapter. The chapter on participation was also collaborative, involving contributions from Rika Yorozu, Anna Bernhardt and Lisa Krolak. Madhu Singh was primarily responsible for the chapter on quality.

None of the chapters could have been written without the assistance of the staff members of UIL's library and documentation centre. Imke Behr, Lisa Krolak and Jan Kairies not only advised chapter authors on the most recent literature, but also actively supported the writing process with their input and feedback. Jan Kairies deserves special mention as he supported all chapter authors with data entry and the construction of tables.

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The final editorial work was undertaken by Carolyn Medel-Añonuevo, assisted by Anna Bernhardt. The insights and contributions during the editing process from Barbara Adams, Manzoor Ahmed, Lynne Chisholm, Chris Duke, and Sue Meyer also deserve special mention. Stephen Roche managed the copy-editing process, with the support of Maya Kiesselbach and interns Laura Fox and Justin Jimenez. Cendrine Sebastiani was responsible for coordinating the layout, design, translation and printing processes. I would also like to mention Christiane Marwecki, who was responsible for the graphic design of this report, and Dominique Bohère and Network Translators, who translated the Report into French, as well as Alfonso Lizaraburu for the translation into Spanish and the revision and editing of the references and links in Spanish.

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Arne Carlsen  
Director  
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

# INTRODUCTION

As countries were preparing for the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2009, the world was feeling the impact of the financial crisis that began in 2008. Nonetheless, the more than 1,000 participants from 144 Member States and civil society organizations listened to each other and collectively considered how adult education could be strengthened. The resulting outcome document, the *Belém Framework for Action*, reaffirmed that adult education is an essential element of the right to education and is fundamental “for the achievement of equity and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies” (UIL, 2010, p.6)<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, it summarised the commitments made by Member States in the areas of policy, governance, financing, quality, participation, and adult literacy.

To monitor progress in meeting their commitments, governments agreed to work with partners to design and implement regular recording and tracking mechanisms at national and international levels. As provided for in the *Belém Framework for Action*, this meant:

- a) investing in a process to develop a set of comparable indicators for literacy as a continuum and for adult education;
- b) regularly collecting and analysing data and information on participation and progression in adult education programmes, disaggregated by gender and other factors, to evaluate change over time and to share good practice;

- c) establishing a regular monitoring mechanism to assess the implementation of the commitments to CONFINTEA VI;
- d) recommending the preparation of a triennial progress report to be submitted to UNESCO;
- e) initiating regional monitoring mechanisms with clear benchmarks and indicators;
- f) producing a national progress report for a CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review, coinciding with the EFA and MDG timeline of 2015;
- g) supporting South-South cooperation for the follow-up of MDG and EFA in the areas of adult literacy, adult education and lifelong learning;
- h) monitoring collaboration in adult education across disciplines and across sectors such as agriculture, health and employment”. (UIL, 2010, p. 9)<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the Member States called upon UNESCO and its structures “to coordinate, through the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), a monitoring process at the global level to take stock of and report periodically on progress in adult learning and education and to produce, on this basis, the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE) at regular intervals” (UIL, 2010, p. 9)<sup>1</sup>.

While the recording and tracking mechanisms have been unevenly pursued, the most tangible development since 2009 is Member States’ submission of their first triennial national progress report<sup>2</sup>.

1 UIL. 2010. CONFINTEA VI. *Belém Framework for Action: Harnessing the power and potential of adult learning and education for a viable future*. Hamburg

2 The terms national reports and country reports are also used interchangeably throughout the Report to refer to the national progress reports.

These were based on a reporting template designed by UIL, in cooperation with UIS, to allow comparison between the current status and succeeding reporting cycles. Elements relating to literacy were identified in collaboration with the Section for Literacy & Non-Formal Education at UNESCO Headquarters. The questions related to the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) were designed to feed into the final evaluation report of the Decade, which will be presented to the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2013.

Several rounds of discussions and consultations (which culminated in an online discussion involving approximately 300 individuals from different regions of the world) helped refine this tool. It was approved by the GRALE Editorial Board in July 2011 before being sent to all UNESCO National Commissions in three languages (English, French and Spanish). The national progress reports were submitted to the Institute between November 2011 and July 2012.

This *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* serves as UNESCO's international monitoring report, synthesizing the national progress reports from 141 countries. Unlike the first *GRALE*, which was prepared as a reference document for CONFINTEA VI, this report contains additional features. It offers the opportunity for all stakeholders to assess whether they are progressing in relation to the Belém commitments. This report and succeeding reports will not only cover the five key areas of adult learning and education (policy, governance, participation, financing and quality as per the *Belém Framework of Action*), but also highlight one theme in each issue. As the *Belém Framework for Action* affirms the fundamental role of literacy within adult education, and since

### Definition of Adult education

“Adult education denotes the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society.” (UIE, 1997, p. 1)<sup>3</sup>.

the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) ended in 2012, adult literacy was selected as the special theme of this report. In addition to the data from national progress reports, a literature review of the six areas was also undertaken to identify trends in these areas since 2009.

The response rate in this round of reporting was more than satisfactory. The 129 completed national progress reports that UIL received from 127 Member States (the United Kingdom submitted separate reports for England, Scotland and Wales) provided a large amount of new information, which was used as a basis for the qualitative and quantitative analysis, and constitutes the foundation of the Global Report<sup>4</sup>. In addition, ten countries submitted narrative reports. Because these did not follow the format of the reporting template, they could not be considered in the quantitative data analysis, but were referred to, where possible, in the Report (the Annex shows a list of countries that submitted reports).

3 UIE. 1997. *Adult Education. The Hamburg Declaration. The Agenda for the Future*. Hamburg, UIE.

4 Two reports could not be included in the analysis because they were incomplete.

**Table 1**  
Number of countries that submitted reports for GRALE in 2009 and 2012

Regions	2012		2009
	All reports received	Reports used in analysis	
Africa	34	31	43
Arab States	14	9	19
Asia and the Pacific	26	24	29
Europe and North America	42	40	38
Latin America and the Caribbean	25	25	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>154</b>

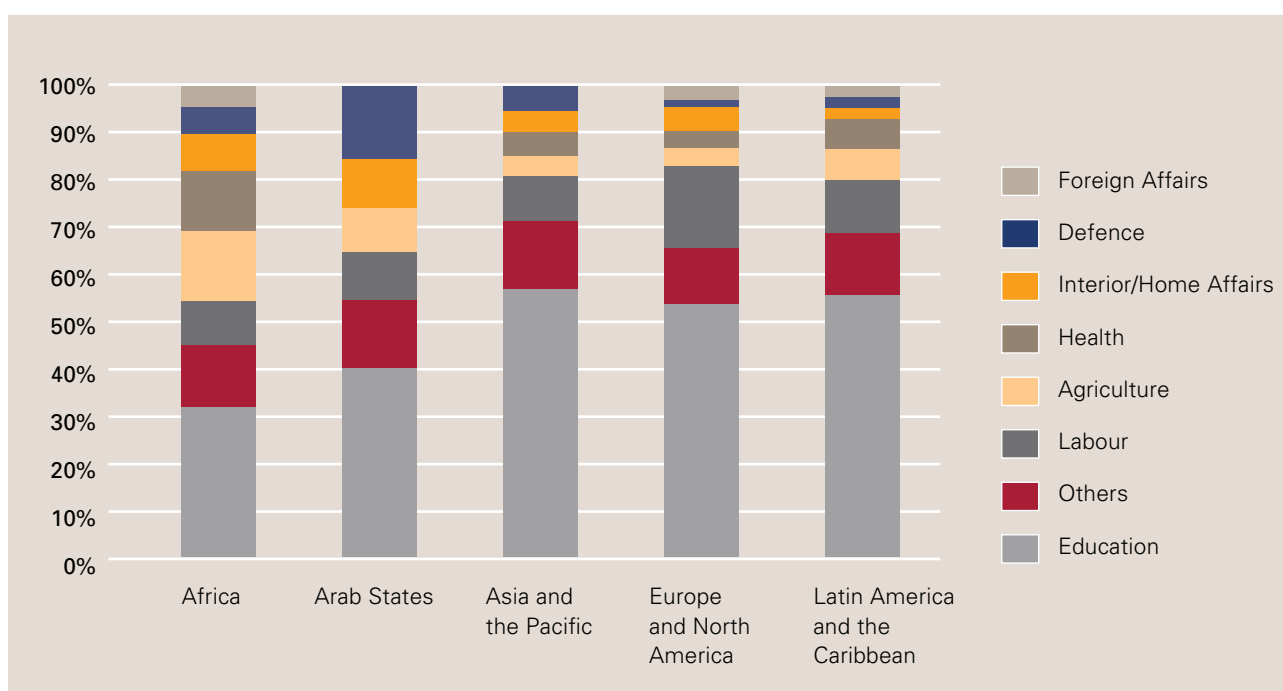
The total number of submitted reports in 2012 includes the narrative reports and those templates that were incomplete. The statistical analysis refers to the 129 completed national progress reports.

Given the lack of systematic data collection in the field of adult education, such a large number of responses represents, in itself, an achievement. Table 1 shows a higher submission rate for the first *GRALE*, but this was probably due to the organisation of CONFINTEA VI and the unrestricted format of reporting, which gave more flexibility to the countries in reporting.

UNESCO encouraged Member States to treat this reporting process as an opportunity for countrywide consultations among all stakeholders involved in adult education. They were asked to seek contributions from a variety of actors, both within governments (e.g., ministries of education, labour, health, agriculture, gender, culture, sports and leisure, social welfare, finance and economics, and foreign affairs) as well as from other sectors (e.g., non-governmental organisations, trade unions, social movements, faith-based organisations, social partners, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, and other private actors).

Figure 1 shows that education ministries were the main institutions reporting on national progress in adult learning and

**Figure 1**  
Governmental organisations involved in the reporting process, by region



education across all regions. In the African region, the reporting process seems to have involved more sectors than in other regions, as the table shows involvement of other ministries, such as health, labour and agriculture. In some cases, national consultations were held, either by setting up committees with representatives of all stakeholders or by validating the country reports in national meetings.

### **Methodological limitations**

While the structure of this *GRALE* is closely aligned with that of the first Report, caution is recommended when comparing trends presented in the two Reports, since the data were collected in different forms and using diverse methods. The main methodological difference concerns the monitoring function.

Furthermore, one needs to acknowledge that any self-reporting process has inherent limitations. Most of the information culled from the national progress reports was taken at face value and was used without systematic verification. It was assumed, in this case, that those providing the information were the most appropriate people to do so.

### **Organisation of the chapters**

As the special theme of this report is literacy, the first chapter on **literacy as a foundation for adult learning and education** occupies a special place. It is not intended, like other chapters, to monitor the implementation of the commitments made in Belém, but instead concentrates on the challenges and opportunities of defining and conceptualising literacy. It also looks at the different ways literacy data have been produced. Aside from this chapter, literacy is also treated as a transversal issue and is discussed accordingly in the five other chapters.

The second chapter on **promoting adult education policy within a lifelong learning perspective** assesses the implementation of the policy elements of the *Belém Framework*. It provides an overview of the conceptual understanding of adult education and the resulting policy frameworks. In addition to examining the

aims and objectives of adult education policy, this chapter also describes policies on language of instruction.

The third chapter on **putting governance structures and processes in place** starts with a review of the concept of 'good governance' and its concrete application to adult learning and education. The diversity of actors and their involvement in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes is then explored, and the need for effective coordination emphasised. Moreover, patterns of decentralisation and their impact on governance are analysed. Finally, the key role of capacity development in all these issues is discussed.

The chapter on **financing of adult learning and education** reviews the level of investment in adult education based on the data provided in the national progress reports. It highlights some successful approaches to mobilizing financial resources and identifies effective funding mechanisms in the international community. In the end, it makes a case for increasing investment for adult learning and education by reviewing newly published evidence relating to costs and benefits.

Participation in adult education is analysed using two different but related approaches in the chapter on **expanding participation and provision in adult education**. First, it takes stock of the various means countries are using to measure participation. Second, it examines the ways countries are addressing barriers to participation.

The chapter on **ensuring quality in adult education** analyses various elements of quality and the criteria for quality assessment. It presents learning-outcomes-based approaches in qualifications and curricular frameworks. It also assesses teaching and learning methods, and looks at whether the training and employment conditions of adult educators have improved.

The concluding chapter elaborates on the call to rethink literacy and summarizes the key findings of the six chapters.





## CHAPTER 1

# LITERACY AS A FOUNDATION FOR ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

## 1.1 Introduction

Literacy<sup>1</sup> is a core component of the right to education as recognised by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The right to literacy supports the pursuit of other human rights. In other words, literacy has the potential to enhance people's ability to act in the pursuit of freedom (Amartya Sen), and to empower them to interpret and transform their realities (Paulo Freire). Strong literacy skills are associated with a range of valuable and desirable outcomes (St. Clair, 2010). The question, then, is not so much what literacy can do for people, but rather what people can do with literacy. How it is acquired and how it is used determines its value for the learner.<sup>2</sup>

Literacy provides a basis for many other learning opportunities. The *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010), in its section on adult literacy, states that "Literacy is an indispensable foundation that enables young people and adults to engage in learning opportunities at all stages of the learning continuum" (ibid, p. 6). Literacy learning is an age-independent and continuous activity: skills acquired at a given time may be lost at another. Thus, the acquisition and development of literacy takes place before, during and after primary

school, in and out of school, and through formal, non-formal and informal learning. It therefore covers the full spectrum of lifelong learning.

Our understanding of the world is increasingly mediated by the written word, in both print and digital forms. Therefore, the abilities to read, write and operate with numbers have become an essential requirement for active participation in society. Changes in the economy, the nature of work, the role of media and digitisation, as well as many other aspects of society, have underscored the importance of literacy today. Increasing amounts of information (including that which is available online) and the need to select and use knowledge from a range of sources, pose a challenge for people with poor reading and writing skills. Many people risk exclusion from the opportunity to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and other social media. Young people and adults who struggle with reading, writing and operating with numbers are more vulnerable to poverty, social exclusion, unemployment, poor health, demographic changes, displacement and migration, and to the impacts of man-made and natural disasters.

"Literacy is an indispensable foundation that enables young people and adults to engage in learning opportunities at all stages of the learning continuum"

Increasingly, teaching and learning reading, writing, language (written and spoken communication) and numeracy are viewed as part of a broader conception of key competencies, human resource development and lifelong learning. As such, literacy is less often perceived as a stand-alone set of skills to be developed and completed in a short time frame.

Rather, literacy and numeracy are seen as fundamental components of a complex set of foundational skills (or basic competencies), which require sustained learning and updating. Governments'

1 'Literacy' usually refers to a set of skills and practices comprising reading, writing and using numbers as mediated by written materials. The discussion presented here summarises the various issues that Member States include when talking about literacy.

2 Ralf St. Clair, drawing on the capability model, puts it slightly differently: the question is not whether literacy and literacy education matter (to the people who are learning, literacy education matters very much indeed), but in what ways it matters, and how we can understand and acknowledge these more deeply (St. Clair, 2010).

commitment to the acquisition of key literacy skills is essential to guarantee the fundamental right to education.

Improving adult literacy levels is one of the six Education for All (EFA) goals. This chapter starts with a review of the challenges involved in attaining this goal, especially in light of developments since EFA was launched in 1990. It further examines the evolution of the concept of 'literacy', followed by a discussion of the different ways literacy is measured and assessed. The last part draws lessons from the earlier sections and offers some points of reflection for stakeholders as they work to improve literacy levels by 2015.

## 1.2 Challenges in achieving EFA Goal 4

Education for All Goal 4 aims towards "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". In May 2013, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) reported that, in 2011, 774 million adults (aged 15 and over)<sup>3</sup>, 63.8 per cent of them women, were unable to read and write. The global rate of adults able to read and write was 84.1 per cent (88.6% male and 79.9% female) compared to 89.5 per cent of youth (92.2% male and 86.8% female), where youth is defined as persons aged 15 to 24. More than half of adults who are unable to read and write (53%) live in South and West Asia, 24 per cent live in Sub-Saharan Africa, 12 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific, 6.2 per cent in the Arab States and 4.6 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean (UIS, 2013). It is estimated that less than two per cent of the global illiterate population live either in Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, North America or Western Europe (UIS, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that, in 2011, 25.4 per cent of the world's population lived in South and West Asia, 12.6 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa, 32.6 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific, 5.1 per cent in the Arab States, and 5.6 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean (data from the UIS Data Centre).

However, reported literacy rates only show a partial picture of the situation. For example, according to the European Labour Force survey in 2011, many of Europe's 73 million low-educated adults (25–64 years old) are likely to experience literacy problems (European Commission, 2012). Poor literacy skills are probably affecting more people in Europe than governments are aware of. Most European countries have simply assumed that everyone who passes through compulsory education will be equipped with adequate literacy skills. However, various surveys have shown that this cannot be taken for granted. The recent report by the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (European Commission, 2012) points out that the majority of adults with literacy problems have attended at least compulsory schooling, but emerged without sufficient competences in reading and writing. As the global labour market continues to change, skills need to be upgraded on a frequent basis. Those without digital competences are increasingly excluded from many services and may have difficulties managing their day-to-day life. The aim of literacy policy therefore should not be to simply reduce so-called "illiteracy rates", but to increase and develop basic skills, including a broad spectrum of literacy skills, and to create rich literate environments and learning societies.

As Table 1.1 shows, 35 countries have already reached or are close to reaching EFA goal 4. Fifty-four countries may be able to reach the goal by 2015 if they intensify efforts, and 29 countries are unlikely to reach the goal. While "illiteracy rates" are declining, the absolute number of adults reported as unable to read and write is not decreasing fast enough to represent substantial progress.

Who is being left behind?

- Women (representing globally two-thirds of all illiterates), but also men (especially in Europe and in some Caribbean countries)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In 81 out of the 146 countries with available data, more women than men are illiterate. Of these countries, 21 show extreme gender disparity, with fewer than seven literate women for every ten literate men (UNESCO, 2012, p. 5).

**Table 1.1**  
Progress towards EFA Goal 4 by region

	Likely to reach EFA 4	Additional effort needed to reach EFA 4	Unlikely to reach EFA 4 by 2015	No. of countries providing data
<b>Africa</b>	3	6	18	<b>27</b>
<b>Arab States</b>	6	6	4	<b>16</b>
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	11	12	5	<b>28</b>
<b>Europe and North America</b>	12	13	0	<b>25</b>
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	3	17	2	<b>22</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>118</b>

Source: UIS, 2013<sup>5</sup>

- People living in rural areas
- People living in countries affected by or emerging from conflict (UNESCO, 2011)
- The poor (UNESCO, 2010)
- Ethnic and linguistic minorities (see UNESCO, 2010)
- People with disabilities (WHO, 2011)

The *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010) emphasises the urgency of redoubling efforts to improve literacy levels by 2015. The interconnected nature of the six EFA goals is clear when we consider the impact that the achievement of Goal 4 would have on Goal 1 (early childhood care and education), Goal 2 (universal completion

of primary education), Goal 3 (youth and adult learning needs), Goal 5 (gender parity and equality in education) and Goal 6 (quality of education) through more skilful parents, families and communities. In the same manner, the achievement of the other five EFA Goals would also have an impact on Goal 4. This interdependence reinforces the fact that literacy is trans-generational and lies at the heart of basic education for all.

Literacy is also vital to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>6</sup> and the goals of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) have stressed the need for accelerated efforts in achieving EFA Goal 4. However, adult literacy has not received appropriate attention and resources. According to the 2011 Global Monitoring Report, the EFA target for reducing illiteracy rates by 2015 will be missed by a wide margin. This reflects a long-standing neglect of literacy in education policy (UNESCO, 2011). The latest Global Monitoring Report (2012) confirms that most countries will not achieve Goal 4.

5 Target values for the EFA goal of reducing the adult illiteracy rate by 50% between 2000 and 2015 were calculated by UIS. The target values for each country were set at the latest adult literacy rate reported in the 2000 census decade (1995–2004), plus half of the difference between that literacy rate and 100 per cent. For example, if the adult literacy rate in a country was 60 per cent in 2000, the target was set at  $60\% + (100\% - 60\%) / 2 = 80\%$ . In some cases, the target literacy rate was calculated in reference to literacy rates from years before or after 2000. Given that the adult literacy rate is a slow-moving indicator, the deviation from the exact target value can be assumed to be small in such cases. Projected literacy rates in 2015 were calculated by UIS with its Global Age-Specific Literacy Projections (GALP) model. The projected values were compared with the target and three prognoses generated: likely to reach or exceed the target, likely to reach the target with additional effort (if the projected value for 2015 is within 5 percentage points of the target), and unlikely to reach the target (if the projected value is more than 5 percentage points below the target).

6 Despite being of critical importance for development, literacy was not included in the MDGs.

Of forty countries with an adult literacy rate below 90 per cent in 1998–2001, only three are expected to meet the goal of reducing their illiteracy rate by 50 per cent (UNESCO, 2012).

Progress towards achievement of EFA Goal 4 has been slow. Low prioritisation from policy-makers and, consequently, inadequate resource allocation have resulted in limitations in the delivery of literacy learning opportunities for adults. In some countries, the absolute numbers of young people and adults lacking literacy skills have increased. This is, of course, partially due to population growth, but also due to early school leaving and poor school quality. The quality and relevance of literacy provision for all age groups are of paramount importance for education policy. The literacy challenge must be addressed in a systematic way and through the lens of lifelong learning.

### 1.3 Evolving notions of literacy

While the concept of literacy has evolved over time, no global consensus on the definition has emerged. ‘Literacy’ is usually understood as the ability to read and to write. Numeracy, as mediated by written material, not oral numeracy, is often added as a complement or component of literacy. Increasingly, there is also mention of language skills, as most people live in multilingual contexts or have a migrant background and need to use oral and written communication in different languages. Terms such as *literacies*, *literacy practices*, *basic literacy*, *initial or advanced literacy*, *functional literacy* and *post-literacy* are used with widely different, and sometimes unclear, meanings in policy, programme and academic contexts. Indeed, these terms reflect the multidimensionality and complexity of literacy and underscore the urgent need to go further beyond the traditional dichotomy of “literate-illiterate”, as is also urged by the *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010).<sup>7</sup>

7 The changing perspective and the new tendency to reject the terms ‘illiteracy’ and ‘illiterates’ as inaccurate and detrimental to the understanding of the real situation was already identified more than 20 years ago resulting from a UNESCO conference on “Literacy and Basic Education in Europe on the Eve of the 21st Century” (see conclusions of Bélanger et al., 1992, pp. 205–206).

One reason for the existence of differing meanings of the term literacy is the linguistic and cultural context in which the term is used. In many European languages, the word for literacy relates to the process of becoming familiar with the alphabet and the coding and decoding of words and text.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, in languages such as English or Chinese, the word ‘literacy’ or ‘literate’ has been associated with a condition of being accustomed with literature or, more generally, with being well-educated and civilised. People struggling with reading and writing can find it humiliating if their lack of skills is equated with ignorance. In contexts where the majority of the population is literate, low literacy becomes a stigma, a hidden issue and a taboo subject, as recently demonstrated in Europe (European Commission, 2012, p.21). In addition to the usual dichotomy of ‘literate’ and ‘illiterate’, there is an implicit assumption that once a person has become “literate”, this condition remains unchanged until the end of his or her life. Many languages lack words to describe the loss of literacy-proficiency over time.

UNESCO, in fulfilment of its normative function, has offered two operational definitions of what constitutes a literate person. In 1958, it was agreed that, “a person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life.”<sup>9</sup> In 1978, UNESCO recommended the definition that “a person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community’s development.”<sup>10</sup>

8 For example, *alfabetización* in Spanish, *alfabetização* in Portuguese, *alphabétisation* in French, *Alphabetisierung* in German, *alfabetisering* in Danish, Dutch and Swedish.

9 UNESCO’s 1958 literacy definition does not specify what is meant by “a simple statement” and “everyday life” (each individual’s everyday life is unique), and does not cover numeracy.

10 UNESCO’s 1978 literacy definition is still widely used. The notion of “functional literacy” has been heavily criticised as instrumental and biased towards economic activity. However, literacy is always “functional”, since it equips people with skills that allow them to function, so there is no need for such a qualifier. These definitions have been framed within education statistics, so they are mostly operational definitions for measurement purposes.

In 2003, UNESCO organised an expert meeting at which the following operational definition was proposed: “Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential, and participate fully in community and wider society” (UNESCO, 2005a, p. 21).

Meanwhile, five different approaches to literacy have been identified in academic discussions:

- 1) literacy as skills, particularly the ability to read, write and calculate, sometimes called cognitive skills or a set of cognitive processes;
- 2) literacy as applied, practised and situated, or as tasks that require the written word, such as functional, family and work-based literacy;
- 3) literacy as a set of social and cultural practices embedded in specific socio-economic, political, cultural and linguistic contexts, including schools, family and community contexts;
- 4) literacy as capabilities, reflected in the ability of the person using the skills to achieve their purposes and their communicative goals; and
- 5) literacy as a tool for critical reflection and action for social change, also referred to as critical or transformative literacy.

(see Lind, 2012, pp. 2–5; UNESCO, 2005, pp. 149–152; McCaffery et al, 2007, pp. 43–105; St. Clair, 2010, pp.13–44).

The *Belém Framework for Action* presents key elements for understanding literacy today: (a) literacy as a continuum; (b) sustainable literacy as a target; (c) literacy as an empowering tool that enables participants to continue as lifelong learners; and (d) an enriched literate environment as essential support for continuing education, training and skills development beyond basic literacy skills (UIL, 2010, pp. 6 f.). From the internationally adopted notion of literacy in the *Belém Framework for Action*, it can be concluded that learning and using literacy skills is a continuous, context-bound process that takes place both within and outside of educational settings throughout life.

Eighty out of 120 countries reporting (or 67%) have adopted an official or working definition of literacy. But these still vary, from short statements, such as “literacy is seen as lifelong learning”, to those adding new concepts, such as digital competence. Official definitions often reflect a simple statement and/or refer to UNESCO’s official and operational definitions from 1958<sup>11</sup>, 1978<sup>12</sup> and 2003.<sup>13</sup> In a number of cases, the scope has been expanded by adding language competences, ICT competences, and essential practical skills. In practice, many countries use more elaborate definitions that relate to the way in which literacy programmes are delivered, rather than how data are generated by departments of statistics in ministries of education or by national statistics authorities. Almost half of the 40 countries that have reported not having any official definition are OECD members in Europe and North America and this may reflect a shift towards embedding literacy in broader frameworks of skills, competencies or qualifications.

Table 1.2 shows that most countries include the domains of reading or writing (76 and 74 respectively) in their definitions. Twenty-seven countries mention both reading and writing (Table 1.3) while forty-nine have adopted definitions that explicitly include numeracy (Table 1.2). Most of these are located in Africa and Europe and North America. Forty-six countries refer to the three dimensions of reading, writing and numeracy in their definitions (Table 1.2) and a number include ICT skills (11), life skills (5) and language skills (21) (Table 1.3). Eighteen countries, mainly in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, emphasise the empowering nature of their literacy approach.

“Progress towards achievement of EFA Goal 4 has been slow. Low prioritisation from policy-makers and, consequently, limited resource allocation have resulted in limitations in the delivery of literacy learning opportunities for adults.”

11 Belgium and Lesotho

12 Bosnia and Herzegovina and France

13 Bangladesh, Jamaica, Namibia, Uganda and Zambia

**Table 1.2**  
Keywords used in literacy definitions (reading, writing and numeracy separately)

	Reading	Writing	Numeracy	Total <sup>14</sup>
<b>Africa</b>	21	19	16	<b>31</b>
<b>Arab States</b>	5	5	4	<b>9</b>
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	12	12	8	<b>24</b>
<b>Europe and North America</b>	23	24	15	<b>40</b>
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	15	14	6	<b>25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 1.2 "Has your country adopted or developed an official definition of literacy?" and Question 1.2.1 "Are other definitions used in practice?"

**Table 1.3**  
Keywords used in literacy definitions (reading, writing and numeracy combined)

	Reading and writing	Reading, writing and numeracy	Total with combined definitions/ total countries reported
<b>Africa</b>	4	15	19/31
<b>Arab States</b>	1	4	5/9
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	4	8	12/24
<b>Europe and North America</b>	10	13	23/40
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	8	6	14/25
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>73/129</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 1.2 "Has your country adopted or developed an official definition of literacy?" and Question 1.2.1 "Are other definitions used in practice?"

<sup>14</sup> The total represents the number of countries that reported having an official or working definition of literacy. Each cell should be read as, for instance, "21 out of 31 African countries include reading in their definition".

**Table 1.4**  
Other keywords used in literacy definitions

	ICT skills	Life skills	Language skills	Critical thinking	Autonomy/ empowerment	Total <sup>15</sup>
<b>Africa</b>	0	2	5	2	5	<b>31</b>
<b>Arab States</b>	0	0	1	0	0	<b>9</b>
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	1	2	8	1	1	<b>24</b>
<b>Europe and North America</b>	9	1	5	0	2	<b>40</b>
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	1	0	2	0	10	<b>25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 1.2 "Has your country adopted or developed an official definition of literacy?" and Question 1.2.1 "Are other definitions used in practice?"

Despite their widespread inclusion in different definitions of literacy, keywords such as reading and writing are not necessarily understood in the same way. The understanding of these actions has also evolved over time. In some cases, reading is characterised as the identification of the letters of the alphabet, and in others as the ability to recognise familiar words. This could mean that just the image of the word is familiar enough for a person to grasp its sound or even its meaning without actually reading it. Sometimes this means decoding skills (sounding out a word), sometimes grasping the meaning of a word, and in some cases, even the ability to critically reflect and act on the meaning that has been grasped (Fransman, 2005). While some of these skills are essential for reading (knowing the alphabet or decoding familiar and unfamiliar words), they are not, in themselves, 'reading'. A similar caveat applies to writing: in the past, several programmes or measurement efforts required individuals to write their names in order to demonstrate that they are proficient in writing. However, this task can be accomplished by 'drawing' a familiar shape rather than writing, whereas writing is understood as an activity intended to produce a piece of written text that embodies meaning.

Looking closely at the responses to the question of definitions, 23 countries, most of them in Europe, include attributes of the pedagogical approach to literacy. Though most of the definitions that make reference to language allow for literacy in any language, there are some exceptions that consider a person literate only if able to read, write and speak in a particular language (such as English in the case of the Bahamas). In the People's Republic of China, given the characteristics of the script, two different standards have been established in the official literacy concept: 1) for rural populations, the ability to identify 1,500 Chinese characters; and 2) for employees of enterprises and institutions, as well as urban residents, the ability to identify 2,000 characters.

Fourteen countries related literacy to skill levels that are equivalent to schooling. For example, the National Education Law of the Lao People's Democratic Republic identifies literacy as equivalent to grades one and two of formal primary school, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a person is only considered

<sup>15</sup> In this table the total represents the number of countries that reported data. Each cell should be read as, for instance, five out of 31 African countries include language skills in their definition.



literate when having completed primary education. Although acceptable literacy levels can be treated as an equivalent to the intended outcomes of a schooling experience, it is important to consider that the results achieved by schooling can diverge from their intended outcomes. Thus, equating literacy with a certain number of years of schooling may be misleading; there is no guarantee that students acquire the required level of literacy within a certain time frame. Rather, it is dependent on the quality of the provision, languages, literate environments and other factors.<sup>16</sup>

In Spain, 'literacy' is subsumed under the formula of 'initial education', referring to the development of the basic competencies required to access secondary education. Norway has developed a Framework for Basic Skills as a reference point and Malta aligns literacy courses with level one of the European Qualifications Framework.<sup>17</sup> In Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, literacy is mainly perceived as an initial level and is subsumed under adult basic education.

The notion of literacy as a gradual or continuous learning process is expressed in definitions from five countries (one quotes UNESCO's operational definition from 2003), most of them in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>18</sup> Ten countries explicitly use the term "lifelong learning" or "lifelong learner" in their literacy concept.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> This was demonstrated by the results of the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which tested reading competency levels at grade four: 50 per cent of children in low-income countries perform at or below the level of the lowest five per cent in high-income countries (Crouch, 2012). According to the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report, out of around 650 million children of primary school age, as many as 250 million either do not reach grade four or, if they do, fail to attain minimum learning standards (UNESCO, 2012, p.122).

<sup>17</sup> The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) was agreed upon by European institutions in 2008 with the aim of relating different European countries' national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework. It enables individuals and employers to better understand and compare the qualifications levels of different countries and different education and training systems.

<sup>18</sup> Bangladesh (UNESCO 2003 operational definition), El Salvador, Guyana, Slovenia and Uruguay

<sup>19</sup> Bangladesh, Botswana, Cape Verde, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Portugal, Scotland (United Kingdom), South Africa, and Uruguay

Based on the national progress reports, a majority of the official definitions focus on the reading, writing and numeracy skills necessary to perform simple tasks in everyday life. However, in some cases, these basic skills are referred to as "literacy, language and numeracy", "skills for life" (literacy, numeracy and ICT skills) or "essential skills." In spite of initiatives to integrate novel dimensions such as ICT skills, very little attention is given in the national progress reports to including the development of critical, creative and independent thinking within the concept of basic or essential skills.

Meanwhile, there are also efforts to review existing terms and to create new ones that acknowledge in more differentiated ways the two aspects of literacy education: the process of teaching and learning, and the outcomes (specific levels of literacy skills) resulting from this process. Conflicting views of literacy often exist as part of a fundamental tension between the breadth, complexity and context of learning processes and the precision required to measure and assess the outcomes of the process. In other words, the way 'literacy' is conceptualised has implications for how it is taught and learned, and for how it is measured. The assessment of a population's literacy skills based on comparable, pre-determined standards has become an important national and international policy concern.

As for the instrumental purpose of literacy training, economic objectives (literacy for employability, for self-employment, for self-reliance, for economic development and growth) prevail. Some countries have developed more integrated approaches, such as family literacy or literacy embedded in vocational training and education. This is most explicit in National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), which have defined specific entry levels of basic literacy and numeracy. The establishment of such frameworks in many countries, which allow for equivalencies between formally and non-formally acquired skills, have helped pave the way for the recognition of literacy as a learning continuum and a foundation of lifelong learning.

None of the official literacy definitions mention the importance of literate environments. If the aim is to develop literate societies as well as individuals, then the quality of the literate environment and its characteristics are just as crucial as literacy training programmes in motivating, developing and sustaining literacy skills. The challenge is to include the features of literate environments in practical interventions and assessments for literacy promotion.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, the understandings of literacy, as reflected in diverse definitions, have evolved alongside new social and pedagogical theories, as well as technological and other developments characteristic of increasingly complex knowledge-based and globalised societies. While there are a few countries that continue to use UNESCO's 1958 and 1978 definitions, more and more countries consider literacy as a set of key competencies involving written communication, and the ability to access and critically process information, and to pursue and organise one's own learning.

When literacy is conceived as a continuum there is no definite line between "literate" and "non-literate". Rather, literacy becomes a kind of *moving target*. Therefore, the dichotomy reflected in the widespread use of the terms "illiterates" and "literate" not only creates a conceptual problem, but also has serious policy implications, starting with potentially misleading discourse on the target of "eradicating" illiteracy. Nonetheless, the evolving notion of literacy as a continuum has increased interest in the direct measurement of skills levels in many countries.

## 1.4 Measuring literacy

The United Nations system and many countries have used UNESCO's operational definitions<sup>21</sup> as a basis for censuses and literacy surveys. At the same time, other conceptions of literacy that go beyond the 1958 and 1978 (official) definitions have also been developed and advanced.

The three UNESCO operational definitions (1958, 1978 and 2003) were primarily developed for measurement purposes: The first two were included in recommendations for education statistics, and the most recent was prepared as a foundation for UNESCO's Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP). Although the concept of 'literacy' has broadened due to a more profound understanding of its complexities, this does not mean that components defined for measurement also have to be broad. In the case of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and LAMP, the broad and multi-dimensional definition of literacy was broken down into three domains: reading, writing<sup>22</sup> and numeracy.<sup>23</sup> Each can be seen as a continuum of skills that can be further differentiated into sub-dimensions.

In order to monitor the implementation of the *Belém Framework for Action*, Member States committed themselves to "investing in a process to develop a set of comparable indicators for literacy as a continuum and for adult education" (UIL, 2010, p. 10). A number of challenges stem from these internationally adopted commitments, as they seek to measure literacy both as a continuum and through the use of comparable indicators. The requirement to measure literacy skills levels as a continuum is incompatible with a clear line between 'literate' and 'illiterate' individuals.<sup>24</sup>

"When literacy is conceived as a continuum there is no definite line between 'literate' and 'non-literate'."

<sup>20</sup> Some innovative approaches have already been developed to measure, for example, the "density of the literate environment" as a component of UNESCO's Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), or "valued practices" by using ethnographic and practice-based approaches (see case studies from Nepal and Mozambique by Maddox and Esposito, 2011; Maddox et al., 2012; Maddox and Esposito, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> See Section 1.3.

<sup>22</sup> Even if none of these studies measure writing skills.

<sup>23</sup> More precisely, these are: prose literacy (reading continuous texts), document literacy (reading non-continuous texts present in forms, graphics, etc.), and numeracy or, in IALS, quantitative literacy (using arithmetical operations on numbers presented in written form).

<sup>24</sup> This does not preclude the possibility of defining a threshold in each continuum considered acceptable at one time. This threshold has to be specified in terms of the actual skills and tasks an individual can perform, and can be revisited and redefined according to changing needs and challenges.

Some countries – often in the context of National Qualifications Frameworks – have already established a scale of different levels of literacy and basic skills development. For example, the EU High Level Expert Group on Literacy proposes three levels of literacy,<sup>25</sup> broadly equivalent to PISA<sup>26</sup> levels 1, 2 and 3:

- 1) baseline literacy (the ability to read and write at a level that enables self-confidence and motivation for further development);
- 2) functional literacy (the ability to read and write at a level that enables development and functioning in society at home, school and work); and
- 3) multiple literacy (the ability to use reading and writing skills in order to produce, understand, interpret and critically evaluate multimodal texts).

The ‘multiple literacy’ level has been identified by the OECD as the minimum threshold that enables people to meet lifelong learning requirements (European Commission, 2012, pp.13 and 103).

When asked how literacy data are obtained, 105 countries indicated that their literacy data (essentially counts of “literate” and “illiterate” and estimated literacy rates) are based on a single question asked in their population census and/or household surveys (Table 1.5). This question is usually phrased in very simple terms: “Can you read and write?”, or a variation of this. It is posed to each individual above a given age, or to a single individual who answers on behalf of the whole household. Data gathered from questions such as these pose problems, as 1) they frame the issue as a dichotomy, 2) they are dependent on what each individual understands as “reading” and “writing”, and 3) they do not reflect the differences in the individuals who report the answers. Several countries have tried to improve the wording by including specific tasks in questions such as, “Can you read a simple message?” or “Can you write down a message for someone else?”. Aside from the fact that these different questions and reporting strategies add to the complexity of compiling data

**Table 1.5**  
**Methods for obtaining literacy data in countries (a)**

	<b>Population census</b>	<b>Household survey</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Neither of these</b>	<b>Total</b> <sup>27</sup>
<b>Africa</b>	28	21	20	2	<b>31</b>
<b>Arab States</b>	6	2	2	2	<b>9</b>
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	15	12	9	6	<b>24</b>
<b>Europe and North America</b>	27	16	11	8	<b>40</b>
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	18	14	12	4	<b>25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 1.3 “How is literacy data obtained in your country?”

<sup>25</sup> The model proposed by the Expert Group actually includes ‘learning to learn’ as a cross-competence, literacy and numeracy at the three levels, and digital competence and communication as enabling and facilitating competences.

<sup>26</sup> PISA is the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment. It is important to note that PISA does not measure writing.

<sup>27</sup> In this table, the total represents the number of countries that reported data. Each cell should be read as, for instance, “28 out of 31 African countries produced literacy data through population census” (but not necessarily in this way only).

internationally, the underlying definitions of literacy and measurement modes are not strictly comparable. Most of these literacy statistics rely on information that is self-reported or reported by someone on behalf of an entire household.

While the rationale for using such measurement strategies is well-known (UIS, 2008, p.18), these statistics nonetheless provide limited representations of the literacy situation in each country and ignore developments that have been made in the literacy field over the past decades. Interestingly, several national progress reports<sup>28</sup> mentioned that the literacy figures that are currently available are unreliable because of these issues, going on to suggest conducting studies to test actual literacy levels. These studies are, however, more demanding in financial and technical terms. Certainly, running a reliable literacy test would be more expensive than including a simple question in an existing (household) survey.

In presenting data on educational attainment (usually gathered through a household survey), 73 countries simply accept the number of school years attended as an indicator of a given level of skills, though this is quite unreliable (see Table 1.6). By contrast, 47 countries produce their literacy data through some form of skills measurement (testing). In Europe and North America, national governments and the OECD began a series of adult literacy surveys based on direct testing in the 1990s. Currently, 24 OECD countries are participating in the first cycle of a new Programme for the International Assessment of Adults Competencies (PIAAC), which will release its results in October 2013. Sixteen countries mention participation in PIAAC in their national progress reports.

**Table 1.6**  
Methods for obtaining literacy data in countries (b)

	<b>Educational attainment</b>	<b>Testing</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Africa</b>	21	14	16
<b>Arab States</b>	2	3	3
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	10	7	7
<b>Europe and North America</b>	26	14	20
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	14	9	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>57</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 1.3 "How is literacy data obtained in your country?"

28 For example, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Mexico, Mongolia, Namibia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Serbia, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Uruguay and Zambia.

In addition, a considerable number of African, Arab, Asian and Latin American countries report the use of direct testing approaches to generate literacy data. UNESCO's Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), initiated in 2003, may have had an influence on this trend. Skills-testing is both technically and financially demanding. Furthermore, it is difficult to judge the reliability of data as detailed information on the methodologies used is often unavailable. In other cases, test results are compromised by evidence of serious methodological flaws. For instance, one national literacy survey with a composite score on literacy used information on reading, writing, arithmetic and general knowledge, but the general knowledge section had no relationship with literacy skills (Guadalupe and Cardoso, 2011, p. 205).

National progress reports indicate a diversity of approaches to generating literacy data. Examples include the following:<sup>29</sup>

- **General household surveys**  
With its 2009 General Household Survey and the 2011 National Census, South Africa began to obtain a more nuanced view of literacy. Respondents who had finished schooling before grade seven were asked to state their level of competence in various tasks, ranging from writing one's name to completing a form (McKay, 2012). Meanwhile, in countries such as Brazil, Cambodia and Indonesia, national household survey data have been used to map and identify municipalities and provinces with the highest levels of poverty, and those that are most likely to face major literacy challenges. These provinces were then targeted for literacy interventions.

- **National literacy surveys**

Botswana has included a test in its National Literacy Surveys, which are conducted every ten years since 1993 to systematically monitor the evolution of literacy in the country (Hanemann, 2005). The Lao People's Democratic Republic implemented a National Literacy Survey in 2001, which showed that, while the reported literacy rate of the population aged 15–59 was 72 per cent, only 45 per cent of the population was found to perform at an acceptable level (UNESCO, 2006). Since 1989, Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Surveys (FLEMMS) have been conducted in the Philippines to provide information on basic and functional literacy status and exposure to mass media. The 2008 FLEMMS was conducted in coordination with the Literacy Coordinating Council and the Department of Education, and consisted of a self-administered questionnaire which was completed by 69,482 individuals aged 10–64 years in 25,505 households sampled for the survey. The fifth in a series of FLEMMS is currently under preparation.<sup>30</sup>

- **Test-based literacy surveys**

Bangladesh has listed a number of test-based literacy surveys conducted in the period from 2002 to 2010, including a survey called Education Watch, conducted by a civil society umbrella organisation (Campaign for Popular Education) in 2002, and another one by an experienced NGO in cooperation with UNESCO Dhaka in 2005. The Bureau of Statistics also conducted a "Literacy Assessment Survey" in 2008. In 2007, as part of the Education Watch Initiative, the Coalition for Education Solomon Islands and the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) conducted a standardised test to assess literacy

<sup>29</sup> This list is not based on a detailed appraisal of each experience reported under the open section of question 1.3, which asked countries for any other methodology (next to the categories mentioned in Tables 1.5 and 1.6) used for obtaining literacy data.

<sup>30</sup> In this survey, "a functionally literate person is one who can read, write and compute or one who can read, write and comprehend. Persons who completed high school or a higher level of education are also considered functionally literate" (<http://www.census.gov.ph/content/almost-nine-out-ten-philipinos-are-functionally-literate-final-results-2008-functional>)

levels, which indicated a crisis in literacy, in school quality and in youth engagement in learning (ASPBAE, 2007). A similar Education Experience Survey and Literacy Assessment was conducted by ASPBAE in collaboration with the Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network (PEAN) in five provinces in Papua New Guinea from 2009 to 2011, indicating a comparable literacy situation (ASPBAE, 2011).

- **Test-based large-scale government literacy surveys**

Direct testing was carried out in Germany in 2010 and was published as the Level One Study in early 2011. A random sample of 7,035 adults aged 18–64, and an additional random sample of 1,401 adults with low literacy skills were tested. The results showed that a total of 7.5 million adults, which is around 14 per cent of the economically active population, possess very poor literacy skills. A new round of the Level One Study is planned to take place in connection with the PIAAC. In England (United Kingdom), there have been large-scale government surveys in 2003 and 2010–11 to identify the levels of literacy, numeracy and information technology of adults (ages 16–65). A test was administered to respondents face-to-face using a computer programme. In 2007, the French Agence nationale de lutte contre l'illettrisme (ANLCI) began a series of regional surveys ("*information et vie quotidienne*" – IVQ), which was expected to be concluded in 2012 in France. Following an agreement signed in 2010 between ANLCI and the Headquarters of the Military Service, ANLCI has developed an adapted testing tool for the military, which will also be used in Vocational Training Centres.

- **Online self-assessment**

Canada and New Zealand have made online tools available to motivate citizens to test their skills levels and, if required, to enrol in related programmes.

- UNESCO's LAMP programme has been fully implemented in Jordan, Mongolia, Palestine and Paraguay. Other countries (El Salvador, Morocco, Niger, and Viet Nam) completed the field trial but further implementation was deferred for political and/or financial reasons. Afghanistan, Jamaica, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Namibia are currently implementing LAMP.

A few countries reported having national data collection systems (e.g., Cape Verde) and National Adult Literacy Management Information Systems (e.g., Uganda), though these are more concerned with data storage than data generation. Other countries mention national surveys on specific topics, such as demographic and health surveys (the Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone), surveys on economically active populations (Spain, Switzerland) that include literacy, or local-level censuses in districts with high illiteracy rates (Indonesia). By and large, the literacy questions included in these surveys mirror conventional census questions, such as "Are you literate? Yes or no." UNICEF is assisting a number of countries in implementing Multi-indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), which follow a similar approach. In Serbia, for example, an MICS study conducted in 2010, included a literacy test. This study will be implemented every three years from 2012. Morocco carried out a national survey on 'illiteracy' and non-schooling in 2006, and plans to conduct follow-up surveys.

It is worth noting that several countries used multiple methods to produce literacy data, including population censuses and household surveys. However, when various methods are used at different times, this creates challenges with regard to the comparability of the data. On the other hand, a number of countries reported that they rely on one method (i.e. household survey, educational attainment or testing) as the sole source of literacy data.

Asked whether they have changed literacy data collection methods since 2006 (the UNLD mid-term review), 38 countries (32%) reported changes, while a majority of 81 (68%) did not. Those that had changed their methods were requested to select the options that best describe the changes.

**Table 1.7**  
**Changes in literacy data collection methods since 2006 in 38 countries**

	<b>New conceptual literacy definition in place for policy</b>	<b>New conceptual literacy definition in place for data collection only</b>	<b>New assessment of youth and/or adults' literacy skills</b>	<b>Increase in frequency of collection without significant conceptual changes</b>	<b>Other changes</b>
<b>Africa</b>	5	6	4	1	3
<b>Arab States</b>	3	2	2	0	1
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	6	6	6	4	2
<b>Europe and North America</b>	4	4	6	1	6
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	2	2	6	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 1.4 "Has your country changed literacy data collection methods since the UNLD mid-term review in 2006?"

The results are shown in Table 1.7. Twenty-four countries reported that their changes involve a new assessment of youth and/or adult literacy skills, and 20 countries indicated making changes, due to new definitions, for policy or for data collection only. Eight countries experienced an increase in the frequency of producing literacy data without significant conceptual changes.

A few countries gave very specific reasons for the changes in their data collection:

- Better coordination between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Central Bureau of Statistics in Indonesia, supported by a Memorandum of Understanding.
- Implementation of the new National Literacy Policy starting in 2012 in Solomon Islands, incorporating some of the changes recommended by the ASPBAE Education Experience Survey.
- In 2007, the Tertiary Education Commission developed a Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool<sup>31</sup> for adults in New Zealand. This is a predominantly online, adaptive, diagnostic assessment tool that helps learners to assess their literacy and numeracy competencies within the established Learning Progressions Framework.
- The Level One Study conducted in 2010 in Germany has involved a methodological change, from a case study to a sample-based survey.
- With the PIAAC, new elements have been introduced into direct testing of literacy skills, such as problem-solving in a technology-rich environment, using ICT skills, and questions on the skills requirements of the respondent's current/last job.

31 <http://www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/resources/356174>

- In 2007, the Scottish government signed an agreement with local governments to report on a Single Outcome Agreement within a National Performance Framework. In 2009, they conducted a survey-based literacy assessment.

Given the above, it is significant to note that almost three out of four responding countries (88 of 118 countries) indicated that they face challenges in collecting literacy data.<sup>32</sup>

Among the challenges listed, the most prominent reported were the following:

- Access-related and logistical challenges (literacy interventions in remote areas); lack of political will; lack of resources; lack of capacity and personnel turnover; lack of clear and standardised data collection instruments; problems with adapting the instruments to local languages; and lack of competent data collectors on the ground (e.g., Afghanistan, Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, Honduras, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Paraguay, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Scotland [United Kingdom], Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe).
- Lack of security; unstable accommodation of population; migration of labour force (e.g., Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, Jordan, Montenegro, Palestine, Romania, Serbia); certain population groups' (e.g., women, elderly people) reluctance to take a literacy test or failure to report their true level of literacy (e.g., Bangladesh, Chile, Uruguay).
- Uncoordinated and parallel data collections, no integration within the literacy sub-sector and no sector-wide integration: Adult literacy data are not included in existing Education Management Information Systems and/or non-governmental (private) providers of adult learning programmes are reluctant to report data to the ministry (e.g., Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Spain).
- Lack of credibility of literacy rates given the way they are produced (self-reported, educational attainment levels, etc.) and no nationally agreed assessment of literacy skills in place (no direct testing) to provide a reliable picture of the actual distribution of skills in the country (e.g., Mauritius, Mongolia, Tunisia).
- Inability to generate reliable data on the current literacy rate on a regular basis (e.g., Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guyana, Jamaica, Latvia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Slovenia, Trinidad and Tobago).
- There is no literacy definition in place that can guide the collection of literacy data (e.g., Nauru), and definitions that are not based on research may not apply because who is or is not literate is dependent on context and time (e.g., Netherlands, Philippines).
- More specific challenges with the conduct of the 2003 survey<sup>33</sup> (literacy and numeracy tests) in England (United Kingdom) include: the scope of the research in terms of age, the linkage between numeracy and literacy and the difficulty of assessing particular skills such as writing and listening.

<sup>32</sup> Only 25 per cent (30 countries) reported not facing challenges.

<sup>33</sup> The 2011 report was not yet published at the time this country report was delivered to UIL. However data (headline findings) were already made available in the form of a research paper in December 2011.



The Republic of Korea presents a contrasting view, and has expressed confidence that their already high literacy rate (98.3%), which is based on a survey by the National Institute of the Korean Language, makes collecting literacy data “a relatively less important issue”<sup>34</sup>. Nevertheless, some independent researchers are particularly concerned about the neglect of broader life skills, such as debate and discussion, creative writing, creative problem solving, hands-on learning and independent study. They suggest that an exclusive focus on a few skills or key competencies in the curricula, and teaching and learning strategies that concentrate too much on preparing learners to pass tests, can also become a problem (e.g., Jambor, 2010).

Difficult decisions need to be made about what kind of literacy is worth assessing, and for what purposes, particularly in developing countries.<sup>35</sup> What this means, in practice, is that governments must decide where to invest the limited resources allocated for literacy. However, here a dilemma emerges: funds spent producing reliable data are taken away from programme delivery; yet, effective programme delivery requires reliable data. The national progress reports imply that governments should revise their policies on literacy measurement and allocate the required resources, not only financial but also professional, to run reliable literacy measurement and testing initiatives.

In response to the challenge of producing comparable statistical literacy data, large cross-country surveys have been developed. Many are based on the IALS model initiated by the OECD in the 1990s, such as PIAAC (among industrialised countries) and LAMP. Several OECD countries mentioned in their progress reports that they are participating in the new PIAAC programme and are expecting their first results in 2013. UNESCO’s LAMP programme has tried to adapt to a variety of contexts, languages and scripts. It pays

<sup>34</sup> see national progress report of the Republic of Korea for GRALE 2012

<sup>35</sup> Another critical question to address in deciding what to measure and how to measure literacy is: who is going to use the collected information, and how?

particular attention to potential ethnocentric biases and to more culturally, linguistically and context-sensitive ways of measuring literacy levels in non-OECD countries.

Comparability is a major concern, but validity is another. For instance, LAMP recognises that several reading components are specific to language and script and cannot be compared in a meaningful way. LAMP has been open to learning from other approaches, such as ethnographic studies carried out in field tests in El Salvador, Mongolia and Paraguay. However, the challenge remains of balancing international, national and local needs, as well as feasibility and affordability, for general use of these direct assessment models.

It is difficult to establish an international standard for a minimum literacy threshold to be reached by all countries in any context and at any time in order to fulfil the requirement of comparability. The contexts are simply too diverse. Globally comparable indicators need to be very general, adaptable to specific situations, and based on a broad consensus. Moreover, the production of global and comparable data requires more professional expertise, time and funding than merely compiling literacy rates. It also entails many epistemological, institutional, and political challenges. An attempt to align a national skills framework to the OECD Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALLS) survey to measure adult literacy and numeracy has been undertaken in Australia (see Box 1.1). However, this has also raised questions about the appropriateness of using international indicators to monitor progress against national objectives and about the need to do so in a more contextualised and nuanced manner.

There are considerable difficulties in standardising literacy levels, instruments and survey procedures across countries, and in establishing best practices for all components of such a survey. Related concerns were already formulated by the methodological review of the first round of IALS (National Centre for Educational Statistics, 1997: Appendix A, pp.14–15).

Another issue is the importance of differentiating “reading” and “reading components” (knowledge of a script,

“The responses of the reporting countries indicate that most of the data collection is still based on the traditional dichotomous approach in determining literacy and illiteracy rates.”

**Box 1.1****Aligning international frameworks with a national framework to measure adult literacy and numeracy: an example from Australia**

Research conducted by a team from the Work-based Education Centre at Victoria University in Australia has shown that alignment between the frameworks of the international OECD Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALLS) survey and the national Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) is achievable. Furthermore, this alignment offers the potential for measuring progress compared to national objectives more regularly. The ACSF offers a way of monitoring any improvements in adult literacy and numeracy in a more nuanced manner than the ALLS. The principal flaws of the ALLS are: a) It is designed to provide a summary of literacy and numeracy skills rather than to act as an assessment tool; and b) it is only administered every ten years. By contrast, the ACSF can be applied at an individual level and provides evidence of progress. In addition, data about a learner's performance in core skills can be gathered at frequent intervals.

In their conclusions, the authors raise a more fundamental issue by asking if the stipulation of skills levels, as measured by the ALLS or PIAAC surveys, is the most appropriate indicator of the work being done in Australia to help people develop their literacy and numeracy skills. While acknowledging the relevance of indicators used by the ALLS and the PIAAC surveys in the international context in providing a comparable measure of Australia's position against other OECD countries, the research team emphasises the need to also use national indicators, such as those developed by the ACSF, that have greater contextual meaning, and to allow for more detailed and regular monitoring of progress against national objectives.

*Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2012*

decoding skills, fluency and automaticity), which are pre-requisites for reading. Information on reading components is crucial to inform interventions.

Overall, the responses of the reporting countries indicate that most of the data collection is still based on the traditional dichotomous approach in determining literacy and illiteracy rates. The vast majority of these rates consist of estimates based on national censuses, household surveys and educational attainment data. They combine several approaches to questioning (self-reported or reported by someone else in the household), yielding information of limited reliability. However, this method of measuring literacy ignores substantive conceptual developments over the past 50 years, in particular the understanding of literacy as a continuum.

Many countries who consider the currently available literacy figures to be unreliable because of the above-mentioned issues suggest conducting studies to test actual literacy levels. However, they also recognise that undertaking such studies would require more resources than are currently allocated. This is particularly

challenging in low-income countries. While this raises questions about the cost-effectiveness of literacy interventions, especially when there is a lack of meaningful literacy data, many national governments are establishing policies to increase resource allocation and to improve their literacy data.

More qualitative approaches, such as participatory and ethnographic identification and measurement of valued literacy practices of individuals, can serve as a complement to large, standardised cross-country surveys. In addition to literacy practices, data may also be generated on literate environments using a set of observable variables. In addition to measuring the level at which an individual is able to perform different tasks that involve the use of written materials, it is important also to measure the impact that different literacy programmes or interventions can have on learners' lives. This kind of information should include longitudinal studies and consider different domains, helping policy-makers to make decisions on investment in literacy provision.

## 1.5 Conclusion

The Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) marked an important milestone by stressing the importance of literacy as an indispensable foundation for independent learning at all stages of the learning continuum. Member States committed themselves to 1) ensuring that all surveys and data collection recognise literacy as a continuum, and 2) investing in a process to develop comparable indicators for literacy. Yet this commitment is posing almost insurmountable challenges to the task of understanding and measuring literacy in different and internationally comparable ways.

There is still no common understanding of how to approach literacy as a continuum and a lifelong learning process. Some countries use elements of UNESCO's operational definition from 2003. Others have begun discussing how to align their approach with the lifelong learning paradigm and the need to establish a standardised, level-based system that is able to provide reliable and comparable data. In the meantime there is a growing number of practices that treat literacy as a lifelong learning process. Integrated approaches such as intergenerational learning, family literacy and literacy embedded in technical and vocational education and training, as well as mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of all forms of learning, position literacy within lifelong learning. National and regional qualifications frameworks with different skills and qualifications levels that allow for equivalencies between formally and non-formally acquired skills have helped pave the way for the recognition of literacy as a learning continuum and a foundation of lifelong learning.

The challenge of generating reliable, credible and comparable literacy data at the international level also complicates the task of assessing and analysing the progress of countries in relation to EFA Goal 4.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report "*Literacy for Life*" (UNESCO, 2005) signified differences in literacy results based on indirect and direct assessments.<sup>36</sup>

Recent small-scale studies conducted by ASPBAE in the Pacific<sup>37</sup> show that only one-third of respondents who declare themselves to be "literate" were able to pass a relatively simple literacy test. In short, the analysis of national progress based on literacy data expressed in numbers and rates (including what has been explained in this chapter) raises concerns about validity and reliability, meaning that such data can only have referential value.

For the moment, most countries continue to use the traditional methods mentioned above (population censuses, household surveys, and educational attainment) to estimate literacy rates, which are still based on the dichotomous approach of classifying a person as either literate or illiterate. However, there are increasing efforts at local, national and international levels to conduct specific literacy surveys that involve the direct measurement (testing) of literacy skills. Even if the quality of the data produced is not always known, more and more countries have engaged in discussions and initiatives that advance the concept of literacy as a continuum and improve the quality of literacy provision and data.

In sum, there is little indication of major changes since 2009 with regard to literacy definitions and how countries produce literacy data. This does not mean that there is a lack of awareness of existing limitations, contradictions and problems. There are many years of experience and interesting innovative initiatives to build upon. Examples from different countries show that conceptual shifts and pragmatic approaches, which are cost-effective and help to set strategic priorities, are possible.

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<sup>36</sup> The evidence that the UNESCO Institute for Statistics compiles and publishes, which is based on Member States' submissions, is not commensurate with what experts, practitioners and stakeholders think about literacy.

<sup>37</sup> For example: In Shefa Province (ASPBAE, 2011a), five provinces in Papua New Guinea (ASPBAE, 2011) and Solomon Islands (ASPBAE, 2007).

**Key messages:**

- Substantial progress has been made towards meeting Education for All Goal 4 (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), but many disadvantaged individuals and groups are still left behind.
- Literacy is a continuum, not a dichotomy. Learning and using literacy skills is a continuous, context-bound process that takes place both within and outside explicitly educational settings and throughout life. This understanding implies concerted development of cross-sectoral policy.
- Literacy policy must focus on raising and developing basic skills as a whole and include creating rich literate environments and learning societies. The lens of lifelong and life-wide learning is the most promising perspective for addressing the literacy challenge.
- Literacy rates are largely based on simplistic and unreliable data and methods. Direct testing is gaining momentum, but is complex and expensive. To move forward, a dual approach is needed: developing culturally appropriate measurement tools and methods, and improving the quality of conventional, cost-effective self-reporting surveys.
- The generation and exchange of reliable and comparable research is indispensable for informed policymaking at all levels, including the international level. Consensus-building in the community of Member States to identify policy-relevant research needs and demands would bring benefits for all. It would be appropriate for UNESCO to moderate this process.

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## CHAPTER 2

# PROMOTING ADULT EDUCATION POLICY WITHIN A LIFELONG LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

## 2.1 Introduction

Establishing a policy on adult education is the first step in recognising the need for and value of learning in adulthood and throughout life. In addition to this recognition, adult education policy is a statement of intent that guides action, lays down principles and creates – or at least forecasts – the conditions needed to provide learning opportunities and to enable learners to benefit from them. Understood in this way, policy sets out the political commitment for adult learning and education, a prerequisite for the allocation of resources and for high-quality provision.

In the section of the *Belém Framework for Action* on policy recommendations, some key attributes are included with regard to the nature and scope of policies that cater to the fulfilment of adult learning and education as previously defined in the *Framework* (see Box 2.1).

Taking into account the commitments and recommendations on policy enshrined in the *Belém Framework for Action*, this chapter describes worldwide policy trends in adult learning and education, including adult literacy and lifelong learning, since the completion of the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (2010). Specifically, it focuses on three aspects: 1) the conceptual understanding that underpins specific legislation and policies on adult learning and education and lifelong learning; 2) the aims and purposes of adult learning and education policies; and 3) policies on language of instruction as an indicator of inclusiveness. In this chapter, policies are interpreted in a broad sense to include constitutional amendments, acts, laws, decrees, strategies, plans and action plans, as indicated by countries in their national progress reports.

### Box 2.1

#### Policy recommendations of the *Belém Framework for Action*

“Policies and legislative measures for adult education need to be comprehensive, inclusive and integrated within a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective, based on sector-wide and inter-sectoral approaches, covering and linking all components of learning and education.” (UIL, 2010, p.7)

## 2.2 Conceptual assumptions and underlying principles in adult education policies

The overall scope and integration of policies, together with embedded targets and goals, indicate how well adult learning and education are understood as a policy priority. Related to this is the question of whether a distinct definition of adult learning and education exists in a particular country and, if so, what the conceptual assumptions are. In its preamble, the *Belém Framework for Action* provides several references to the understanding of adult learning and education (see Box 2.2).

Three main principles can be derived from the *Belém Framework for Action* to help in clarifying the policy implications for adult learning and education:

**Rights-based approach:** adult education, including adult literacy, is part of the human right to education, which imposes certain obligations on the state and society. Providing learning opportunities for young people and adults is, hence, not to be



**Box 2.2****Extracts from the Preamble to the *Belém Framework for Action***

“Adult education is recognised as an essential element of the right to education, and we need to chart a new and urgent course of action to enable all young people and adults to exercise this right.” p. 5, [§ 1]

“We endorse the definition of adult education, first laid down in the *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education* adopted in Nairobi in 1976 and further developed in the *Hamburg Declaration* in 1997, namely, adult education denotes ‘the entire body of on-going learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society’”. p. 5 [§ 3]

“We affirm that literacy is the most significant foundation upon which to build comprehensive, inclusive and integrated lifelong and life-wide learning for all young people and adults.” p. 5, [§ 4]

“Lifelong learning ‘from cradle to grave’ is a philosophy, a conceptual framework and an organizing principle of all forms of education, based on inclusive, emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values; [...]” p. 5, [§ 7]

“We recognize that adult learning and education represent a significant component of the lifelong learning process, which embraces a learning continuum ranging from formal to non-formal to informal learning.” p. 6, [§ 8]

“It is furthermore our conviction that adult learning and education equip people with the necessary knowledge, capabilities, skills, competences and values to exercise and advance their rights and take control of their destinies.” p. 6, [§ 9]

seen by governments as an extra or luxury endowment to be met once other needs are fulfilled. The provision of learning opportunities for young people and adults is an element of fulfilling the right to education.

**Lifelong learning framework:** adult learning and education are an integral part of lifelong learning, which includes all modes of learning and education along the learning pathway. Given this perspective, literacy, as a foundational skill, is an important part of adult learning and education.

**Comprehensive and multi-dimensional character:** adult learning takes place in many areas of individual and social life and has multiple objectives. It involves learning in a range of spheres (economic, political, social, cultural and environmental) to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable people to become active agents in their personal and social development.

To appreciate how such principles are translated into policies, a question on whether a definition of adult education exists was included in the reporting template for the national progress reports. Out of 129 valid reports, 58 per cent indicate that an official definition of adult education exists in their country (54% in the African Region, 43% in the Arab States, 41% in Asia and the Pacific, 61% in Europe and North America, 73% in Latin America and the Caribbean). With regard to the existence of a definition of literacy, slightly more countries responded positively: 67 per cent indicated that they have an official definition in their country (74% in Africa, 84% in the Arab States, 64% in Asia and the Pacific, 52% in Europe and North America, 83% in Latin America and the Caribbean). A closer examination of the further explanations provided in the reports indicates that even countries which responded that they do not have an “official” definition of adult learning and education do have underlying conceptual understandings of adult learning and education, which are applied in practice.

In addition to asking about the existence of an “official definition”, the template also asked about a “definition used in practice”. What then can be said about the conceptual orientation of the responding countries? Compared with the commitment made in the *Belém Framework for Action*, the concepts indicated can be classified either as one-dimensional or as comprehensive visions of adult learning and education.

One-dimensional interpretations of adult education prevail in approximately half of the countries that submitted reports to UIL. These limited interpretations may be roughly divided into three groups. The first is based on age groups and, typically, understands adult education as addressing persons of 15 years of age and above, without specifying the procedure or purpose. This interpretation was found in a small number of countries (5), which also tended to equate adult education with literacy education. In the second type, the understanding of adult education encompassed basic and second-chance education, and life skills training. One sixth of reporting countries indicated that they apply this limited concept of adult education. They are distributed across all world regions, but predominantly located in Latin America. The third type equates adult education with technical and vocational education and training (TVET). When asked to define adult education, many indicated TVET as the only thematic focus.

Roughly half of the reporting countries apply broader official definitions of adult education, conceived in terms of levels, learning modes and purposes, and integrating instrumental and humanistic elements. These definitions usually include a combination of general, vocational, cultural, political and citizenship education. Objectives of individual, societal and national development are part of the definition, as are employability, civic participation, quality of life or empowerment. While this perspective has been adopted by countries in a variety of different regions (for example, Brazil Cape Verde, China, Jamaica, Palestine), it is particularly common among European countries.

In a few countries, adult education is explicitly defined as an integrated part of lifelong learning – in exceptional cases the

integration into lifelong learning has been taken so far that no separate definition of adult education exists any more (Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Viet Nam). Some countries openly refer to or have adopted verbatim the CONFINTEA definition.<sup>1</sup> An outstanding example is Uruguay, where adult education is legally enshrined as part of lifelong learning and aligned with the right to education for all inhabitants throughout life.

In sum, the national progress reports show that a division still exists between those that adopt a narrow definition, and those that embrace a broader perspective compatible with CONFINTEA goals. This points to challenges in advocacy and conceptual clarification that remain to be addressed despite the achievements of the CONFINTEA process since 1949, the 1976 *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education* adopted at the UNESCO General Conference in Nairobi (UNESCO, 1976), and the recent adoption of the *Belém Framework for Action* by 144 countries in 2009.

Definitions reflect conceptual understanding but we also need to examine how those concepts are reflected in policies. The following section therefore looks at how definitions are reflected in policy frameworks or policies. Policies as discussed here include laws, regulations and other public policy measures, as well as initiatives or strategies with a primary focus on supporting either lifelong learning, adult education or adult literacy.

The majority (87%) of the 110 countries who answered the relevant question in their national progress reports indicate that they have a policy on lifelong learning: the highest regional proportions are in Europe and North America (95%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (89%) and Africa (89%). The three other regions report on laws focusing on lifelong learning to a lesser extent, as can be seen from Table 2.1.

<sup>1</sup> “Adult education denotes ‘the entire body of on-going learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society.’” *Belém Framework for Action*, p.5, § 3

“The national progress reports show that a division still exists between those that adopt a narrow definition, and those that embrace a broader perspective compatible with CONFINTEA goals”.

While a majority of 87 per cent is impressive, a closer look reveals that many of the measures reported by countries as lifelong learning policies in fact either make no explicit reference to lifelong learning or do not include a lifelong learning perspective. For example, the national education act dealing with formal education is often mentioned as an instrument of lifelong learning policy. In many other cases, measures focusing on non-formal, adult or continuing education or vocational training are classified under the category of lifelong learning. In some cases, the policy classified as lifelong learning is the same as the one indicated as an adult education policy.

Countries from Europe and North America comprise the majority of those with national lifelong learning strategies. This is not surprising, as the Lisbon Strategy

2000–2010, which embodied the European Union’s action and development plan, had lifelong learning as one of its core strategies. At the same time, it should be noted that in this region, lifelong learning strategies mainly focus on adult continuing learning and education, often with a view to vocational upgrading. Many of these policies, particularly in Eastern European countries, came into existence between 2005 and 2007 (for example, in Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). More recent lifelong learning strategies have emerged in Austria (2011; see Box 2.3) and Serbia (National Education Development Strategy 2020) or have been drafted, but not yet formally adopted, in Malta, Montenegro and Slovenia. Outside Europe, examples of countries moving towards or having developed national lifelong learning strategies include Jamaica, Japan and Namibia (in draft). Malaysia, the

**Table 2.1**  
Existence of laws, legal regulations or other public policy measures/initiatives with a primary focus on supporting lifelong learning

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Yes</b>	24	4	16	35	17	<b>96</b>
<b>No</b>	3	1	6	2	2	<b>14</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>110</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 2.1 “Does your country have laws, legal regulations or other public policy measures/initiatives with a primary focus on supporting lifelong learning?”

**Table 2.2**  
Existence of laws, legal regulations or other public policy measures/initiatives with a primary focus on supporting adult education

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Yes</b>	25	5	16	37	24	<b>107</b>
<b>No</b>	2	1	5	1	0	<b>9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>116</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 2.1 “Does your country have laws, legal regulations or other public policy measures/initiatives with a primary focus on supporting adult education?”

Republic of Korea and Thailand (National Education Act) all have national strategies for lifelong learning under which all education, including adult education, is subsumed. Meantime, Viet Nam aims at building a learning society.

With regard to policies on adult education, 107 (or 92 %) of the 116 countries reporting on this indicate that they do have such a policy. In Latin America and the Caribbean, all countries indicated that they have a policy on adult education (see Table 2.2).

A more detailed analysis reveals that across all regions, policies classified by countries as dealing with adult education tend to be concerned with vocational training and skills upgrading, with a view to helping adults obtain qualifications and contribute to national development. As was shown in the discussion of definitions, in some cases adult education policies concentrate on literacy, either exclusively or in combination with other focus areas, such as vocational training. In particular in Europe, two more areas of focus are common: the integration of immigrants (including language teaching), and liberal or general education.

The tendency identified in the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UIL, 2010) for adult education to focus largely on the development and upgrading of skills and competences for the labour market has persisted. Issues beyond the work arena and wider benefits such as health, personal fulfilment, active citizenship, greater social and democratic

participation are included as goals of adult and lifelong learning (for example, in the European Commission's *Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning*, 2011). However, the development of human resources in response to economic needs clearly dominates the contemporary field of adult education (Moutsios, 2009; King, 2011; Rui, 2007, p. 257; Preece, 2011, p. 104; Lee and Friedrich, 2011, p. 160; Ball, 1998, p. 126). The UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education, Qian Tang, underscored this point: "Indeed, the development of skills through TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) is now one of the most often-cited priorities by ministers of education in both developing and developed countries." (Tang, 2011, p. 14).

Meanwhile, ninety-seven (or 88%) of the 111 countries reporting on this indicate that they have a law, regulation or policy measure on adult literacy. All twenty countries from the region of Latin America and the Caribbean reported the existence of policies on adult literacy, as did 96 per cent of the African respondents (see Table 2.3).

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**Table 2.3**

**Existence of laws, legal regulations or other public policy measures/initiatives with a primary focus on supporting adult literacy**

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Yes</b>	26	8	14	29	20	<b>97</b>
<b>No</b>	1	1	6	6	0	<b>14</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>111</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 2.1 "Does your country have laws, legal regulations or other public policy measures/initiatives with a primary focus on supporting adult literacy?"

The national progress reports point to three trends in how adult literacy policies are framed in countries. The most significant of these is the treatment of adult literacy as an isolated component of the education system. Here, they have very specific focuses – often to establish a committee or commission – with short timelines (e.g., in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire).

A second trend is the inclusion of adult literacy elements within national education laws, overall lifelong learning policies, adult education policies (e.g., in Botswana, Bulgaria, Gambia and Kenya) or within vocational training policies. In such cases, one needs to carefully examine whether adult literacy is given the attention and space it needs, or is marginalised as part of a broader education policy.

Despite this, the link between adult literacy and vocational training is supported by the data collected in the national progress reports, with literacy increasingly understood as an essential skill for employment and strongly associated with economic success (e.g., in Canada and the United States of America, particularly in the context of family literacy).

Finally, specific regulations or policies on adult literacy exist in France, Ireland, Morocco (National Strategy of 2004 revised in 2009), Namibia (the Adult Literacy Policy of 1996 is under revision), New Zealand, the Philippines, and Scotland (United Kingdom). Such a comprehensive approach is illustrated by South Africa, where adult literacy is framed within youth development policies.

**Table 2.4**  
Examples of laws, regulations and other policy measures/initiatives with a primary focus on adult education or lifelong learning introduced in UNESCO Member States since 2008

### Adult education

Country	Title of law, regulation or policy measure	Description
<b>Brazil</b>	Resolution “CNE/CEB no. 3” (2010)	Establishes operational guidelines for the education of youth and adults, including duration of courses, the minimum age for admission to courses and certification exams, and distance education. See Box 2.3
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	Decree no. 2009/644/PRES/MEBA to Organize Non-formal Education (2009)	Sets the scope and definitions, general principles and objectives, structures and common provisions of non-formal education. as well as pedagogical organisation and common provisions of non-formal education.
<b>Canada</b>	Nova Scotia’s Adult Learning Act (2010)	Supports adult learning programmes and services to enable adult learners to develop their potential and acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.
<b>Estonia</b>	Development Plan for Estonian Adult Education (2009–2013)	Aims to 1) improve access to formal and non-formal education, 2) decrease the proportion of people aged 25–64 with low levels of education or without professional or vocational education, and 3) create the preconditions for people to reach a higher level of education.
<b>Ethiopia</b>	Adult Education Strategy (2008)	Contains chapters on status and relevance of adult education, strategic directives on accessibility and quality of adult education, as well as management and organisation of adult education.
<b>Georgia</b>	Adult Education Strategy in the Context of Lifelong Learning (2009)	Focuses on one of the most important forms of lifelong learning: adult non-formal education. The concept of lifelong learning is integrated into the government programme, with an emphasis on social inclusion.

<b>Kenya</b>	National Adult and Continuing Education Policy (2010)	Recognises that out-of-school youth and adults deserve quality and relevant education that enables them to realise their full potential.
<b>Montenegro</b>	Law on Adult Education (2011)	Repeals the previous Law on Adult Education (No. 64/02 as amended by 49/07) and contains provisions on the aims, forms and programmes of education, the status and rights of adults in education, and educational planning.
<b>Nigeria</b>	Reviewed National Benchmark for Non-formal Education (2008)	Provides indicators for assessment of the following: literacy programmes, centres and methodology; facilitators, materials and equipment; curriculum, contact hours, ratio of learners to facilitators, and measurement of achievements; access, monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance; governance and partnerships; continuity of learning; and roles of stakeholders including international development partners.
<b>Norway</b>	Adult Education Act (2009)	Regulates the non-formal adult education sector, including study associations and distance education institutions.
<b>Palestine</b>	Final draft of the Strategy for Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning	Measures weaknesses, strengths and opportunities in the sector of adult education.
<b>Paraguay</b>	Inclusive Youth and Adult Education Policy "Let's light the fire" (2011)	Ensures access, acceptability, efficiency and equity of lifelong education as a public asset and human right for young people and adults, particularly for populations that have been historically marginalised.
<b>Swaziland</b>	National Education and Training Sector Policy (2011)	Addresses education and training issues holistically. The section on non-formal and continuing education aims to develop and regulate the non-formal and continuing education system to facilitate flexible access to relevant education opportunities for disadvantaged, elderly or disabled learners, to enhance their employment prospects and capacity to play a meaningful role in the socioeconomic life of the country.
<b>The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</b>	Strategy for Adult Education 2010–2015 (2010)	Strengthens the system of adult education by monitoring the educational mobility of adults; creates the conditions for lifelong learning and mobility; improves the quality and efficiency of education and training of adults; promotes equality, social cohesion and active citizenship; promotes adult education and a culture of learning.
<b>Wales (United Kingdom)</b>	Delivering Community Learning for Wales (2010)	Sets out strategic aims for adult community learning and defines the key actions for the Welsh Assembly (regional legislature) and adult education providers.

### Lifelong learning

<b>Country</b>	<b>Title of law, regulation or policy measure</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Armenia</b>	Concept Paper on Lifelong Learning (2009)	Defines the principles and concepts of lifelong learning, the main problems in the field and possible solutions.
<b>Austria</b>	National Strategy for Lifelong Learning (2011)	Sets out the principles, objectives and areas of action for the development of an holistic approach to lifelong learning. See Box 2.3
<b>Bulgaria</b>	National Strategy for Lifelong Learning (2008–2013)	Provides guidelines for actions that the Bulgarian government should take in order to ensure the future preparedness of Bulgarian citizens to actively participate in the global knowledge-based economy.

<b>Finland</b>	Government Decree on the Council for Lifelong Learning (2009)	Sets out tasks and composition of the Council for Lifelong Learning, an expert body operating within the Ministry of Education to foster cooperation between the worlds of education and work, and to further improve the conditions for lifelong learning and adult education.
<b>Jamaica</b>	National Lifelong Learning Policy (legislation in development to support the National Education Strategic Plan) (2011)	Fosters a climate that allows for continuous engagement of the population for knowledge and skills acquisition, leading to enhanced personal and national productivity and employability as well as active citizenship, strong families, and a healthier population.
<b>Latvia</b>	Lifelong Learning Strategy (2007, renewed in 2009)	Focuses on adult education, the weakest link in the Latvian education system. The long-term goal is to promote lifelong learning based on citizens' interests, abilities and socioeconomic needs.
<b>Lithuania</b>	Strategy on the Assurance of Lifelong Learning (2008)	Defines the development of lifelong learning policies and implementation measures, with an emphasis on vocational training and adult education.
<b>Malaysia</b>	Blueprint on Enculturation of Lifelong Learning for Malaysia (2011–2020)	Provides a roadmap to create a lifelong learning culture in Malaysia.
<b>Slovakia</b>	Strategy on Lifelong Learning (2009)	Regulates lifelong learning (in which further education is connected to the levels and grades of school education), further education, programmes for accreditation, rules and procedures for the certification and recognition of educational outcomes, including the national qualification framework.
<b>Thailand</b>	Promotion of Non-formal and Informal Education Act (2008)	Supports the mechanisms and processes relating to the provision of non-formal and informal education. Promotes and supports non-formal and informal education as a systematic and continuous process. See Box 2.3
<b>Uruguay</b>	General Law of Education no. 18437 (2008)	Promotes the coordination and complementarity of formal and non-formal education as principles of lifelong learning. Since CONFINTEA VI, national action plans have been developed and/or updated both in adult literacy and adult learning and education, including new regulations for the validation and accreditation of previous learning outcomes.

The trends and policies in adult literacy, adult education and lifelong learning described above are confirmed by various studies. In some regions the notion of lifelong learning has entered the mainstream of national and trans-national policy dialogue and discourse, both as a strategic goal for education policy reform and as a means to achieve other goals (Centeno, 2011). Continued learning for youth and adults is more clearly spelled out in policy, particularly in East Asia and Europe. The increasing number of countries that are drafting new laws and policies or revising their policies indicates the growing interest in lifelong learning, adult education and adult literacy. Whether that interest is translated into political commitment, matched with resources is

another issue. In the meantime, lifelong learning is represented almost as a new policy panacea for unresolved problems in a global context of growing economic divisions within and between countries, marked by accelerated social and technical developments (Hinzen, 2011; Keming, 2011; Varavarn, 2011).

The “policy discourse divide between the North and the South” in lifelong learning that was highlighted in the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UIL, 2010, p. 24) still exists, but an increasing number of countries in the global South are now moving in the direction of those in the North. Moreover, the concepts underpinning policy in lifelong learning and adult learning, where they exist, also

reveal that the policy approach to lifelong learning is neither inclusive nor cohesive in most cases. Lifelong learning is not yet used as a framework for education, but is in general thought of as one element of it. At the same time, many specific policies on adult learning are one-dimensional, limited either to literacy and basic education, or to vocational and technical education (Popovic, 2009; Lee and Friedrich, 2011).

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the distinction made by policy-makers, and even by many experts and scholars, between lifelong learning and adult learning remains unclear, or at least contested. In theory, the idea of lifelong learning seems to be clear as being “learning from cradle to grave”. This idea of learning throughout life exists in practically all cultures. However, in practice, lifelong learning is operationalised in different ways, starting at the policy level. While the *Belém Framework for Action* refers to lifelong learning as “an organising principle of all forms of education” (UIL, 2010, p. 5), the reality in almost all countries is different. Instead of being the overall framework within which all education is conceived, lifelong learning is usually understood as a single element, or possibly a series of elements. It is located within the education system, yet outside the formal education sector.

Moreover, the notion of policy itself is complex, and may be best understood both as a product and a process. As Yang explains, policy does not only consist of plans, decisions, documents and proposals, but also covers the processes preceding, accompanying and following the products: intentions, ideas and aims, activities and performances, and also the lack of them: “In addition to written forms, policy can include actions, practices and even the inactions of governments.” (Rui, 2007, p. 244)

The processes underlying policy-making are often neither linear nor rational. Hence, outcomes are often characterised by incoherence and continuing tension. Being the result of negotiation and compromise between conflicting interests and involving stakeholders with different values and assumptions, policy processes and policy products are necessarily multifaceted.

Context is a critical determinant, both nationally and locally. This difficulty was captured eloquently by Ball:

National policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalizing theories, research, trends and fashions and not infrequently flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work. Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflicted through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice (Ball, 1998, p.126).

Notwithstanding the above limitations, it is instructive to look into the cases of Austria, Brazil, Cape Verde and Thailand, where different features of a lifelong learning perspective are incorporated into policies.

“Lifelong learning is usually understood as a single element, or possibly a series of elements.”



**Box 2.3****Policy approaches to lifelong learning in four different countries****“LLL 2020”: The Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy**

The Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy “LLL 2020” was jointly developed by the Ministries of Education, Science, Social Affairs and Economy, and was signed in July 2011 by the four Ministers. To coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Strategy, a task force comprising representatives of the four Ministries will produce annual reports until 2020. Enshrined in the European lifelong learning policy framework, the Austrian “LLL 2020” contains twelve strategic targets and benchmarks to be achieved by 2020, ranging from designing specific policies to increasing participation rates to developing standards. It incorporates all sub-sectors of education (early childhood, school education, initial vocational training, adult learning, higher education, professionalisation and recognition of learning outcomes). The Strategy is explicitly comprehensive, being both cross-sectoral and sector-wide, and places the learner at the centre of focus. Participation in learning is supported at different stages of life through guidance, competence-based educational provision, and motivational measures. Ten concrete lines of action to achieve the above aims provide guidance for implementation. Based on an assessment of the current state and indicating the vision for each line of action, they specify the objectives and measures to be undertaken. The lines of action include the reinforcement of pre-school learning as a long-term basic requirement, provision of basic education and equal opportunities in schools and formal education, ensuring basic skills in adulthood, promotion and reinforcement of community education by local institutions and civil society organisations, and learning-friendly work environments.

*Source: Austria. Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, 2011*

**A holistic vision of education: the “magic triangle” of Cape Verde**

Cape Verde presents a compelling case for a holistic vision of education within a lifelong learning perspective, based on a favourable policy environment and conditions which are flexible, open and responsive to diverse learning needs regardless of where learning is taking place and at what age. Cape Verde was singled out as a success story by the African Development Bank in its 2012 analysis, having seen its status raised to that of middle-income country in 2008. One of the critical factors behind this accomplishment is its successful human development record. Given its limited natural resources, Cape Verde conceived and developed its human resources as the country’s primary resource. As a result, universal access to primary and secondary education and almost full literacy among youth have been achieved. To consolidate this economic and social success, principles of pluralism and participation and an inclusive approach to policy-making are being applied. During the African follow-up meeting to CONFINTEA VI in November 2012, Cape Verde presented its integrated policy approach to education, which links education, training and employment (“the magic triangle”) through the active involvement of three ministries (Education and Sports; Youth, Employment and Human Resources; and Higher Education and Innovation), with the additional cooperation of private companies and public investment in the health sector. This inter-sectoral policy approach is in the tradition of democratising education and learning with the aim of building an engaged and active population. It is also meant to address the challenge of high unemployment rates, particularly among youth.

*African Development Bank, 2012*

**Towards a comprehensive lifelong learning policy framework in Thailand**

Education policies within a framework of lifelong learning have been gradually developed and refined in Thailand for over a decade. The principles of lifelong education integrating formal, non-formal and informal education were already outlined in Thailand’s “National Education Act” of 1999. In the ensuing “Promotion of Non-formal and Informal Education Act” of 2008, specific mechanisms for the provision of non-formal and informal education were outlined, promoting and supporting non-formal and informal learning opportunities as a systematic and continuous process. This was followed by educational reforms aimed at ensuring quality and increasing learning opportunities. A new set of policies to support lifelong learning was introduced in 2011. With the aim of ensuring equal and fair access to quality education and lifelong learning for all population groups and making the education system more efficient, these specific policies are geared towards the professional development of teaching personnel, modernised vocational training possibilities, use of ICTs, research and innovation. Strategies for implementation include extending learning opportunities to hard-to-reach populations, providing tablet computers to school children, offering formal and non-formal courses to learn English, setting up community vocational training centres, and connecting community learning centres via the Internet. To complete and coordinate the reforms and the different policy measures, an overall Lifelong Education Act has been drafted and is under discussion.

*National presentation given during the “Seminar on National Policy Frameworks for Lifelong Learning in the ASEAN Countries”, Hanoi, Vietnam, 10–11 January 2013*

### **An integrated and participatory National Education Plan 2011–2020 in Brazil**

The goal of Brazil's National Education Plan is to create a national system of collaboration between the public authorities at different governmental tiers (municipal, states, federal) in order to ensure an integrated approach to education at various levels, stages and modalities (formal and non-formal). Drafted with the participation of stakeholders from governmental and non-governmental organisations, the National Education Plan presents ten guidelines and twenty goals, followed by specific implementation strategies for the second decade of the century. All guidelines are conceived within a lifelong learning perspective, while priority attention is given to the right of youth and adults to free basic education, outside or beyond schools. Specific strategies are geared towards the inclusion of minorities, indigenous and rural populations, prisoners, out-of-school children and youth. Others address the initial and continuing training of teaching personnel. Regular monitoring and evaluation of every individual involved in education is foreseen – learners, students, teachers, professionals, managers. The plan determines the progressive expansion of public investment in education to achieve a minimum of 7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), with a foreseen revision of that percentage in 2015. Once approved by the National Congress, the National Plan will form the basis for education plans to be developed by each province/state.

*Source: National progress report for GRALE 2012*

While acknowledging the key role of governments in developing and implementing national policies, the impact of regional policies cannot be underestimated. The role of the 2000 Lisbon Strategy in the development of

lifelong learning policies in the countries of the European Union (EU) cannot be measured exactly, but it is evident that, since 2000, EU Member States have crafted lifelong learning policies, strategies and plans.

### **Box 2.4**

#### **Regional policy initiatives of frameworks**

##### **Non-formal education and adult learning as part of a holistic, integrated and diversified vision of education in Africa**

"The ideal situation in education [...] is that all forms of education provision, irrespective of their target groups, their delivery modalities, the sub-sector in which they are placed, etc. are of equal dignity. They all contribute to the achievement of lifelong education, maintain in a dynamic way fruitful interactions and deserve to be valued, supported, articulated and coordinated within the framework of a holistic, integrated and diversified vision of education." (p. 11). Guided by the above principle and following a consultation process with experts from governments and multinational organisations, the Working Group on Non-formal Education of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) developed the *Strategic Orientation Framework for Non-formal Education in a Holistic, Integrated and Diversified Vision of Lifelong Education*, which was finalised in 2012. The framework is conceived to help understand and apply holistic policy approaches to education. The most critical issues are addressed through four strategic areas: creating ownership of the holistic vision among stakeholders; improving governance and education reform; establishing sustainable financing systems; and developing innovation through research. As a pragmatic tool, the framework contains a matrix for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this holistic education approach.

*Source: ADEA, 2012*

##### **Defining the focus of European cooperation in adult learning policies for 2012–2020**

Building on the "2008–2010 Action Plan" and set within the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training ("ET2020"), the Council of the European Union adopted a resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning in 2011. The Resolution underscores that adult learning is a vital component of the lifelong learning continuum, making an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.

The resolution emphasises the need to develop new skills for continued active participation, for greater access to higher education for adults, and for solidarity between different age groups, cultures and people of all backgrounds.

*(cont.)*

(cont.)

Increased focus is given to learning later in life to promote active, autonomous and healthy ageing. To improve coherence and cooperation, the resolution calls for the designation of national coordinators to facilitate cooperation with the European Commission and effectively liaise with multiple stakeholders in each country.

Five priority areas are defined in the resolution for adult learning in Europe for the period of 2012–2014.

These are:

1. making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
2. improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
3. promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult learning;
4. enhancing the creativity and innovation of adults and their learning environments; and
5. improving the knowledge base on adult learning and monitoring the adult learning sector.

Source: *European Union, 2011*

### **Educational goals for Latin America for 2021**

'Metas 2021 (Educational Goals for 2021): the education we want for the bicentennial generation' is an initiative driven forward by the Organization of Ibero-American States for Science, Education and Culture (OEI) and adopted in 2010 by the Ministers of Education of the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries of Latin America, as well as by Spain and Portugal.

The ultimate goal of this policy document is to develop, over the next decade, an education system that responds to urgent social demands, ensuring that people can learn and study for longer, with fair and inclusive provision, with the participation of the vast majority of institutions and all sectors of society. It is based on the conviction that education is the fundamental strategy to advance social cohesion and inclusion.

Eleven goals with specific indicators and objectives make up the body of the document. Lifelong learning is reflected in almost all the goals but in particular in the eighth general goal which aims to offer all individuals lifelong educational opportunities, guaranteeing access to education to young people and adults with the greatest needs.

Source: *Organisation of Ibero-American States for Science, Education and Culture (OEI), 2010*

The above examples demonstrate that, increasingly at the regional level, policy frameworks on adult education from a lifelong learning perspective are being addressed. In the case of Africa, ADEA is promoting the role of non-formal education as part of the holistic view of lifelong learning. In the European Union, it is assumed that adult learning is included in the broader Union policies. In Latin America and the Caribbean, countries are responding to the challenge of providing learning opportunities not only for children and youth but also for adults.

### **2.3 Targets and goals of adult education policies**

Aside from understanding the conceptual underpinnings of adult education policies, it is also essential to consider the groups of learners targeted by national adult education policies. A review of the responses received in the national progress reports reveals four learners' parameters: 1) age-related 2) gender-specific 3) from disadvantaged or marginalised background, and 4) work or employment-related.

Regarding age-related parameters, approximately half (56) of the 129 countries reporting indicate that their policies address adult learners across the full age spectrum. This includes groups in which learners are identified from a certain age (mostly 15+), or where the entire workforce age cohort is targeted (i.e., 15–65). A smaller share of countries specifies a closed age cohort (e.g., 15–45 years).

This may be based on what is considered the most active workforce cohort in each case. Almost the same number of countries (60), evenly distributed across regions, specifically target youth. Another age group that has been specified is the elderly, which is indicated by 11 countries in Europe and North America as a target group.

Concerning gender, women are referred to in all regions (in the Arab States, however, this only applies to a few countries). This targeting addresses historical gender inequality in education in all regions, but it is striking that only one third of the reporting countries highlighted women as a target group. In Palestine, learners are targeted “regardless of gender”. The number of countries that identify men as a target group is very small or non-existent in the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and North America. In Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean however, several countries are now targeting men as a priority group.

Marginalised populations appear to be an important target group. These include disadvantages of various kinds, including geographic location (rural or isolated populations), socioeconomic status (socially excluded, homeless, migrants), education (illiterates, school drop-outs, low-skilled workers), as well as current or former prisoners, disabled people or people suffering from mental or physical illness. In particular in countries in Latin America, indigenous people are singled out as a specific target group. People seeking second-chance education are the largest target group highlighted by all regions except for the Arab States.

The final category indicated in the national progress reports relates to a specific sector of activity, namely work or employment. Ninety out of 129 countries reported target groups which are already in specific areas of employment (e.g., public-sector employees in Côte d’Ivoire, employees in Bhutan and Cuba, labourers in the People’s Republic of China, and working adults in Mauritius), or are unemployed or under-employed (e.g., job-seekers in Gabon, those interested in improving work knowledge, skills and competence in Uganda, the unemployed in Uzbekistan and Estonia, unskilled and low-skilled

people in Denmark, Germany, Hungary and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

In sum, many of the target groups present an emphasis on work-related adult education.

Aside from targeting specific groups of learners, policies are developed to achieve certain goals. In the national progress reports, 71 per cent indicate that they have set goals for their adult education policies. In terms of the nature of the goals highlighted by the countries, three trends could be observed. Two pertain to the education system itself, either to (a) improving the function of the entire system or its elements or to (b) the results produced by the system (internal effectiveness). The third trend relates to the impact or wider benefits of adult learning and education.

Across all regions, a majority of countries highlight different aspects of internal effectiveness when indicating their goals for adult education policies. These range from greater access to educational provision and better links between adult education and vocational training to the establishment of a lifelong learning system. The general notion of providing high-quality education is an issue across all regions.

The goals most often cited are the improved functioning and effectiveness of adult education; higher participation rates (indicated by 46 countries, predominantly in Europe and North America), and higher literacy and qualification levels (indicated by 37 countries, across all regions except for the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific).

Goals that point to the impact or wider benefits of adult learning and education are much less prominently mentioned in the national progress reports. These include improving the quality of life, achieving sustainable development, social integration and employability. Only two countries mention issues around citizenship (to promote active citizenship by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; to develop a profound citizen consciousness by the Dominican Republic).

“In sum, many of the target groups present an emphasis on work-related adult education.”

Examples of wider benefits indicated are to raise the cultural and professional level of the population (Cape Verde), to “develop measures ... for realizing lifelong learning as a right and an obligation of all citizens” and to “include the imagination and abilities of all ... citizens and their active participation in all aspects of life” (Croatia).

On the whole, the goals of adult education policies indicated in the national progress reports reflect the trends highlighted in previous sections. The definitions and titles of policies suggest an appreciation of the importance of adult learning and education, and a humanistic standpoint is recognizable. However, the more we move towards concrete policy targets and goals, and to practical priorities, a functionalist perspective with a clear focus on the work sector and employability emerges.

“Decisions on language use in education are critical, as they go beyond the realm of education, involving issues of social justice, social cohesion and individual development.”

## 2.4 Policies on language as an indicator of inclusiveness

The *Belém Framework for Action* envisages inclusive adult learning and education policies that eliminate barriers to participation arising for example from language (see UIL, 2010a). It points out that national policies in multilingual and multicultural contexts increasingly address mother-tongue learning, but few countries have consistent policies that open up to linguistic and cultural diversity, for example to indigenous and minority languages (UIL, 2010a). Language policies play an important role for today’s multilingual and mobile societies; they can address language barriers within the education system as well as between the education system and learning in other social domains.

Language policies for inclusiveness are therefore important to enhance social and individual multilingualism as a means to communicate across linguistic borders.

Decisions on language use in education are critical, as they go beyond the realm of education, involving issues of social justice, social cohesion and individual development. These implications are internationally acknowledged and enshrined in linguistic rights embedded in the rights to education and learning. For example, UNESCO identified three basic principles

for language in education in its declarations and recommendations (UNESCO, 2003, p. 30). First, “UNESCO supports *mother-tongue instruction* as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of learners and teachers”. With regard to teaching and learning processes, the choice of the language of instruction and language teaching should provide the conditions for understanding, communication and enhancement of linguistic competences in all subject matters. It is not effective to teach and learn in a language that the learner does not use and master well enough. As a second principle, “UNESCO supports *bilingual and multilingual education* at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies”. Third, “UNESCO supports language as an essential component of *inter-cultural education* in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights”.

The regional statements of the regional preparatory conferences for the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2008 and 2009 highlight the regional perspectives on language use for literacy, education and learning. In the African context, the “use of African languages [is perceived as] critical for the realisation of an integrated, peaceful, prosperous Africa” (UIL, 2008, p. 2). The Latin America and Caribbean region demands “the creation and reinforcement of quality learning provision throughout life, guaranteeing that adult and youth education policies take into account cultural, linguistic, racial, ethnic and gender diversities” (UIL, 2008c, p. 4). The Pan-European Statement (UIL, 2008b, p. 4) recognises the critical importance of language within lifelong learning strategies for individual empowerment, inclusion, and economic well-being. The Asia and Pacific region takes into account its rich cultural and linguistic heritage, by underlining the importance of “culture-specific responses, drawing on traditional or indigenous knowledge and values and upholding cultural identities within the global economy” (UIL, 2008a, p. 3).

As part of the vision and strategy of UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) and the United Nations Literacy Decade, attention has been given to literacy education and learning in bi- and multilingual contexts. Education and learning in multilingual contexts was therefore one of the major issues discussed in the regional Conferences in Global Support of Literacy (2007–2008), the regional Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) meetings (2007–2008), and the regional preparatory conferences for CONFINTEA VI (2008–2009). The outcome documents of these conferences suggest that mother-tongue-based, multilingual programmes are increasingly being accepted as a necessary element for (i) high quality education, (ii) the development of literate environments, and (iii) social development that strengthens the potential of all citizens in a democratic society.

To monitor the implementation status of the *Belém Framework for Action* in relation to language of instruction, Member States were requested to indicate whether they have a policy on the language of instruction for adult education including literacy. This question addresses a central issue with regard to language use in education, as Tollefson points out: "in education, the most important language planning decisions are about the choice of medium of instruction" (Tollefson, 2008 p. 3). This choice needs to be responsive to adult learners' language competences, and their sociolinguistic environment. According to the national progress reports, 73 of the 125 responding countries have a policy on the language of instruction. In many countries language policies refer to the whole education sector, not only to adult education and literacy. The policies differ in their degree to which they restrict or embrace linguistic diversity with regard to the languages of instruction. The policies also differ with regard to the educational level up to which non-official languages are allowed as media of instruction. Table 2.5 below provides an overview of language policies based on national progress reports and, in some cases, additional sources.

A regional comparison of the policies shows that the African region has the greatest variation in terms of language policies, followed by the region of Asia and the Pacific. The Caribbean countries and the Arab region show the least variation. Interestingly, despite the multilingual agenda at the level of the European Union, 22 European countries that responded either do not have a language of instruction policy for adult education or only allow for the official language to be used. Yet, some provide measures for bridging the linguistic barriers for immigrants to official languages: six European countries went beyond the question asked by the template and indicated that they have special foreign language courses for the integration of adult immigrants.

**Table 2.5**  
**Nature of policies for language of instruction per region and country**

Regions	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific
Nature of policies for language of instruction			
No policy	Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Togo	Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Yemen	Azerbaijan, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Rep. of Korea, Solomon Islands, Thailand
Policy allows for the official language and maybe a local language as teaching aid	Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique	Bahrain	Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam
Policy allows in addition to the national/official language a foreign language (English)	-	-	Bhutan
Policy allows for 2 official languages to be used	Lesotho, Swaziland	-	Palau, Sri Lanka
Policy allows the use of more than 2 official languages	Rwanda, South Africa	-	-
In addition to the official language/s, policy allows for one or several additional national language/s at basic and/or higher level	Botswana, Chad, Gabon, Niger, Zambia	Morocco	Uzbekistan
In addition to the official language/s, policy allows for several additional national/minority languages	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Zimbabwe	-	Afghanistan, Cambodia, China
Policy allows for all local languages at basic level /lower levels/literacy	Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Gambia, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda	-	Bangladesh, Indonesia
Policy allows for all mother tongues/local/minority languages without further specification of levels or at all levels	Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone	-	-
Category unclear	-	-	Nepal
Countries that offer courses for teaching adult immigrants the official language of the country and if necessary mother tongues as teaching aids	-	-	-
<b>Total number of countries</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23</b>

Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total number of countries
Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, England (United Kingdom), Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Scotland (United Kingdom), Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America, Wales (United Kingdom)	Argentina, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Saint Vicente and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay	52
Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Greece, Lithuania, Turkey	Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil (incl. Portuguese as a sign language), Cuba, Guyana, Suriname	21
-	-	1
-	Paraguay	5
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Luxembourg, Slovenia (in some regions)	-	5
Netherlands, Norway	-	9
Latvia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru	16
-	-	9
-	Bolivia	4
Hungary, Israel	-	3
England (United Kingdom), France, Germany, Israel, Norway, United States of America	-	6
40	25	125

Note:

In addition to the national progress reports some other resources were consulted and are listed below, the websites were all last accessed on 30 May 2013:

Afghanistan [www.afghanembassy.com.pl/cms/en/afghanistan/languages/](http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/cms/en/afghanistan/languages/);

Bosnia and Herzegovina: [www.language-rich.eu/home/country-profiles/profiles-overview/bosnia-and-herzegovina.html](http://www.language-rich.eu/home/country-profiles/profiles-overview/bosnia-and-herzegovina.html);

Cyprus: [ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/cy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/cy_en.pdf);

Denmark: [www.language-rich.eu/home/country-profiles/profiles-overview/denmark.html](http://www.language-rich.eu/home/country-profiles/profiles-overview/denmark.html);

Morocco: [www.marocconstitution.com/2011/05/article-3-langues-2/](http://www.marocconstitution.com/2011/05/article-3-langues-2/);

Palau: Ministry of Education October 2006. Education Master Plan 2006–2016, Republic of Palau;

Status of French as official language: [www.francophonie.org/Denombrement-des-francophones.html#h322e7b](http://www.francophonie.org/Denombrement-des-francophones.html#h322e7b);

Southern African Development Community: [www.sadc.int/member-states/](http://www.sadc.int/member-states/);

Sri Lanka: [www.languagesdept.gov.lk/](http://www.languagesdept.gov.lk/);

Zimbabwe: [www.sacmeq.org/education-zimbabwe.htm](http://www.sacmeq.org/education-zimbabwe.htm)



“Despite a series of economic, ecological and socio-political crises in the second decade of the 21st century, the critical importance of learning and education in youth and adulthood continues to be unevenly recognised in policy-making across the globe.”

The national progress reports reflect two major policy orientations in language of instruction. One group, consisting of 32 countries, uses the official language/s as medium of instruction at all educational levels, with one exception that additionally promotes instruction in a foreign language, English. This first group includes ten countries that have two or more official languages which is a way of responding to linguistic diversity. The other group, composed of 38 countries, allows for non-official languages as medium of instruction in addition to the official language/s. The scope of inclusion varies in terms of the educational levels at which they are permitted: nine countries allow for one or several additional national languages at basic and/or higher level of education, 16 countries allow for several additional national or minority languages, nine countries allow for all local languages at basic level/literacy, and four countries allow all mother tongues, local and minority languages to be used without further specification of levels, or at all levels.

To conclude, many regional and international high-level policy recommendations on adult literacy and adult education call for a careful choice of languages of instruction that is responsive to linguistic and cultural diversity and quality education principles. Among the countries with language-of-instruction policies for adult education, the majority promote to different degrees the use of two or more languages as languages of instruction, thereby acknowledging and “contesting the historical inequalities that have seen minority languages, and their speakers, relegated to the social and political margins” (May, 2008, p. 26). How many and which people remain excluded in each case could not be assessed for this Report. The experiences of countries embracing linguistic diversity are a source of inspiration and learning for policy, research and practice. Innovations and good practices can be found in each region. Nevertheless, this brief overview illustrates that in all regions, policies for languages of instruction need to be developed further, to correspond to the requirements for inclusion and quality education, the regional visions expressed for adult education and to the *Belém Framework for Action*.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Despite a series of economic, ecological and socio-political crises in the second decade of the 21st century, the critical importance of learning and education in youth and adulthood continues to be unevenly recognised in policy-making across the globe. After sixty years of CONFINTEA process and its related policy documents and dialogue, a notion of learning and education that includes children, youth and adults beyond the formal pathways has not yet systematically penetrated international education and development agendas. Neither has it become a policy priority in a large number of national arenas (Duke and Hinzen, 2011; Pamoja West Africa, 2010; Aitchison, 2012).

The *Belém Framework for Action* makes clear that “adult learning and education represent a significant component of the lifelong learning process” (UIL 2010a, p. 6). The lack of conceptual clarity about adult learning and education on the one hand, and lifelong learning on the other, already identified in the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UIL, 2010), still characterises the majority of national and trans-national policy-making. In the national progress reports in 2012, lifelong learning policy, with few exceptions, is still treated as synonymous with policy on non-formal continuous learning for out-of-school youth and adults – in brief, with adult education policy.

Given the complexity of this field of policy, in terms of process and policy, the time span is short – possibly too short – for tangible post-CONFINTEA VI developments to have taken place. The long-term nature of the policy changes in adult education or in lifelong learning that have taken place since 2008/2009, as reflected in the national progress reports and related research, suggests that they are not necessarily the outcome of the *Belém Framework for Action*. It is, however, evident that the CONFINTEA-associated policy debates and dialogues have influenced and shaped the thinking in policy projects already underway.

It is significant that the national responses on policy have not made specific reference to Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – in terms of how adult education and lifelong learning have figured in the run-up to the 2015 deadline and how these concerns may find a place in the ongoing international and national discourse on the post-MDG and post-EFA development agenda. There are lessons to be learned from EFA and the MDGs (see discussion on EFA goals 3 and 4 in Chapter 1) about promoting the centrality of adult learning and education and lifelong learning in any future vision of development, with human capability enhancement as a key theme.

In the wake of the global financial crisis, poverty and youth unemployment have brought to the fore the instrumental goal of work and employment-related skills development.

It is necessary to re-think how to find a balanced approach, locating adult education within a lifelong learning perspective, shifting the focus from an almost exclusive interest in economic competitiveness to broader human capability enhancement and empowerment. The increasing acceptance and use of the principle of lifelong learning in framing education agendas is a positive trend, demonstrating a growing awareness of the integrated nature of different formats and modalities of education. However, national and international education stakeholders need to remind themselves that adult education is not synonymous with lifelong learning, but merely a significant component of it. Concomitantly, it needs to be clear that adult education is more than literacy, or that lifelong learning is larger than TVET. Advocacy efforts need to be intensified to advance conceptual clarification, which is indispensable for policy development and crucial to promote the agenda of non-formal adult education in its own right, as well as part of comprehensive and integrated lifelong learning.

In addition to conceptual clarification and political prioritisation, the greatest challenge with regard to adult learning and education continues to be moving from rhetoric to action; operationalising what has been adopted at policy level.

Education stakeholders need to focus on the question of how adult education policies can be implemented regionally, nationally and locally, according to diverse economic, political and social conditions.

#### **Key messages:**

- Adult learning and education is integral to lifelong and life-wide learning as a framework for fostering and sustaining the development of active democratic citizenship. Policy visions have still to unfold their potential with respect to youth and adults beyond formal systems and pedagogies.
- Four years after CONFINTEA VI is too soon to assess tangible impact, yet the national progress reports clearly show that debates and dialogues have taken up the key themes and are incrementally relaying core messages into on-going policy formulation and implementation processes.
- The gaps between policy and research discourses remain wide, and constructing more robust bridges between the two is a key task for international organisations and agencies. The Asia-Europe Meeting's Lifelong Learning Hub (ASEM-LLL) may be seen as an example of good practice.

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## CHAPTER 3

# PUTTING GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES IN PLACE

## 3.1 Introduction

Governance constitutes “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences” (UNPAN, 2013). It portrays how diverse stakeholders – governmental and non-governmental actors, as well as individual citizens – relate to one another in the implementation of policies (DfID, 2006). In a diverse and intricate field such as adult education, however, the way in which different actors in countries exercise authority side by side, while also applying the principles of accountability, remains a challenge. In the *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010), Member States adopted two key principles for the promotion of good governance in adult literacy and adult education, and put forth two recommendations for their implementation:

- 1) Good governance should facilitate the implementation of adult learning and education policy and programmes in ways that are effective, transparent, accountable and equitable.
- 2) Representation by and participation of all stakeholders are indispensable in order to guarantee responsiveness to the needs of all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged.

Among the specific recommendations for applying these principles in the governance of adult education were the following:

- a) creating and maintaining mechanisms for the involvement of public authorities at all administrative levels, civil society organisations, social partners, the private sector, community and adult learners’ and educators’ organisations in the development, implementation and evaluation of adult learning and education policies and programmes;
- b) undertaking capacity-building measures to support the constructive and informed involvement of civil society organisations, community and adult learners’ organisations, as appropriate, in policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation; and
- c) promoting and supporting inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation”. (UIL, 2010, p.7)

This chapter examines the developments that have taken place since CONFINTEA VI with respect to these recommendations. It starts by presenting an overview of the different actors and stakeholders that are active in adult literacy and adult education in the countries reporting. The next section looks into the broad and diverse mechanisms of coordination among countries, as good governance requires effective coordination of all stakeholders. This is followed by an exploration of patterns and trends and their impact on adult literacy and adult education, focusing particularly on the major trend of decision-making being transferred from central national authorities to lower levels of administration. The final section describes the progress that countries have reported in providing capacity development for effective governance of adult literacy and adult education.

### 3.2 Involvement of actors and stakeholders in governance practice

“Good governance” is viewed as “an ideal in which political processes translate the will of the people into public policies and establish the rules that efficiently and effectively deliver services to all members of society” (Crouch and Winkler, 2007, p. 3). The literature identifies a number of characteristics of good governance, including the rule of law, transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, participation and responsiveness.

The issue of good governance poses many challenges in the field of adult literacy and adult education because of the diversity and the varying degrees of involvement in the phases of policy implementation. National ministries of education carry the main responsibilities for adult literacy and adult education in the majority of Member States. However, on average five other governmental institutions are involved in adult literacy and adult education provision at the national level (i.e., ministries of

health, sports, gender, labour, social development, agriculture, defence, and others). An average of four non-governmental organisations, institutions and agencies are involved in planning, implementing and evaluating policies for adult education and adult literacy in each Member State.

Table 3.1 presents the involvement of governmental and non-governmental institutions in adult literacy and adult education with regard to planning, implementing and evaluating policies. It can be broken down into three categories:

- 1) only governmental institutions involved in planning, implementing and evaluating policies for adult literacy and adult education;
- 2) mixed involvement of governmental and non-governmental bodies; and
- 3) only non-governmental institutions involved.

**Table 3.1**  
Number and percentage of countries in which governmental and non-governmental institutions are involved in adult literacy and adult education

Region		Primarily governmental institutions (no. of countries)	%	Mixed Involvement (no. of countries)	%	Primarily non-governmental institutions (no. of countries)	%
<b>Africa</b>	Adult literacy	3	10	25	83	2	7
	Adult education	4	16	21	84	0	-
<b>Arab States</b>	Adult literacy	2	25	6	75	0	-
	Adult education	2	33	3	50	1	17
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	Adult literacy	2	11	15	83	1	6
	Adult education	5	25	13	65	2	10
<b>Europe and North America</b>	Adult literacy	5	15	26	76	3	9
	Adult education	6	15	31	78	3	8
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	Adult literacy	7	33	14	67	0	-
	Adult education	7	30	16	70	0	-

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 3.1

“Please list the names of organisations, institutions or agencies that are involved in adult literacy and adult education”

The analysis of the national progress reports indicates an overall trend towards mixed governmental and non-governmental involvement in planning, implementing and evaluating policies for both adult literacy and adult education. Given these patterns of mixed governance, it is interesting to look at the specific ways in which governmental and non-governmental bodies contribute to policy-making in different regional and national contexts.

Examples from countries support the three categories mentioned above:

### **1) Primarily governmental institutions involved**

Bahrain and Barbados are examples of countries that have centralised responsibility for governance in the Ministry of Education. In Japan, the Ministry of Education, with its Lifelong Learning Bureau and the National Institute for Educational Policy Research, leads policy implementation in adult education. In Mongolia, the National Centre for Non-Formal and Distance Education assumes responsibility and in Malaysia, the Planning and Research Division of the Ministry of Higher Education implements adult literacy and adult education policies at the national level.

### **2) Mixed governmental and non-governmental involvement**

While the Ministry of Education in Eritrea holds primary responsibility for adult literacy and adult education through its Adult and Media Education Department, other ministries run various professional training programmes. Most notable are the Ministry of Health, which runs programmes for nurses, pharmacists, village health workers and technicians, and the Ministry of Agriculture, which runs programmes for a very wide range of ministry staff and also for farmers. The National Union of Eritrean Women is responsible for women's literacy programmes and the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students offers a variety of educational programmes for young people (Amadio and Geisseler, 2008, p. 91). In Sierra Leone and Zambia, broad coalitions of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders are involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of adult education, while in Botswana, governmental and non-

governmental institutions bear responsibility for adult literacy policy. In Tunisia, a total of ten ministries, including the Office of the Prime Minister, are involved in policy implementation of adult literacy nationally. At the sub-national level, Morocco provides nine examples of governmental institutions operating in adult literacy from different sectors, including agriculture, fishing, sport and the military. Non-governmental organisations also have significant responsibility in the Arab States. The Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (dvv international), is mentioned as an important actor in the provision of adult literacy programmes in Jordan and Palestine.

In Afghanistan, in addition to the Ministry of Education, seven other ministries are responsible for national policy implementation in adult literacy. Another example of a wide sharing of responsibilities at both national and sub-national levels is Indonesia, which, in addition to involving several national ministries, has delegated authority for adult literacy to 33 provincial and to municipal governments, and a variety of non-governmental organisations. In Bangladesh, while there is strong involvement by several ministries in adult literacy, many larger non-governmental institutions play an equally important role in policy implementation (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee – BRAC; Campaign for Popular Education – CAMPE; Friends in Village Development Bangladesh – FIVDB; Caritas Bangladesh; Nijera Kori and the Centre for Mass Education in Science – CMES). In New Zealand, aside from the Ministry of Education and other national ministries, the Tertiary Education Commission, the National Qualifications Authority, the Department of Corrections, the Police Force and the Defence Forces are involved in implementing adult literacy and adult education policy with the support of a strong coalition of stakeholders from non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

Sweden is a European example of mixed governmental and non-governmental responsibility, where policy implementation has been fully transferred to four national governmental agencies and to the semi-governmental National Council of Adult Education.



“Given the involvement of both government and NGOs in this field, effective coordination at local, regional and national levels becomes a necessary prerequisite for good governance in adult literacy and adult education.”

In Latin America, Member States such as Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Mexico also involve ministries other than the one for education, such as those responsible for social affairs, labour, health, agriculture and defence, in implementing adult education and adult literacy policy.

### 3) Primarily non-governmental institutions involved

In Georgia, Papua New Guinea, Togo and Wales (United Kingdom), a wide array of non-governmental stakeholders take the lead in implementing adult literacy and adult education policies. In Togo, for example, about 80 civil society and grassroots organisations focus mainly on adult literacy.

In summary, the vast majority of national progress reports submitted indicate that the planning, implementation and evaluation of adult literacy and adult education policies typically involve multiple governmental and non-governmental entities. While national ministries of education usually play a prominent role, their responsibility is shared or complemented by other government agencies and by a variety of civil society, faith-based or community-based organisations. The involvement of non-governmental institutions is slightly larger for adult literacy than for adult education.

Given the involvement of both government and NGOs in this field, effective coordination at local, regional and national levels becomes a necessary prerequisite for good governance in adult literacy and adult education.

### 3.3 Coordination of actors and activities in adult literacy and adult education

Good governance in adult literacy and adult education entails creating and maintaining mechanisms for policy-led action involving diverse stakeholders. The vertical transfer of authority and resources, as well as effective, supportive cooperation between different stakeholders should be facilitated.

The potential for greater involvement of civil society in adult literacy and adult education policy and practice emerged as a strong theme in the first *Global Report on*

*Adult Learning and Education* (UIL 2010a). What kinds of processes have developed since 2009 to further improve coordination between relevant actors? This section will look at a) existing coordination mechanisms and b) respective actions that have been undertaken to facilitate cooperation among stakeholders based on national progress reports.

Eighty-four per cent of the countries reported having a national entity responsible for the coordination of adult literacy, while 86 per cent also referred to a national entity coordinating adult education. Hence, the majority mention a coordination mechanism at the country level, which is responsible for adult literacy and adult education. This coordinating entity is, in most cases, located within the national ministry of education.

The data show a clear trend among countries towards developing coordination mechanisms in adult literacy and adult education. Reporting countries have increasingly recognised the value of involving all stakeholders and establishing appropriate coordination mechanisms to develop policies and implement programmes. However, the responsible entity is not always located directly within a ministry. It may also be located within other types of institutions, such as national institutes (e.g., in Mexico and Norway), agencies or universities.

The national progress reports point not only to the existence of coordination mechanisms, but also to the organisation of concrete activities to facilitate coordination. Overall, 81 per cent of the countries across all regions report facilitating cooperation among diverse stakeholders in adult literacy, and 82 per cent in adult education. Concrete coordination activities consist mainly of periodic meetings of relevant actors and institutions.

In Africa, nine out of ten countries reported the existence of an entity responsible for coordinating adult literacy and/or adult education. However, there is diversity with regard to the location of the coordinating body within governmental structures. A few countries (e.g., Gambia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia) only mention a ministry, some specify a substructure within a ministry,

such as a directorate or a department (e.g., in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Gabon, Ghana, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and Zimbabwe), and others merely refer to a board, commission or programme (e.g., in Angola, Comoros, Lesotho, Malawi and Nigeria). Coordination activities consist mainly of periodic meetings of actors and institutions involved in adult literacy or adult education activities. In some cases activities aim at the *creation* of a coordination entity. Several countries reported holding coordination activities in connection with concrete events such as a National Literacy Day. A few mention the provision or distribution of funds as the purpose of coordination. In Zambia, there is a national consultative process for the formulation of a national open and distance learning policy in adult education, whereas the Adult Literacy Technical Committee and Sector Advisory Group (SAG) hold consultative meetings for the coordination of adult literacy policy.

Roughly three out of four reports from the Arab States confirm that there is an entity at national level responsible for coordination of adult literacy. Fifty-seven per cent of countries mention an entity that is responsible for adult education. Coordination units are often located in a sub-structure of a ministry (e.g., in Jordan, Palestine and Yemen), but concrete coordination activities are scarcely mentioned. In some cases, these consist of periodic meetings of actors (e.g., in Tunisia and Yemen) or the support of programme activities. In Morocco, there is an inter-ministerial commission chaired by the Prime Minister that oversees the literacy coordination committee, which includes diverse technical and financial stakeholders.

Three out of four reports from the region of Asia and the Pacific confirm that there is an entity at national level responsible for the coordination of adult literacy, and 83 per cent mention an entity responsible for adult education. In the majority of cases, responsibility for coordination lies within the Ministry of Education or one of its departments. In the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Nepal and Uzbekistan, a national institute or centre is responsible for coordination. Concrete activities include

the organisation of regular meetings with stakeholders, conferences and networking events and, in some cases, support for certain programme activities. In Bangladesh, the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE), which is situated within the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, works closely with national and international non-governmental organisations, development partners and donors to coordinate Non-Formal Education (NFE) activities. In Indonesia, coordination with the private sector leverages Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives by providing facilities and services for adult education, such as community reading centres at malls and mobile learning centres. Malaysia has established a National Committee of Lifelong Learning on the basis of its “Blueprint on Enculturation of Lifelong Learning for Malaysia 2011–2020”. In New Zealand, a National Centre for Literacy and Numeracy for Adults has been established at the University of Waikato, which facilitates professional development and collaborative opportunities.

A large majority of reports from Europe and North America indicate that national governments provide central coordination for adult literacy and/or education, predominantly through an entity at their ministries of education. However, there are some examples where, despite having ample provision overall, there is no national coordination unit for adult education (e.g., in France and Germany) or literacy (Germany). Coordination activities focus mainly on improving cooperation between stakeholders, facilitating policy implementation, improving programme quality and distributing funds. In Norway, responsibility for coordinating adult education has been delegated to Vox, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning, which monitors the field of adult education, administers the national programme for basic skills in the workplace, manages the governmental system of grants to educational non-governmental organisations and generally coordinates national synergies for both formal and non-formal adult education. In Finland, the Ministry of Education has a Division for Adult Education and Training, whose tasks include formulating the entire national adult education policy in cooperation with

“Reporting countries have increasingly recognised the value of involving all stakeholders and establishing appropriate coordination mechanisms to develop policies and implement programmes.”

other divisions. In Luxemburg, there are coordinating bodies for both adult literacy and adult education, and a consultative commission for adult education has been created to advise the Minister of Education on issues regarding adult education. In Poland, an inter-ministerial team for lifelong learning assures coordination for both adult literacy and adult education. In England (United Kingdom), the overall responsibility for policy implementation lies with the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS). The Skills Funding Agency is responsible for coordinating funding. In Latvia, the institution responsible for lifelong learning and adult education policy is the Ministry of Education and Science, which assumes key coordination tasks, such as cooperation with other ministries. Within the Ministry of Education and Science of Serbia, there is a group for adult education that is in charge of secondary education, with a focus on developing laws and by-laws for adult education and lifelong learning.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the majority of countries reported that there is an entity at national level responsible for coordinating adult literacy, and all countries mentioned having an entity with responsibility for adult education. These coordination units are, in most cases, located within the ministries of education. In a few cases (Guatemala, Mexico), coordination is the responsibility of a national committee or a national institute.

Broader participation of stakeholders has been observed in the field, given that "... the successful implementation of public policy is increasingly dependent upon a wider array of public, private and voluntary organisations ..." (Husemann and Heikkinen, 2004, p. 14). However, the mere existence of coordination mechanisms, such as a national entity, or specific actions mentioned to facilitate cooperation, does not indicate whether these efforts are effective, or whether they represent good governance.

In this section we have argued that coordination entities and activities to facilitate cooperation among stakeholders are indispensable mechanisms in governing adult literacy and adult education. The next challenge that needs

to be addressed is how these mechanisms can be made more effective. Section 3.4 looks at whether or not such an entity only needs to be established at national level, within a ministry or institute.

### 3.4 Decentralisation processes

Coordination of actors and activities in adult literacy and adult education is characterised by the interplay between two elements: on the one hand there is the need for effective management structures, sustainable funding sources and broad participation of actors in policy-making and provision, and on the other hand the ongoing development of a diverse adult literacy and adult education field.

This interplay is also influenced by decentralisation, which affects not only policy formulation, accountability lines and distribution of funds, but also participation and effectiveness of learning provision. Many countries are moving towards shared responsibility between governmental and non-governmental actors, which means that the effects of decentralisation need special attention.

Transfer of decision-making power and control of funds from central authorities to lower administrative levels has become a major global trend in public sector governance reform across the world. Since the 1990s, many countries have been trying to improve the effectiveness of government services, reduce costs and implement shorter decision-making lines. Since they are closer to local communities and therefore more sensitive to the needs of citizens, local and regional governments are considered to be more effective than national governments in delivering public and social services (Bray and De Grauwe, 2009, p. 1; Kimr, 2008). However, for decentralisation reforms in education to succeed, there is a requirement for central government to support regional and local governmental and non-governmental stakeholders through capacity-building and funding (Lugaz and De Grauwe, 2009, p. 4; Healey and Crouch, 2012, p. 16).

Although considerable research has been conducted on decentralisation in education, very little has targeted adult

**Table 3.2**  
Percentage of countries in which local communities play a role in the planning, implementation and evaluation of adult literacy and adult education programmes

Region	Type of provision	Percentage of countries in each region	Total no. of countries that responded
<b>Africa</b>	Adult literacy	97	29
	Adult education	92	23
<b>Arab States</b>	Adult literacy	86	6
	Adult education	80	4
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	Adult literacy	74	17
	Adult education	86	18
<b>Europe and North America</b>	Adult literacy	81	25
	Adult education	84	31
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	Adult literacy	65	15
	Adult education	55	12

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 3.5 "Do local communities play a role in planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes in adult education/adult literacy?"

literacy and adult education. It is clear that civil society largely makes up for limited state intervention in adult literacy and adult education, compared to other fields in the education sector (Closson et al., 2002). In other words, the state is not the sole actor implementing adult literacy and adult education policies. Implementation is often embedded in a range of development and public service delivery activities, such as entrepreneurship training, agricultural extension, health and sanitation. Decentralisation in adult literacy and adult education, therefore, requires thorough monitoring and evaluation, as well as local capacity-building activities to ensure delivery (Closson et al., 2002, p. 38). We can see from the national progress reports that local communities play an important role in planning, implementing and evaluating both adult literacy and adult education programmes (an average of 80% of the responding countries). In Africa, community involvement is even more significant, while in Latin America and the Caribbean, local communities are less involved (See Table 3.2).

Involving learners is an integral part of the decentralisation process. The majority of African Member States reported the involvement of learners in policy dialogue (79% for adult literacy and 80% for adult education). Global figures are 55 and 59 per cent for adult literacy and adult education respectively, confirming the importance that governments place on learners' participation in planning, implementation and evaluation of adult literacy and adult education policies (See Table 3.3).

### **Case studies on decentralisation of adult literacy and adult education: Brazil, Canada, Indonesia and Uganda, Slovenia**

The impact of decentralisation processes on adult literacy and adult education is not uniform. To demonstrate its varied effects, we selected four countries<sup>1</sup> with

<sup>1</sup> UIL commissioned background papers in 2011 for the second *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE) from adult education researchers in five countries (Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, Slovenia, and Uganda)

**Table 3.3**  
**Percentage of countries in which learners are involved in policy dialogue in adult literacy and adult education**

Region	Type of provision	Percentage of countries who report involvement of learners in policy dialogue	Total no. of countries that responded
<b>Africa</b>	Adult literacy	80	25
	Adult education	79	29
<b>Arab States</b>	Adult literacy	50	6
	Adult education	67	9
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	Adult literacy	64	22
	Adult education	58	24
<b>Europe and North America</b>	Adult literacy	51	39
	Adult education	40	35
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	Adult literacy	46	24
	Adult education	36	22
<b>Total</b>	Adult literacy	59	116
	Adult education	55	119

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 2.8 "Have adult learners and/or adult literacy learners been involved in discussions about your policy and plans?"

decentralised structures (Brazil, Canada, Indonesia and Uganda) as case studies, showing the extent to which policy implementation has resulted in provision. Slovenia has also been chosen as a case study as it has a highly centralised political structure with decentralised delivery of adult literacy and adult education.

In Brazil, education has been decentralised since the adoption of the 1988 constitution, which allowed municipalities to assume operational responsibility for the first four years of basic education and federal states to take over from years five to nine. Brazil has also transferred all responsibility for the administration of personnel and non-personnel costs to the municipalities, with extensive responsibilities in financing and some responsibilities in planning the curriculum development. This includes not only the formal school system, but also adult basic education.

Although new decentralisation policies created in 2006 clearly stipulated the division of funds between the formal school system and adult learners, research shows that local decision-makers have, in reality, allocated most of the available funds to basic education for the formal school system. In fact, this decentralisation reform led to considerable funding cuts in adult education and adult literacy. Educational policies in Brazil have always been marked by the challenge of reaching equity and quality in a diverse and multi-faceted country. Cooperation between all levels of government for achieving equity and quality has always been on the agenda. The skewed distribution of funds, as well as this decentralisation reform process, have created inequalities within and between different municipalities, but also between different levels of government (Di Gropello, 2004, p. 3; Di Pierro and De Rezende Pinto, 2011; UNESCO, 2009, p. 147).

In Canada, there is no federal ministry of education, nor is there an integrated federal education system. In fact, Canada is the only OECD country without a national ministry of education and hence no national education policies (CMEC, 2008, p. 6; Shanahan and Jones, 2007, p. 32). Therefore, the provinces hold principal responsibility for providing education and the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) functions as a coordinating body between them. However, the central government is responsible for direct service delivery of education for populations that fall within their jurisdiction, such as First Nations peoples (Elfert and Rubenson, 2013, p. 224).

Over the past decade, much of the responsibility and funding for work-related training has devolved from the federal government to the provinces. The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES)/Bureau de l'alphabétisation et des compétences essentielles (BACE), a sub-unit of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)/Ressources Humaines et Développement des Compétences Canada (RHDC), provides project funding for literacy and basic education in the provinces. Although adult literacy and adult education are provincial issues, the federal government is active in orienting the agenda and allocating funds on the basis of HRSDC's nine essential skills, which are used as a framework for instruction, learning and assessment (HRSDC, 2013). Policies continue to vary greatly across the provinces, but they have all been strongly influenced by the essential skills agenda. As a consequence, "adult education is increasingly becoming synonymous with job-related skills training" (Elfert and Rubenson, 2013, p. 228). Despite federal commitment to adult literacy and adult education, provincial government structures play a key role in programme planning and implementation; a wealth of different activities is undertaken under their sole responsibility (Ouellet, 2011; Shanahan and Jones, 2007, p. 32).

Education was highly centralised in Indonesia until 1999, when a decentralisation law was introduced to replace the previous structure in favour of redistributing jurisdiction to local authorities. This law broadly outlined the

powers and responsibilities of each level of government and led to the formation of a new structure of responsibilities for the district/city education office, the provincial education office, and the central government. Regional autonomy is accompanied by a corresponding delegation of authority and functions in the areas of finance, budgeting and expenditure, the acquisition of assets and personnel recruitment. The central government develops basic service standards for adult literacy and adult education (e.g., standardisation of quality, supervision, national monitoring and evaluation policies and allocation of educational funding with pro-poor orientation). The provincial education offices and the district/city education offices, in cooperation with programme providers, have broad powers to initiate new models of services, and update methods and approaches.

This requires continuous capacity-building activities for local governments, providers and stakeholders (Syihab, 2011).

The devolution power in Uganda's education sector, from central to local levels of government, took place after the country's adoption of the new 1995 constitution and the 1997 Local Government Act. Uganda has been one of a few countries to fully decentralise education to regional and local authorities. It has also been described as an education governance success story (Crouch and Winkler, 2007, p. 14). Decentralisation was selected as the approach most likely to promote good governance and development by bringing the delivery of education services under the control of local communities, so as to ensure effectiveness and accountability (UNESCO, 2009, p. 146). Government policies in adult literacy and adult education are executed through three main levels of decision-making and planning:

- 1) The Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development provides the policy framework and the overall supervision of programmes (the Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Water and Environment also take part in planning, implementing and evaluating policies);

- 2) Local governments and district councils are responsible for allocating funds, mobilising communities, approving the recruitment of staff, monitoring and supervising specific programmes, promoting inter-sectoral linkages, providing incentives for teachers and facilitators, and approving plans and budgets;
- 3) The Community Development Officers implement adult literacy and adult education programmes at the local level, under the supervision of civil servants at various levels.

Civil society organisations are involved in direct provision of adult literacy and adult education services in Uganda. Through advocacy and lobbying, a successful partnership between civil society, faith-based organisations and the government has been forged. At the same time, decentralisation in Uganda has not only brought public services, but also corruption, nearer to the people. In response, civil society and faith-based organisations have tried to train local administrators in budget tracking in order to monitor how funding for adult literacy and adult education is being spent (Okech, 2011).

“When countries decide to decentralise adult literacy and adult education, the process must complement and support local stakeholders and communities.”

While many countries have decentralised their education systems – including adult literacy and adult education – Slovenia has maintained its centralised structure (Drofenik, 2011). The 1996 Law on Adult Education introduced two measures to generate public interest and accelerate the development of adult education: 1) A resolution on adult education programmes for the period 2005–2010; and 2) an annual adult education programme, which is adopted by the government on a yearly basis. The Law on Adult Education also introduced important changes in governance. The Expert Council for Education, within which adult education was previously marginalised, was replaced by three Expert Councils. The Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Adult Education was given two main roles: 1) to make decisions in matters concerning adult education development; and 2) to provide professional support to governmental policy and legislative regulation of adult education.

However, only twelve out of 212 communities adopted local annual adult education programmes. Communities have no legal obligation concerning adult education, with one exception: the constitutional right of adults to free access to primary education is the mutual responsibility of both state and local authorities. However, many local communities have neither financial capacity nor available personnel to provide access to primary education without substantial state support.

In addition, a resolution on the adult education programme for 2012–2020 is currently being discussed and is expected to be adopted in the first half of 2013. While there are no plans to change the current legislation on adult education, the Organisation and Financing of Education Act, which regulates the requirements for the performance of educational activities and defines the governance and financing of preschool, primary, secondary, post-secondary, vocational and adult education, is now being reviewed following political changes.

Slovenia has also gone through a period of further centralisation as public funding is increasing while private funding decreases, reflecting the policy of the state government (Drofenik, 2011).

Although decentralisation has been considered to bring about efficiency, equity and quality to education services, there is little concrete evidence of a direct relation between decentralisation and greater efficiency, equity and quality (De Grauwe, 2010; Chikoko, 2009, p. 202). The process of transforming centralised systems into decentralised systems is complex and has produced mixed results, mainly due to lack of accountability at different levels of decision-making, ineffective implementation, political-economic friction, and poor programme design (Healey and Crouch, 2012). Some of the main arguments against decentralisation in education particularly mention the risk of greater inequity, widening disparities, lack of financial control and lack of competencies within educational planning and management at local levels (Chikoko, 2009, p. 202; De Grauwe, 2010; Lugaz et al., 2010; Healey and Crouch, 2012).

It can be seen from this section that a lack of capacity at central, regional and local levels is one of the main reasons for weakened decentralisation processes, not only in adult literacy and adult education, but also throughout the education sector and within other public and social services. When countries decide to decentralise adult literacy and adult education, the process must complement and support local stakeholders and communities. This can be accomplished through capacity development, but also through more monitoring and evaluation. The following section delves into the kind of capacity development needed at all levels for effective and efficient governance in adult education.

### 3.5 Capacity development

To ensure good governance of adult education, it is necessary to develop the capacities of the responsible agents. In particular, the capacities to initiate and maintain dialogue, mobilise people, apply research and raise awareness of adult literacy and adult education are crucial (UIL, 2010b).

Although capacity building for good governance in formal education has been widely debated, there has been less focus on governance of adult literacy and adult education. Effective coordination is especially important in adult literacy and adult education, due to the wide distribution of responsibilities, and the involvement of a myriad of governmental, non-governmental and private sector stakeholders. Coordination requires strong capacities at both individual and organisational levels, locally, regionally and nationally.

Capacity development is a long-term process that only yields substantial results once the stakeholders have put the improved capacity into practice. In this respect, accountability, monitoring and capacity development are closely linked to one another. Successful implementation requires that administrators, both governmental and non-governmental, are trained and motivated to put policy into practice. Administrators at all levels, national, regional and local, must be

accountable to the legislative and executive bodies and, ultimately, to their fellow citizens (Crouch et al., 2007, p. 11).

Several countries (Bolivia, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mozambique, Nigeria, the People's Republic of China, the Solomon Islands, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia and Uzbekistan) organise yearly workshops to build stakeholders' capacities in adult education governance. Other countries (Panama and Turkey) organise workshops and conferences that are exclusively focused on adult literacy governance. Paraguay has created specific courses on strengthening and creating opportunities for participation, improving financial resource management and information systems, and on planning, monitoring and evaluating adult education programmes. In Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay, national governments organise national conferences to train providers and stakeholders in the formulation, development, implementation and evaluation of adult education programmes, thus also providing the skills necessary for effective governance. In Afghanistan and Bangladesh, workshops and seminars are organised to build the capacities of administrators implementing adult literacy.

In Gambia, Morocco and Senegal, the governments provide training in monitoring and evaluation of administration and financial management procedures for literacy providers. The Training Institute in Literacy and Non-Formal Education (IFAENF) in Niger has long-standing experience in training African policy-makers and practitioners in policy development, planning and monitoring and evaluation. In Ecuador, training in policy development, project implementation and management are ensured and promoted by the Ministry of Education.

In Canada, each provincial and territorial government supports capacity development activities to ensure that different stakeholders can participate in policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation of adult education and skills development initiatives.

In Lithuania, various stakeholders from the adult education sector are involved in developing, implementing and assessing



priorities for adult education policy through various studies, monitoring activities, surveys, and annual conferences and discussions. The government of Burkina Faso has launched a major national capacity development programme for administrators to improve governance in both adult literacy and adult education. The South African government provides training for adult education administrators from its nine provincial departments of education. One way to further develop sustained capacities in governance is to tap the potential of the university sector. Uganda, for example, has put in place robust capacity development programmes, in which public universities address the wide scope of learning needs of different categories of personnel engaged in implementing, managing and evaluating adult literacy. The University of N'Djaména in Chad and the University of Botswana feature other examples of long-term capacity development programmes.

Local capacity-building is a key prerequisite for the development of effective governance in adult literacy and adult education, especially in countries with strong decentralisation (see also 3.4 above). However, although developing capacities at regional and local levels is crucial, in many countries capacities in adult literacy and adult education governance tend to “dwindle downstream”; implementation of policy falls short locally due to low levels of competence and capability at local and regional levels. The competences of regional and local education administrators, as well as organisational capabilities at the local level, are therefore crucial to implementing policy (Crouch and Winkler, 2007, p. 11).

Capacity development is essential to ensure good overall planning, management and quality control. At the programme level, there is a need to develop both individual competencies and institutional capabilities (Richmond et al., 2008, p. 59). In Austria, for example, the Conference of Adult Education Institutions (KEBÖ), made up of ten major education institutions, ensures the social and educational capacity of major organisations and their member institutions through special agreements. In order to provide programmatic and

strategic work on a reliable basis, these organisations and the Austrian government create “contract management” agreements for a period of three years, in which the objectives of individual institutions are defined and appropriate funding is allocated accordingly. Due to the heavy involvement of both parties in drafting legal regulations, the relationship between the Austrian government, represented by the BMUKK (Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture), and various adult education institutions is well-established.

It takes many years for the positive effects of capacity development to be measured (De Grauwe, 2009). Long-term capacity development programmes for governance in adult literacy and adult education require substantial resources and consistent commitment from governments. The Czech Republic, England (United Kingdom), Ireland, Norway and Scotland (United Kingdom) have reported allocating public funds to capacity development in adult education governance. In Ireland, for example, the Department of Education and Skills provides funding for adult education organisations to conduct research, prepare presentations and reports to support policy-making, and to lobby for the needs of learners. Another example of public funding for capacity development can be found in Norway, where the government helps to finance both the operational costs and the costs of institutional development of the two main umbrella organisations for non-formal learning: the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning and the Norwegian Association for Distance Learning. National workshops in adult literacy governance support administrators in implementing existing legislation.

It is clear from the reports that most countries undertake some capacity development to ensure that different national stakeholders are able to participate in policy and programme development in adult literacy and adult education. However, the national progress reports reveal that some countries still only implement short-term or piecemeal capacity development activities, such as national conferences or workshops. While this can be seen as a first step towards a more long-term process of consistent capacity development, these short-term conferences fall short of what is

required to ensure the development of both individual and organisational capabilities. A thematic think-piece of the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda (Governance and Development) highlights the importance of governance capacity for cross-sectoral, integrated and inclusive decision-, policy- and law-making at all levels (UNDESA, UNDP, UNESCO, 2012, p. 5). While some countries have reported regular commitment to capacity development programmes for governance in adult literacy and adult education, many require additional public funding to local governments and/or non-governmental organisations to ensure consistent training at local level.

### 3.6 Conclusion

To guarantee equity and quality in learning for all, governments must ensure good governance mechanisms at national, sub-national and community levels. The involvement of all relevant actors in adult literacy and adult education remains a key requirement. Different national contexts require different solutions. The trend of mixed responsibility between governmental and non-governmental actors in adult literacy and adult education needs to be matched with effective mechanisms for continuous consultation and coordination among different stakeholders.

There is no standard way of institutionalising effective coordination. Member States have increasingly recognised the importance of involving all stakeholders and establishing appropriate coordination mechanisms in developing policies and implementing programmes. However, the responsible entity is not always located directly within a ministry. It may also be located within other types of institutions, such as national institutes, agencies or universities.

The need for sustained capacity building at all levels to ensure good governance and thus equal access to adult literacy and adult education has never been more important. Many Member States still offer only short-term capacity building programmes, making it difficult to develop a critical mass of trained administrators and providers who are able to ensure effective

policy implementation at all administrative levels. Decentralisation processes in many countries require further fine-tuning of governance mechanisms. This means that capacities need to be developed and strengthened, not only at national level, but also at regional and local levels.

It is clear that achieving good governance in adult literacy and adult education depends on far-reaching and long-term political will, as well as reforms in how policy is formulated and how decisions are made. It is also evident that predictable and sustained financing is needed to support such policies and governance mechanisms.

#### Key messages:

- Decentralisation to regional and local levels has become a key instrument, but its effective implementation demands both adequate funding and comprehensive capacity building. Strong coordination capacity is of the essence.
- The involvement of all relevant actors remains a key requirement for good governance in adult education, and mixed governance models require highly effective consultation and coordination mechanisms and practices.
- Adult learning and education is an inherently complex sector of policy and action, yet capacity-building activities and coordination mechanisms remain at an early stage of development. UNESCO could act as a clearing-house for the exchange of good practice between Member States.

*“The trend of mixed responsibility between governmental and non-governmental actors in adult literacy and adult education needs to be matched with effective mechanisms for continuous consultation and coordination among different stakeholders.”*

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## CHAPTER 4

# FINANCING ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

## 4.1 Introduction

Adult learning and education bring social benefits by creating more democratic, peaceful, inclusive, productive and healthy societies. To achieve the benefits of adult education, policies must be backed by appropriate resources. The first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* documented the chronic under-investment in adult learning and education in most countries of the world (UIL, 2010). Very few countries have committed even one per cent of their gross national product (GNP), with even less in some developing countries, despite the broad and inclusive role for adult education outlined by Member States' agreements at the fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) in Hamburg in 1997.

In the *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010a), Member States committed to five clear areas of action:

- a) seeking investment of at least 6 per cent of GNP in education, and working towards increased investment in adult learning and education;
- b) expanding existing educational resources and budgets across all government departments to establish an integrated adult learning and education strategy;
- c) establishing transnational funding programmes for literacy and adult education, along the lines of the actions taken under the EU Lifelong Learning Programme, and considering the introduction of new programmes;
- d) creating incentives to promote new sources of funding, for example among the private sector, NGOs, communities and individuals, without prejudicing the principles of equity and inclusion; and
- e) prioritising investment in lifelong learning for women, rural populations, and people with disabilities.

However, the evidence from the national progress reports suggests that adult education remains a low priority for investment for governments and international development assistance alike. It is important to recognise the factors, both external and systemic, that have created the gap between commitments made at CONFINTEA VI and the subsequent behaviour of Member States, including the difficulty of producing a realistic assessment of what funding is essential to produce meaningful progress across the globe.

This lack of investment has become even more apparent since 2000 when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) included only two of the Education for All (EFA) Goals – those promoting universal primary schooling and gender parity at school. While there has been real progress in addressing these two EFA goals, especially in the early years of the decade, the unexpected side-effect of this has been the neglect of investment in youth and adult education.

The strength and depth of the global financial crisis precipitated by the banking sector in industrial countries, and exacerbated by market pressures on EU member states with heavy debt burdens, was not anticipated in the *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010a). As highlighted by the United Nations in 2011, the problems created by the global financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 for the global economy are multiple and interconnected (UN, 2011).

“...the evidence from the national progress reports suggests that adult education remains a low priority for investment for governments and international development assistance alike.”

As analysed in the previous chapter on Governance, the role that adult learning and education play as a catalyst in the achievement of a wide range of social policy goals makes it extremely difficult to manage cross-departmental financial agreements and to coordinate investment of the private sector and civil society organisations (CSOs) (see Chapter 3). In this connection, the national progress reports also almost certainly under-represent the full investment picture, since few are able to take into account the contributions made by the private sector, CSOs or ministries other than the ministry of education.

Given this context, this chapter reviews, first of all, the level of investment in adult education based on the qualitative and quantitative data provided in the national progress reports. Then it highlights successful practices and approaches to mobilise financial resources. This is followed by a discussion of innovative funding mechanisms in the international community. The final section makes a case for increasing investment in adult education by reviewing newly published evidence relating to the cost-benefits of such investment.

## 4.2 Level of investment in adult education

The quantitative information requested in the financial section of the national progress reports related to expenditures on (i) the education sector, (ii) adult education, and (iii) literacy, by various financing agents in each field. An overview of the responses received can be seen in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. Of 129 countries which submitted national progress reports, 56 (or 43%) provided data on financing education in general; 64 (or 49%) provided data on financing adult education; and only 32 (or 25%) included data on financing literacy (Table 4.1).

Very few countries submitted data on funding provided by civil society organisations, international donors, the private sector or learners themselves (Table 4.2). This chapter should be viewed with an eye to these limitations, not to mention the difficulties inherent in various definitions and interpretations of “adult education” used by countries in their national progress reports (see Chapter 2).

**Table 4.1**  
Regional overview of available financing information from national progress reports

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Reports submitted</b>	31	8	23	40	25	<b>129</b>
<b>Reports containing data on financing education</b>	12	2	9	21	12	<b>56</b>
<b>Reports containing data on financing adult education</b>	16	3	12	20	13	<b>64</b>
<b>Reports containing data on financing adult literacy</b>	11	1	6	8	6	<b>32</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012

**Table 4.2**  
Availability of financial data from national progress reports

	Financing body	No. of countries that provided related data	Percentage of the total submitted reports
<b>Adult education</b>	National government	48	37
	Sub-national government	13	10
	CSOs	3	2
	Donors/International aid	12	9
	Private companies	4	3
	Learners	5	4
<b>Adult literacy</b>	National government	43	33
	Sub-national government	6	5
	CSOs	3	2
	Donors/International aid	9	7
	Private companies	1	1
	Learners	5	4

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Questions 4.5 and 4.6, which asked for "figures on the financial contributions" to adult education and adult literacy.

Table 4.3 is mostly based on the information provided by countries on expenditure for education, adult education and literacy, and shows the percentage change in investment in the education sector (Column 2) and in adult education including literacy (Column 3) between 2009 and 2010. The table also shows expenditure on adult education as a percentage of total education sector budget and GNP.

In general, the data received from countries are relatively scarce due to the fact that i) less than half of the countries that submitted national progress reports (or less than one-third of countries) provided data on finance; ii) countries have different understandings of the scope of adult education; iii) very few stakeholders other than governments were included in the reporting process; and iv) there are inconsistencies in terms of units of expenditure, as well as currencies. These limitations need to be considered when interpreting the data.

Column 2 in Table 4.3 indicates public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP. A widely recognised international financing benchmark is to invest at least 6 per cent of GNP in education, as

confirmed in the CONFINTEA V and VI outcome documents.

Information provided in the 2011 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* (EFA GMR) indicates that the median expenditure is 5 per cent for developed countries, 4.5 per cent for developing countries and 4.7 per cent for the world (UNESCO, 2011). Among a total of 70 countries providing quantitative information regarding finance in their national progress reports, 22 (or 32%) have already reached the 6 per cent target, 31 (or 44%) invest between 4 and 6 per cent and 17 (or 24%) are below 4 per cent. It is clear that public expenditure on education varies considerably from country to country, with the percentage ranging from 13.6 per cent in Cuba to 2.7 per cent in Cambodia. Even within the same region, countries with similar GNP per capita<sup>1</sup> allocate very different shares of their GNP to education. In Latin America, for example, Uruguay, with a GNP per capita of USD 10,290 invests a mere 2.9 per cent of GNP in education, while Chile with a GNP of USD 10,750 invests 4.9 per cent.

1. The World Bank equates the GNP per capita with the GNI (Gross National Income). For definitions see <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD>



**Table 4.3**  
Public expenditure on education and adult education in 2009 and 2010

Regions	1	2	3		4	5	6
	Country	Public expenditure on education as percentage of GNP 2010	Increase (%)		Adult Education	Public expenditure on adult education as percentage of	
			2009–2010			GNP 2010	Education
			Education				
Arab States	Jordan	5.0*			0.0	0.030	0.60
	Morocco	5.5	6.5		15.7	0.029	0.44
	Oman	4.7	9.9		4.1	0.075	1.45
Central and Eastern Europe	Bulgaria	4.7			80.2	0.013	0.30
	Croatia	4.5	-1.1		38.9	0.002	0.05
	Estonia	6.0	12.1		38.4	0.030	1.04
	Hungary	5.4	-3.0		27.3	0.225	4.63
	Latvia	5.2	11.3		312.5	0.350	9.32
	Poland	5.3	3.9		...	...	...
	Slovakia	4.1	...		149.3	0.228	6.00
	Slovenia	5.8	-1.1		6.6	0.098	1.46
	The former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	...	...		4.5	0.056	...
	Turkey	2.9*	...		-4.1	0.052	...
Western Europe and North America	Cyprus	8.1	3.8		22.6	0.211	2.55
	Denmark	8.6	3.8		-3.5	0.340	4.29
	Finland	6.7	...		12.2	0.273	4.63
	Greece	3.9*	-17.1		-4.5	0.008	0.21
	Ireland	6.6	-0.1		0.0	0.024	0.33
	Israel	6.0			-16.7	0.090	2.09
	Luxembourg	3.9*	17.2		1.5	0.201	5.09
	Malta	6.0	11.6		0.0	0.001	0.02
	Netherlands	6.1	1.1		-24.5	0.026	0.57
	Norway	7.4	5.0		10.0	0.144	3.27
	Portugal	5.1	0.6				
	Scotland (UK)	5.5*	2.4		...	...	7.21
Central Asia	Sweden	7.2	2.0		3.5	0.175	2.55
	Azerbaijan	3.5	4.7		0.0	0.010	0.03
East Asia	Mongolia	5.9	33.9		10.0	0.030	0.06
	Cambodia	2.7	...		-65.8	0.010	0.59
	China	3.6*	19.9		...	0.002	0.04
	Indonesia	3.1	1.0		-15.0	0.021	2.05
	Malaysia	5.9	3.3		3.3	0.692	10.00
	Philippines	2.7	...		25.3	0.005	0.21
Pacific	Thailand	3.9	44.9		58.5	0.360	8.89
	New Zealand	7.6	2.4		-9.5	...	4.86
	Palau	7.8	-0.2		-1.2	0.042	0.54
	Solomon Islands	7.1	...		42.9	0.002	0.18
	Sri Lanka	2.1	10.8		0.0	...	0.01

Regions	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Country	Public expenditure on education as percentage of GNP 2010	Increase (%)		Public expenditure on adult education as percentage of GNP 2010	
			2009–2010			
			Education	Adult Education	GNP 2010	Education
South and West Asia	Bhutan	4.4	-28.0	-5.5	0.079	1.76
	Nepal	4.7	-28.6	...	...	...
Latin America	Bolivia	8.2*	6.6	13.2	0.232	2.82
	Brazil	5.8	...	10.3	0.178	3.36
	Chile	4.9	...	11.7	0.048	0.82
	Colombia	5.0	...	16.8	0.101	2.46
	Honduras	...	...	-34.8	0.042	...
	Mexico	5.4	17.4	-19.6	0.019	0.62
	Paraguay	4.1	...	23.8	0.117	3.00
	Peru	2.9	3.9	-11.3	0.096	3.14
	Uruguay	2.9*	...	65.4	...	...
Caribbean	Bahamas	3.9*	-10.6	-34.5	0.095	2.45
	Belize	6.9	...	30.9	0.151	2.70
	Cuba	13.6	0.8	-23.7	0.195	1.47
	Dominican Republic	2.3	5.6	10.4	0.048	2.09
	Trinidad and Tobago	3.9*	3.7	...	...	...
Sub-Saharan Africa	Botswana	8.2	...	-18.7	0.090	1.02
	Burkina Faso	4.0	13.5	...	0.117	2.54
	Chad	7.6	25.4	68.1	0.025	0.95
	Côte d'Ivoire	4.8	-5.0	24.6	0.022	0.65
	Gambia	5.4	...	7.3	0.051	1.66
	Ghana	5.6	31.5	254.5	0.030	0.53
	Kenya	6.7	10.6	9.2	0.043	0.78
	Malawi	5.9	28.9	-14.6	0.018	0.39
	Mozambique	6.0	15.8	-3.3	0.030	1.60
	Niger	3.9	-9.9	-12.6	...	...
	Nigeria	...	...	4.6	0.376	...
	Rwanda	4.7	4.7	-36.6	0.012	0.26
	Senegal	5.7	3.4	-19.6	0.033	0.48
	Sierra Leone	4.3	-3.6	40.1	0.070	0.78
	South Africa	6.1	17.8	6.0	0.063	1.00
	Swaziland	7.6	-2.6	-0.1	0.060	0.14
Uganda	3.2	14.6	...	...	2.69	
Zimbabwe	5.0*	67.4	0.0	...	...	

Notes: The subdivision of regions follows that of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) for EFA GMR. The data presented in this table are primarily based on the national progress reports. In cases of obvious misplacement of data in some of the reports, UIL adjusted the inputs in the data cleaning process. The specific sources of data are:

**Column 2:** EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2012, data for 2010 or the most recent year available. In some cases (\*) from the national progress reports.

**Columns 3 and 4:** National progress reports. Column 4 reflects the sum of expenditure on adult education and literacy.

**Column 5:** Calculation from national progress reports data for 2010 and the gross national product (GNP) from column 2.

**Column 6:** Calculation from national progress reports data for 2010. (...) Indicates that data are not available

A detailed understanding of the size of GNP and the delivery systems in place for education may be needed, in order to provide a more nuanced and realistic understanding of current investment.

Column 4 (Table 4.3) shows investment in adult education from 2009 to 2010. Of the 64 countries which provided data on adult education, 36 (or 56%) increased their investment, while 22 (or 34%) reported a decrease, and 6 (or 10%) showed no change in investment in adult education. These data follow a similar pattern to overall investment in the education sector (Column 3): among 53 countries reporting, 38 (or 72%) increased funding, while 15 (or 28%) show a decrease over the same period.

It should be emphasised that financial allocations and expenditure data for only two successive years are not an adequate basis for drawing conclusions about trends in financing. More information is needed over a long-term period to interpret these changes in investment in adult education and the overall education sector. According to the 2011 EFA GMR (UNESCO, 2011), the financial crisis in 2008 seems to have caused cuts in education spending in 2009 and 2010 in some countries.

There are other reasons for such changes. In Niger, for example, after the 2009 food crisis reduced government revenue, spending on education fell by 9.9 per cent between 2009 and 2010 (UNESCO, 2011). Expenditures on adult education also dropped by over 12.6 per cent in the same period, as shown in Column 4. In some other countries, the significant increase from 2009 to 2010 might reflect a recovery from funding cuts made in 2009. In Chad, for example, the total allocation to education fell by 7.2 per cent in 2009 (UNESCO, 2012). However, from 2009 to 2010, investment in both the education sector as a whole (25.4%) and adult education (68.1%) increased significantly.

However, in some countries, significant changes in adult education expenditure can be explained by the very low funding base from which the change proceeds. In cases such as the Philippines or the Solomon Islands, given that they respectively spend only 0.21 per cent and 0.18 per cent of

their education budgets on adult education, a large increase in expenditure on adult education as a percentage of expenditure on education may not represent a major increase in absolute terms; whereas in countries such as Malaysia or Latvia, in which 10 per cent and 9.3 per cent respectively of total education expenditure is on adult education, a small increase in the rate could mean a substantial increase in absolute terms.

A further aspect to be considered in relation to the percentage change in expenditure on education and adult education are inflation rates in the reporting country (not reflected in the national progress reports), which impact on the percentage increase or decrease in real terms. For example, in Nigeria, where there was an inflation rate of 13.7 per cent in 2010 (World Bank, 2010), increased expenditure of 4.6 per cent on adult education could not even offset the impact of inflation. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, which had an inflation rate of 16.6 per cent (World Bank, 2010), a 3.6 per cent decrease in expenditure on education meant that the real funding situation was worse.

Column 5 of Table 4.3 presents the percentage of GNP invested in adult education. Again, the range is quite broad, from 0.36 per cent in Thailand and 0.34 per cent in Denmark to 0.001 per cent in Malta and 0.002 per cent in the Solomon Islands. Although there is no significant correlation between a country's expenditure on adult education as a percentage of its GNP and its level of development in terms of GNP per capita, 19 countries classified by the World Bank<sup>2</sup> (2012) as high-income countries allocated an equivalent of 0.1504 per cent of their GNP to adult education. This is almost 50 per cent more than the expenditure of the 34 middle-income countries, which allocated, on average, 0.1080 per cent, and 2.6 times more than the nine low-income countries, which allocated, on average, 0.0418 per cent.

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2 World Bank Classification (2012):  
 - High income countries = GNP per capita above USD 12,476  
 - Middle income countries = GNP per capita between USD 1,026 and USD 12,475  
 - Low income countries = GNP per capita below USD 1,025

**Table 4.4**  
Changes in government expenditure on adult literacy in 2009 and 2010

Country	Increase (%)	Country	Increase (%)
Dominican Republic	303.6	Ireland	0
Ghana	255.7	The former Yugoslav	
Suriname	100	Republic of Macedonia	0
Chad	68	Netherlands	0
Denmark	66.7	Sri Lanka	0
Solomon Islands	42.9	Thailand	0
Croatia	38.9	Uganda	0
Côte d'Ivoire	24.6	Hungary	-0.14
Peru	18.1	Bhutan	-5.5
Morocco	15.6	New Zealand	-9.5
Bolivia	9.5	Malawi	-14.6
Oman	8.1	Mexico	-16.8
Swaziland	6.2	Senegal	-19.6
South Africa	5.3	Indonesia	-29.4
Norway	4.8	Rwanda	-36.6
Slovenia	0.8	Colombia	-52.4
		Gambia	-77.8

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 4.6, which asked for "figures on the financial contributions to adult literacy".

**Table 4.5**  
Average percentage of GNP allocated to adult education in countries with different income levels

Level of income (number of countries)	Percentage of GNP allocated to adult education (simple arithmetic average)
Low-income countries (9)	0.0418
Middle-income countries (34)	0.1080
High-income countries (19)	0.1504

Source: Authors' calculations based on national progress reports and EFA GMR 2012 (UNESCO, 2012)

Table 4.3 also presents expenditure on adult education as a percentage of total expenditure on education (indicated in Column 6). In 55 of the 61 reporting countries, this percentage is below 6 per cent; in 27 countries, below 1 per cent.

As literacy is an important component of adult education, the template for national progress reports allowed countries to report specific information on their expenditure for literacy programmes. When literacy is isolated from adult education, only 32 countries provided related information. Half of these showed an increase in the period 2009–2010, as shown in Table 4.4.

As with the data on expenditures for adult education, large changes in the percentage of expenditure on literacy may, in some cases, be explained by a very low base investment. However, there are meaningful increases in investment in literacy that can be attributed to genuine political will and effort. For example, the data from the Dominican Republic show that the considerable increase in the budget is mainly due to a recent national plan led by the President to intensify literacy efforts across the country.

Caution is needed in interpreting these findings. Evidence shows that most countries do not have a national agency equipped to collect data on investment in adult education, meaning the volume of investment may well be under-estimated. For example, a recent analysis of the decentralisation and public financing of literacy and basic education for young people and adults in Brazil (Di Pierro and Pinto, 2012), indicates that much of the expenditure by states and municipalities on youth and adult education has been under-reported.

In a number of countries, administrators and teachers/facilitators of adult education are teachers in elementary education who work in adult education at night or in their spare time. Rarely are these scenarios included in adult education costs, since they are included within budgets for elementary education. In reality, investment in adult education may well be greater than the data suggest. A study on financing adult and non-formal education in Nigeria by

Hassan (2009) shows that there are several reasons why investment in adult education may be underestimated: 1) difficulties in identifying budgets that are used for adult and non-formal education (for example, adult education carried out in the health, agriculture, commerce, industry or other sectors is not referred to as adult education and the budget dedicated to education often does not specify the percentage meant for adult education); 2) inadequate information on the sharing of funds for adult and non-formal education between government agencies; and 3) lack of information on funding by individuals and the private sector.

In summary, it is clear that, while there may be some under-reporting of investment in the data collected from national progress reports, current investment in adult education does not meet the targets that have been set by CONFINTEA V and VI. This shortage of investment contrasts sharply with the demand emerging in adult education and adult literacy. For example, a study from the region of Asia and the Pacific estimated the aggregate cost of achieving EFA Goal 4 on adult literacy for 255.7 million adults without literacy skills (205.8 million female and 49.9 million male) at USD 45 billion, based on a cost per learner of USD 176 (Raya, 2012)<sup>3</sup>. Countries in South Asia, in particular, will face a major challenge in mobilising such resources. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan will need to allocate 15–30 per cent of their education budgets for adult literacy. Political will and sustained external assistance are needed to address the literacy gap effectively and achieve the EFA goal for adult literacy.

Although the lack of robust data on expenditure on adult education from countries makes it difficult to interpret the trends in recent years, some indicative conclusions may be drawn from the available information. It is possible to conclude that the year-on-year data collected from 64 countries for 2009–2010 show an overall increase in investment in

<sup>3</sup> EFA Goal 4 refers to 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.

adult education of 56 per cent. An important finding from the data analysis is that high-income countries are likely to spend relatively more on adult education, and, in fact, they invested 2.6 times more, as a percentage of GNP, than did low-income countries. Unfortunately, in the case of the great majority of countries, the total investment from the public education budget to adult education is still very low compared to the needs of the youth and adult population.

### 4.3 Mobilising financial resources

Most adult literacy and adult education programmes are offered by a broad range of providers catering to very heterogeneous populations of learners. This diversity needs to be taken into account in considering the mobilisation and utilisation of financial resources. Financing covers both how financial resources can be mobilised and how they can be effectively spent. By mobilising and increasing the aggregate level of finance from all possible sources, countries can ensure more adequate levels of investment in adult education; and through the fair and effective utilisation of financial resources, they can ensure that their societies reap the wider benefits that adult education can deliver.

A crucial question relating to the financing of adult education or any kind of learning and education is who pays or should pay. Costs of adult education include the labour costs of educators and administrators, the cost of physical facilities and equipment, the value of learners' marginal earnings lost while they are learning, as well as additional expenses for travel, accommodation, learning materials, child care, etc. While there is great diversity in the range of provision, quality adult education is costly and it is debatable whether all aspects can be financed by government or any other single stakeholder. In most countries, funding for adult education is provided from both public and private sources.

In an OECD meeting in 1996 to promote the value of lifelong learning, some policy-makers and experts indicated that the distribution of costs should better reflect the benefits and beneficiaries of education and learning (Schuetze, 2009).

Others suggest that it should also reflect peoples' ability to pay, with public funding concentrated primarily on those most in need (Dohmen, 2012). In the case of adult education, the beneficiaries are individuals, employers, and various social entities at the local, regional, and national levels. It follows that all these beneficiaries, including government, employers, civil society, international development partners and individuals, should contribute to the financing of adult education, balancing the extent to which they benefit and their ability to pay. As will be seen in the following section, financing arrangements are already based on a variety of cost-sharing approaches.

#### a. Expanding public financial resources

As early as 1976, the UNESCO *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education* suggested principles for governments investing in adult education: "For the individual, lack of funds should not be an obstacle to participation in adult education programmes. Member States should ensure that financial assistance for study purposes is available for those who need it to undertake adult education. The participation of members of underprivileged social groups should, as a general rule, be free of charge" (UNESCO, 1976, p. 12, § 60).

Government funding, whether at national, regional or local level, operates in two broad ways: *supply-side* or *demand-side*. Supply-side policies subsidise the cost of providing learning, while demand-side approaches contribute to the individual's ability to pay (Dohmen and Timmermann, 2010).

In most countries the government is a key funder of adult literacy and adult education. Boxes 4.1 and 4.2 give some examples of funding approaches taken from national progress reports. In addition to explicit education budgets, investments in adult literacy and adult education occasionally come out of the budgets of other ministries, such as employment, health, agriculture, industry or defence. In Burkina Faso, for example, every government department has the responsibility for planning, implementing and financing literacy programmes.

"High-income countries are likely to spend relatively more on adult education, and, in fact, they invested 2.6 times more, as a percentage of GNP, than did low-income countries.

### Box 4.1 Examples of government financing of literacy

#### Africa

**Burkina Faso:** As part of the implementation of the National Programme for the Acceleration of Literacy, there has been an increase in the state contribution to literacy and non-formal education to support activities by local authorities.

**Namibia:** The Ministry of Education has increased funding through the Directorate of Adult Literacy.

**Nigeria:** An MDG fund amounting to NGN 1 billion (Nigerian Naira<sup>4</sup>) has been allotted for the implementation of the National Programme on Revitalizing Adult and Youth Literacy.

#### Asia and the Pacific

**Lao People's Democratic Republic:** State funding for non-formal education has increased at both central and local levels, particularly for literacy.

**New Zealand:** The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) administers several funds which support adult literacy provision, including workplace literacy and numeracy, intensive literacy and numeracy for learners with greater needs, and refugee education.

#### Latin America and the Caribbean

**Argentina:** The budget for the National Literacy Programme 'Encuentro' and the Plan for Completion of Primary and Secondary Studies (Fines) is funded by the Federal State, in contrast to the "Secondary Education and training for Youth Work" programme, which is co-financed by a grant from the European Union.

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012

Over the last three years, the following developments in public financing for adult education could be discerned: increasing attention paid to equity and adoption of pro-poor policies; increasing efficiency in the direct public funding of institutions; and decentralising funding and delivery.

Adult education has the potential to ameliorate economic, social and cultural inequalities. The *Belém Framework for Action* urges that there should be no exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity

<sup>4</sup> Equivalent to USD 6.3 million, based on UN Operational Rate of Exchange, June 1 2013

or orientation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment (UIL, 2010). Funding is critical in improving inclusion and equality and there is encouraging evidence of focus on equity and adoption of pro-poor policies in European States. In 2009, the national government of Austria spent EUR 2.81 million on integration courses for foreigners. These courses are in part mandatory for immigrants from low-income countries, as part of an effort to ensure universal A2-level German language skills among this population group. In France, the Act of 29 November 2009 allows the least qualified workers to benefit more from vocational training. In Slovenia, new measures have been introduced to entice low-skilled employees to participate in educational and vocational programmes, in addition to basic skills programmes for vulnerable groups. In Ireland, a total investment of EUR 32 million has been provided by the National Training Fund (NTF) for education and training opportunities for 11,500 learners nationwide. The NTF focuses on the low-skilled, as well as other target groups. It has also been used to finance the tutor support element and multimedia activities of the National Adult Literacy Agency.

Meanwhile, in many countries it has been common practice for government or its agencies to directly allocate financial resources to public adult education institutions. Asa Sohlman (2011) describes mechanisms that have recently been introduced to make public funding more efficient: (1) different types of incentives, for example, output-based funding to improve value for money; (2) decentralisation of financial decision-making, giving more autonomy to local education and training institutions; and (3) ensuring competition for government contracts by applying tendering procedures. For example, as shown in Box 4.3, in the United States of America, some states have adopted performance-based funding (PBF) systems to distribute adult education funds based on student and programme performance.

In line with the decentralisation of governance of adult education (see Chapter 3), financial responsibility for funding adult education has also been decentralised, meaning that local government is being

## Box 4.2 Examples of government financing of adult education

### Africa

**Ghana:** In providing funding for innovative training in both the formal and informal sectors, Ghana's Skills Development Fund (SDF) sets aside special funding, dedicated solely for training and entrepreneurship development and support to the informal sector.

**South Africa:** Adult Basic Education is funded and delivered by two ministries: 1) the Department of Basic Education, which is responsible for initial literacy through a literacy campaign and 2) the Department of Higher Education, which provides basic literacy for adults requiring the second to fourth levels of adult basic education. The Department of Higher Education and Training uses a decentralised model, through which funding is allocated to the nine provinces for implementation. In addition, the Department of Higher Education is responsible for the National Skills Fund, from which a number of Sectorial Education and Training Authorities allocate funds for basic education and skills training.

### Arab States

**Syria:** The government is the main funding source, in addition to the support and assistance of charities and international organisations.

### Asia and the Pacific

**Bhutan:** The Royal Government of Bhutan provides dedicated annual funding to support adult education.

**Solomon Islands:** The government has increased the budget for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and a portion of the TVET budget is given annually to the Literacy Association of Solomon Islands.

### Europe and North America

**Serbia:** There is a new system of financing set for implementing the project 'Second Chance', which is geared towards functional education for adults. The new budget line for financing primary adult education was established, with additional funding of professional training through active employment programmes by the National Employment Agency. In the context of adopting active employment measures for unemployed persons, the National Employment Office has increased the expenditures for adult education and training from EUR 0.99 million in 2009 to EUR 4.19 million in 2012.

**United Kingdom (excluding Northern Ireland):** Adult education is supported in different ways by central and local governments where provision for employability is an important aspect of adult education. Adult literacy learning is mostly free to learners though the use of Individual Learning Accounts is being encouraged for workplace learning.

**United States of America:** At the federal level, from 2009 to 2010, the budget allocation to education and training increased from USD 80.6 billion to USD 130.9 billion to support, among other things, training and employment services, veterans' education, training and rehabilitation.

### Latin America and the Caribbean

**Bolivia:** A large proportion of financial support for adult education comes from the national and local government.

**Colombia:** Sub-national governments are authorised to use the resources that are assigned by the central government, on account of "royalties" (payments made by oil companies to exploit the Colombian oil fields) in order to implement programmes for elementary and secondary education for youth and adults.

**Jamaica:** The government has established the National Education Trust (NET), which provides funding for adult education. The trust is a mechanism to ensure the availability of secure, non-recurrent funding for long-term capital investment, thus allowing the education sector, including adult education, to pursue important developmental and infrastructural initiatives without the constraints and fluctuations typical of central government funding.

**Trinidad and Tobago:** Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding has now been extended into Technical and Vocational Education and Training, through which students can obtain financial assistance for TVET.



**Box 4.3****The adoption of performance-based funding systems for adult learning and education in the United States of America**

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998) requires states to establish a comprehensive performance accountability system to assess the effectiveness of eligible agencies in making continuous improvement in their adult education and literacy activities. To motivate local adult education providers to improve the quality and effectiveness of their services, states have begun adopting performance-based funding (PBF) systems to allocate federal and state adult education resources.

States often use the PBF development process to reassess and, in many cases, redesign their entire adult education funding systems. In the process, they often incorporate new base funding criteria to allocate non-PBF resources. These may include indicators of community need, enrolment, geographic setting and other factors, to ensure that allocations are fair, equitable, and transparent.

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) introduced its “Technical Assistance to States on Performance-Based Funding” initiative to help state policy-makers and adult education administrators make more informed decisions about adopting PBF systems to allocate adult education resources. From 2009 to 2010, twelve states were selected to receive nine months of individualised support to design or refine PBF systems.

Source: *National progress report for GRALE 2012*

assigned greater responsibility. In Brazil, studies on public expenditure on youth and adult education have shown that, in 2010, the federal government provided 33 per cent of the expenditure, while states and municipalities were responsible for 67 per cent (Di Pierro and Pinto, 2012). In Latvia, the Law on Local Governments Section 46 determines the responsibility of local authorities to budget independent funding for education, including adult education. In the United States of America, the largest source of federal investment in adult education and literacy is the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which currently provides a budget of USD 595 million, while state and local investment is almost three times this amount: around USD 1.5 billion annually (NCL, 2012).

The European Commission has constituted eleven Thematic Working Groups (TWG) in education and training to support Member States in strengthening the sector. The TWG on Financing Adult Learning was set up in October 2011 and is made up of experts from government ministries and other social partners. It assists Member States in improving efficiency and coherence of financing of adult learning by discussing existing good practices in the countries. Through peer learning activities and regular meetings, it is expected produce policy recommendations by October 2013.

**b. Financial support by employers, private and civil society organisations**

In most countries, governmental funding of adult education is complemented by private contributions by employers and private training organisations, since the private sector sees the further education and training of their employees as an investment in human resources. It is argued that employers have a primary responsibility for ensuring that their employees possess the necessary skills, and for enabling individuals to achieve, maintain and update job specific skills appropriate to their organisation (European Commission, 2011).

In high-income countries, employers and private organisations have played a more substantial role in paying for adult education. In OECD countries, the total number of hours of non-formal instruction an individual can expect to attend between the ages of 25 and 64 is used to indicate the level of investment in adult education. According to data provided in *Education at a Glance* (OECD, 2011), the total investment in all non-formal education exceeds 1,500 hours of instruction in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. It is less than 500 hours in Greece, Hungary, Italy and Turkey.

In more concrete and direct financial terms, the United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills suggests that, “UK employers spend an estimated GBP 20 billion annually on the non-wage costs of staff training and development; alongside government expenditure across the UK of GBP 12 billion on adult learning and skills” (UKCES, 2010).

While employers have played active roles in contributing to funding and providing learning opportunities in general, employees with a higher level of education benefit more than those with lower skill levels. On average across the OECD, individuals with tertiary education will spend three times as many hours of instruction than individuals with low levels of education (OECD, 2011). A recent study on adult education in Europe (Dohmen et al., 2013) also reveals the drawbacks of employer-funded initiatives: far from targeting those with the lowest levels of initial qualifications, workplace learning funded by employers is dominated by highly skilled workers who are often employed in professional and managerial occupations. The bulk of training provided in the workplace is geared towards helping the company perform better, rather than helping individuals realise their own learning objectives, which are often linked to wider life goals (Riddell, 2012). However, it should also be noted that learning in the workplace is among the most important drivers of innovation, if not the most important (Dohmen et al., 2013).

In middle- and low-income countries, there are also many examples of private organisations providing funding for adult education. In Azerbaijan, although banks and insurance companies allocate budgets for professional development, the funds generally do not leave the company for external projects, as training is conducted internally, within the companies themselves. In Slovenia, the Agency for Education of Employees was established in 2009 as a training fund by regional Chambers of Commerce. Members are required to contribute one per cent of income for training their employees. In Indonesia, as of 2012, Non-formal Education Units (similar to community learning centres) are being revitalised. As they can no longer depend on government funding, many have started building partnerships with the private sector.

Several countries have reported that training levies based on wages are being used to mobilise funds for employment-related skills training. A review by Johanson (2009) shows that about 60 countries have or had levy schemes for training. Most schemes are found in Latin America

and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia and the Pacific, and, especially, Europe. Training levies are not restricted to larger countries. In fact, they operate in countries with relatively small populations such as Barbados, Botswana, Fiji, Jamaica, the Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Namibia and Central American countries. Payroll levies can be used to finance the provision of training by national training organisations and training directly provided by enterprises

#### Box 4.4

#### Advantages and limitations of levy systems

##### Advantages:

- Earmarked payroll levies can be viewed as “benefit taxation”, meaning those that benefit (employers and workers) pay for the training.
- Levy systems can substantially augment the resource base for training.
- Increased training resources can substantially increase the incidence of training.
- Levies can provide a steady and protected source of funding, particularly in the context of unstable public budgets.
- Levy-grant systems can encourage firms to intensify their training efforts, increase training capacity and raise training quality.
- Training levies collected from formal sector employers can serve as a vehicle for cross subsidisation; e.g., for smaller enterprises and for firms in the informal sector.
- Levy-financed funds can also help to correct imbalances in training access by pooling funds, e.g. for training disadvantaged segments of society, unemployed, those in the informal sector.
- Levy systems move away from earmarked taxation, which does not conform well to the principles of sound public finance and weakens attempts to unify the national tax system.

##### Limitations:

- Payroll levies raise the cost of labour for employers, possibly discouraging employment.
- Employers may shift the levy onto workers in the form of reduced wages. In this case, it is workers rather than employers who bear the burden of the tax.
- Insecurity of income: Under fiscal pressure, governments may divert levy proceeds into general public tax revenues for non-training uses.
- Unequal access: Many firms, particularly small ones, do not benefit from the scheme. This breeds resentment and compromises the status of training levies as “benefit taxation”.
- Inefficiency: Payroll levies may constitute an over-sheltered source of funding, leading to unspent surpluses, inefficiencies and top-heavy bureaucracies.

Source: Johanson, 2009

where a levy grant system is adopted and administered through a training fund. Enterprises are reimbursed in a levy grant system for the cost of qualified training. Levy success depends on a sufficiently wide economic base in the formal sector and reasonable administrative capacity. These schemes are more effective in countries with a large formal sector and a large tax base. Box 4.4 shows the advantages and limitations of levy systems.

### c. Contributions by learners

Most programmes in adult education are partially financed by their participants. Such programmes require the individual learner to support his or her learning activities with their own financial means, whether current income, savings or loans. Two types of costs are involved in learner contributions: direct costs and living costs. In theory, the system of self-financing adult education is based on some important assumptions, including 1) that the supply and demand in adult education follow the market allocation mechanism and are steered by market prices; 2) the cost of learning is borne (solely or partly) by the learner according to the pay-as-you-use principle; 3) learners with sufficient income are able and willing to pay these prices; and 4) learners from lower income backgrounds who are only partly or unable to pay market prices are expected to be able and willing to take loans, which they will pay back later from their, hopefully higher, incomes (Dohmen and Timmermann, 2010).

Assessing learner investment in adult education is difficult. In reviewing the data available on individuals' spending, Dohmen et al. (2013) arrive at rather limited spending by individuals, often due to public supply-side funding that reduces fees substantially. However, in Germany, according to the Adult Education Survey 2010, expenditure by individual learners amounts to approximately EUR 6 billion (Gnahs and von Rosenblatt, 2011), comprising 37.5 per cent of the country's total continuing education-relevant expenditure of EUR 16 billion in 2009. In summary, data collection in this area is not transparent and, while learners undoubtedly contribute to the costs of their learning, particularly through indirect costs such as transport, child care, books etc., further work on the scale and scope of this contribution is necessary.

### d. Financial support by development partners

Development partners, such as international organisations and funds, provide financial support for adult education in low-income countries. From the information provided in the national progress reports, UNICEF, UNDP and UNESCO are often mentioned for contributing to adult education on the African continent. Eritrea has benefited from financial support from partners such as UNICEF, UNDP and UNESCO in the implementation of literacy programmes for out-of-school children and adults. In Malawi, adult literacy and adult education programmes are now benefiting from Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) funding and pooled funding from EFA and the Fast Track Initiative (FTI). Development partners, such as the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA), contributed, in Malawian Kwachas, MKD 84 million in 2009 and MKD 90 million in 2010. UNDP has supported the Functional Literacy for Integrated Rural Development (FLIRD) programme with MKD 140 million in 2009 and 2010. In Chad, under the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) and Capacity Development for Education for All (CapEFA), the UNESCO Yaoundé office in Cameroon finances activities to strengthen administrative capacity and organisational and educational sub-sectors of literacy and non-formal education.

In addition to CapEFA funding for LIFE, other literacy projects have been implemented with special grants from bilateral donors, foundations or government funds-in-trust. Post-conflict countries receive much-needed support from multiple international donors. For example, a major literacy project implemented in South Sudan from 2009 to 2011 received financial support from the Italian Government and technical support by the NGO BRAC South Sudan. In Afghanistan, a major programme called the "Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan" (ELA), which reaches 600,000 young people and adults across 18 provinces, is funded by the Government of Japan and implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. In Iraq, a four-year LIFE project was launched in 2010 and was funded (USD 6.4 million) by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. Its primary goal is to build institutional and human capacities.

Some African countries have benefited from North-South-South cooperation. In Cape Verde, for example, Spain and Brazil have provided financial support for adult education. In Senegal, adult education programmes by civil society and the private sector, in addition to state operations executed by local communities, were supported by the following sources: INTERVIDA (Spain), PMA (The Netherlands); USAID, IDB, MDG Funds (Spain), PRC (multi-donor), ACDI/FEED-APC (ICS literacy employees), Metal Africa, and BCI (State of Senegal).

In Asia and the Pacific, the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) provide considerable support for adult education. In the case of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the WB and the ADB support the implementation of TVET. In 2010, the World Bank provided funding for literacy research to two provinces in the Solomon Islands for the Coalition for Education Solomon Islands.

In Europe, some countries have benefited from the European Union's IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) programme, the European Globalisation Fund, and the European Social Fund. In Croatia, since 2009, a number of projects aimed at adult education institutions and individual adult learners have been financed through the European Union's IPA and, since 2011, Croatia has fully participated in the European Union Lifelong learning programme. In Ireland, the European Globalisation Fund (EGF) provides up to 65 per cent of the costs of programmes to re-skill laid-off workers. Financed by the European Social Fund, the Adult Education System Project in Lithuania imparts basic competencies to learners and implements key priorities of Lithuania's lifelong learning strategy. In Cyprus, the overall budget of the Programme for Greek Language Teaching Applicable to Migrants and Other Foreign Language Speaking Residents is EUR 3.25 million, which is expected to cover expenses until 2015. Seventy per cent of the budget is financed by the European Social Fund and 30 per cent by the government.

In Latin America, Argentina's Media Education and Training for Youth Work is co-financed by a grant from the European

Union. In Guatemala, the Literacy and Job Training Programme received financial support from the Organization of American States (OAS) and UNESCO. Peru also received grants from the European Community to implement a project entitled "Support to Vocational Training for Work Integration: Consolidation and Upscaling". Meanwhile, the education of young people and adults in Paraguay is mainly financed by a mixture of state and international development funds. Funding for adult education in Paraguay during the last ten years came from the Spanish Agency for International Development and Cooperation, whose funds are administered by the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI). This has led to the reform of education for young people and adults, as well as an improvement in quality.

With funds from the federal government of Germany and other donors, and guided by a commitment to human rights and the promotion of women and gender equality, dvv international cooperates with more than 200 partners in over 30 countries. The institute fosters the exchange of expertise and supports the establishment of youth and adult education structures worldwide.

#### 4.4 Innovative and effective financing mechanisms

Whatever the purpose of investing in adult education, financial mechanisms have to be carefully chosen in order to achieve desired results and outcomes efficiently (Sohlman, 2011). The process of improving the financial efficiency of funding agencies (state, private, etc.), adult education institutions and individual learners can take many different forms.

##### a. Partnership and cost-sharing

Having elaborated on the roles of government, the private sector, development partners and individuals in financing adult education, it is important to note that, in many cases, these financing agents work in partnerships to share the cost of adult education. As Schuetze (2009) explains, the cost-sharing approach makes good sense under the principle that those who benefit should pay,

**Table 4.6**  
**Major financing mechanisms and cost-sharing models for adult education in developed countries**

	Public funding		Cost-sharing instruments		Private financing	
	Individual	Provider	Individual	Employer/ company	Individual	Employer/ company
<b>State</b>	Supply-side funding (unconditional and conditional)  Demand-based funding (e.g., vouchers with no co-financing required)	100 per cent subsidies (grants provided from the government without any individual contribution, neither explicit nor implicit)	Vouchers/Individual Learning Account grants (cost-sharing with financial contribution from the individual); Loans (if subsidised or provided by the state); Tax incentives; Saving schemes (if subsidised or state regulated)	Grants for companies; Tax incentives; Loans (if subsidised or provided by the state); Training funds (if the state contributes to funding bases); Training leave (if the state contributes to the cost)		
<b>Individual</b>					Loans (market conditions, with no state subsidy); Saving schemes (if neither subsidised nor state regulated); Human capital contracts	Payback clauses
<b>Employer/ company</b>					Unpaid Training Leave; Fees (if employer-paid)	Paid Training Leave; Training funds (national, sectoral) (if no public contribution)

Source: Dohmen, 2012

since the benefits of learning generally do not only accrue to one stakeholder, but to several. Furthermore, cost-sharing can be an efficient way to discover whether the stakeholders concerned have sufficient demand and willingness to pay for certain education services (Sohlman, 2011). Table 4.6 provides an overview of major financing mechanisms and cost-sharing models for adult learning in developed countries.

As countries have different financial regulations and characteristics, cost-sharing arrangements vary. A recent study in the United Kingdom on expenditure and funding models in lifelong learning suggests that taxpayers, employers and individuals all contribute to the funding of learning. An important reason for bringing these contributors together is that investment depends on a shared sense that everyone is contributing on a fair basis. "Co-financing" – the sharing of costs

by two or more of the stakeholders – is a key to leveraging resources for learning (Williams et al., 2010).

In Austria, a strategic partnership that began in January 2012 between the federal government and the nine Austrian provinces is particularly illustrative. It aims at both the quantitative expansion and qualitative development of education programmes over a period of three years. An important added value of the model is that the available funds from the federal government and the provinces are increasing the effectiveness of programmes. This means that sustainable educational policy effects may be achieved, a goal that would not have been possible if both parties worked separately.

In Germany, 21 per cent of the costs of continuing education are funded by the federal government, 24 per cent by the states, 18 per cent by the municipalities, 36.5 per cent by the private sector (private households, companies, private non-profit organisations), and 0.1 per cent from abroad (Bildung in Deutschland, 2010, fig. B1-2, p. 31).

Cost-sharing mechanisms in adult education are not confined to Europe. A recent study on lifelong learning in three Asian countries showed that government funds are often supplemented by innovative funding schemes, such as the Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund in Singapore and the Employment Insurance Fund in the Republic of Korea, which mobilise additional funds from the private sector. Regulations are also in place to encourage investment from the private sector and local governments in adult education (Yang et al., 2012). In El Salvador, the National Literacy Commission (CNA), composed of NGOs, churches, universities and municipalities, is planning to generate other sources of revenue to support the National Literacy Programme. In Togo, under the Sectoral Plan of Education 2010–2020, the Support Fund for Literacy and Non-Formal Education will be provided by the government, donors, and the private sector.

#### **b. Tax deduction**

Some countries subsidise training through taxation. This can be done either by allowing firms to deduct training

expenditure from their tax bills, or by allowing individuals (workers) to deduct their training expenditure from their income tax (Falch and Oosterbeek, 2011). Since a firm's training expenditure is part of its normal operative costs, it can deduct such costs from its tax bill. This is possible in many countries, including Canada, Chile, the People's Republic of China, Japan, and several EU countries. Individuals may also deduct direct training expenditure from their taxable income in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In some other countries, including Australia, Canada and the United States of America, training expenditure may be deducted, as long as it relates to the maintenance of existing skills. After reviewing several studies on the deduction of direct training expenditure from taxable income, Falch and Oosterbeek (2011) conclude that this approach appears to be an effective instrument in human capital accumulation. At a marginal tax rate of 0.4, every euro invested by the government in the form of a tax deduction results in 0.75 to 1.5 euros of private expenditures on training investment. This may be due to the fact that this instrument is available to all taxpayers, while the other policies are typically aimed at specific groups of low-skilled workers. In addition, tax incentives do not only address fees, but also the costs of travel and accommodation, making them much more comprehensive in terms of reimbursable costs.

Tax incentives tend to increase the volume of learning but, since they work most effectively for people who pay a significant amount of taxes, they have less impact than other measures on the poorest members of society. People who pay little or no tax are not motivated by this strategy since they have to pay the full costs of their learning.

#### **c. Paid and unpaid educational or training leave**

In 1974, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted Convention C140 concerning Paid Educational Leave (PEL). Paid and unpaid educational leave concern the provision of time and, if applicable, funds for learning (CEDEFOP, 2012). Paid leave means that an employee's salary is paid if he or she is absent from the workplace for training purposes.

Sometimes this includes learning that is not work-related, but is rather for the individual's own interests. Unpaid leave means that a period of time for learning is granted, but without salary.

The role of educational leave policies may become more important in the context of demographic change and shortage of skilled labour, as an added enticement to employees. Empirical evidence shows a low take-up rate for legally regulated training leave across Europe (generally below one per cent) (CEDEFOP, 2012). In some cases, to encourage more people to avail of unpaid educational leave, individuals may receive allowances from the government. For example, the Austrian government pays an allowance at the same rate as unemployment benefits to compensate for the income that has been foregone. In Finland, participants can also avail of a grant equal to unemployment benefit.

According to a study of adult education and training during the financial crisis, conducted by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2011), some countries have improved their policies on educational/training leave. The most thorough reform of training leave has taken place in Austria. Under the new conditions, after six months of continuous employment a person is eligible for training leave (before 2008 three years were required). In addition, the minimum duration of training has been reduced from three to two months, and the training leave can be taken at one particular time or divided up into several periods of at least two months each (but cannot exceed a total of 12 months within four years). As a result, the number of employees on training leave has increased. The monthly average number of employees in Austria availing of training leave came to 1,551 in 2008 and 4,894 in 2009, with a peak in November 2009 of 6,855 people.

#### **d. Vouchers**

Vouchers have been discussed as an alternative to financing from government or other agencies. They are intended to increase the demand for adult education by reducing its direct cost while improving the ability of individuals to exercise choice in the market. Instead of allocating budgets

to suppliers directly, the state would direct money to individuals in the form of vouchers or entitlements. These individuals would then enjoy increased purchasing power in the education market. A voucher would represent a certain amount of money, and each eligible person would receive a certain number of vouchers that could be used to pay fees (partially or fully) of education and training provided by state, private non-profit or for profit educational organisations.

A recent review by Falch and Oosterbeek (2011) indicates that instruments such as vouchers and individual learning accounts give potential learners very explicit confirmation of the increased purchasing power that they would gain from learning activities. This confirmation raises people's awareness of the availability and value of such learning activities. Dohmen and Timmermann (2010) also comment on the merits of vouchers. As voucher systems focus on individual choice between educational institutions and programmes, an elaborate information system which provides both suppliers and customers with useful and easily accessible information is crucial. The strong merit of the voucher model is its ability to offer equal access to adult education for all who want to learn and to enhance the efficiency of providing and using learning opportunities.

The use of vouchers for adult education opportunities is spreading to many countries in Europe. The federal system of Education Premiums in Germany was availed of by some 65,000 individuals in 2010. A total of close to 200,000 people co-financed their training through this scheme between late 2008 and late 2011. In 2008, the Flemish Training Cheque was issued to 200,000 employees, covering 9.7 per cent of the target group (Heyman, 2010). In Austria, a total of just over 100,000 participants per year were funded by vouchers and learning accounts issued by the federal states and chambers of commerce (Dohmen and Timmermann, 2010). In Greece, vouchers are used for both initial vocational education and training, and continuing TVET. In Latvia, education vouchers for non-formal adult learning are provided by the state, under the condition that the individual co-finances 30 per cent of the cost.

#### e. Loans

Loans provide individuals who lack sufficient liquidity with the means to finance adult education. Thus, loans are instruments to improve the ability of individuals to pay and are a form of privately financed adult education, though they are also often publicly subsidised, as via interest subsidies. It is unlikely that loans will encourage participation from low-income groups, and therefore any resulting increase in demand would only reflect the unequal distribution of personal income in society. While self-financing as a sole financing mechanism is not likely to increase participation, partial payment by learners that only amounts to part of the programme cost is acceptable to many people (Dohmen and Timmermann, 2010). Recent research indicates that loans for adult education have been most successful in countries with high participation rates in adult education (Dohmen et al., 2013).

#### 4.5 Making the case for increased funding for adult education: The benefits of learning

Before considering the wider benefits of adult learning and education, it needs to be emphasised that adult literacy and adult education are integral to the right to education. This has been reflected in numerous international conventions and declarations. Article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, stating that “everyone has the right to education”, is intended to apply throughout life (UNESCO, 2000, p. 55). The 1979 *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women* recognises the right of adults to literacy education in Article 10(e), calling on all parties to ensure that men and women have “the same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes” (United Nations, 2006, p. 78). The 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child* also refers to the promotion of literacy (United Nations, 2006, Art. 28,3, p. 110). Regardless of gender, mental or physical capacity, and age, the right to all forms of education and learning is not merely a right on its own; it is a basic requirement for the full attainment of other human rights. Therefore, solely from a human rights perspective, it is clearly

the responsibility of Member States to mobilise financial and other resources to develop adult literacy and adult education programmes.

Increasing funding for adult education has proven to be challenging. Although the end results of adult learning seem real and concrete to those involved, they are often hard to grasp from an outsider’s perspective. While it is generally recognised that learning increases livelihood opportunities and enriches minds, concrete results of investment in adult education are not immediately evident, and the general attitude towards increasing funding is one of reluctance.

Mechanisms such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) make it possible to assign monetary values to the benefits of adult education. SROI is an analytic method that allows for a much broader concept of “value”, essentially quantifying the advantages of adult education and placing social and environmental values on these advantages (The SROI Network, 2012). There are also a number of initiatives working towards new indicators of well-being and societal progress. For example, the *Report of the Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives* listed a set of indicators including economy, equity and distribution, well-being, human rights and sustainability (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2012). These concepts of social and economic development provide fresh perspectives on financing adult education.

The following section will look at how the benefits of learning have an effect on other areas of government expenditure – specifically in health, law and order, economic gain and democratic participation – demonstrating that investment in adult education can save money and improve outcomes in other policy areas. Making these connections and having governments accept them is crucial in improving levels of investment and increasing understanding of the value of adult learning and education beyond the scope of education departments.

#### a. Learning and health

A society in which large numbers of people suffer from poor health will experience financial difficulties as a result



of rising health care costs. Therefore the ability of this population to contribute to development is compromised. The first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UIL, 2010) provides an example of how education programmes could improve health outcomes of South African women. In the United Kingdom, the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning used longitudinal cohort studies to examine the specific benefits of adult learning. The 2006 study explored the positive association between adults enrolled in both formal and non-formal courses and subsequent changes in their health and well-being. These changes are expressed through healthier lifestyle practices, such as giving up smoking and increasing exercise (Hammond and Feinstein, 2006). Since education has a positive effect on health – regardless of income, race, or social background – it makes sense to invest in learning measures to offset the possible consequences of external factors (ELLI 2010, p. 5).

Poor mental health in adults is a rising health cost (Kingsbury, 2008) and, based on the data presented so far, there are strong linkages between negative experiences in initial education, low qualification rates and poor mental health. According to a study conducted by the Mental Health Foundation (2011) in the United Kingdom, community-based adult learning programmes are an effective means to combat depression and anxiety. According to this study, a statistically significant number of participants reported mental health improvements in three areas – well-being, symptoms of depression, and symptoms of anxiety – as a result of participating in community-based adult learning programmes. Furthermore, the majority of participants reported that these programmes allowed for creative expression and increases in confidence and self-esteem, and some were even able to stop taking medication. Appropriate and careful investment in community learning leads to a reduction in spending on medication and treatment to rehabilitate those with mental illness.

Particularly in developing countries, learning initiatives that target women have proven successful, both in terms

of healthcare results and increases in profit and productivity. As stated in a 2010 McKinsey study, as well as in the 2012 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, companies who invest in programmes aimed at women reported financial improvements. One-third of companies surveyed reported an increase in profits, and an additional 38 per cent anticipate increased earnings (Yeager, 2010; World Economic Forum, 2012). In addition to these gains, women benefit from programmes directed towards improving health, such as the HERproject programmes<sup>5</sup> in the People's Republic of China, Egypt, India, Mexico, Pakistan, and Viet Nam. In Pakistan, companies have reported that, due to the work of HERproject, health-related absenteeism has decreased, productivity has increased, and worker-management relations have improved. As a result of a HERproject group discussion on women's health awareness in a factory in Karachi, Pakistan, the overall rate of worker absence decreased by 11 per cent, which resulted in a net productivity gain of 2.5 hours per worker per month during the studied period (Yeager, 2010).

#### **b. Learning and prevention of crime**

The financial costs of crime weigh heavily on all societies. It is not only the cost of crimes themselves, but the associated hidden costs that are significant: prison systems, the judicial system, lost productivity, both of victims and perpetrators, and the social and economic costs to families and communities. In other words, major government spending in this area is required by the communities and populations affected (Mitra, 2012, p. 13).

There is a well-established link between lack of education and involvement in crime. According to the European Lifelong Learning Index, a one per cent increase in American high school graduates would result in a decrease of 34,000–64,000 crimes per year. A ten per cent increase in graduation rates would reduce the number

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<sup>5</sup> HERproject (<http://herproject.org/about/>) is a factory-based women's health education programme. Business Social Responsibility (BSR) leads a coalition of partners, including international companies, their supplier factories and farms, and locally-based NGOs, to promote women's health awareness and access to services.

of prosecuted murderers by 14–27 per cent, which would translate to USD 0.9–1.9 billion in savings per year (ELLI 2010, p. 15). When comparing average costs per student to average costs per inmate, the United States of America currently spend USD 13,000 more annually on a prison inmate than on a public school student (Mitra, 2012, p. 16).

Considering the fact that 85 per cent of juvenile offenders worldwide lack literacy skills, it is clear that investing in youth and adult education would save funds that are currently being spent fighting and prosecuting crime (Cree, 2012, p. 6).

The correlation between education and crime is also associated with the fact that achievement in higher education usually results in improved employability. Individuals with high and stable employment are largely assured economic security, whereas those who are unemployed or in unstable employment may see crime as a more appealing route or opportunity. In a nutshell, increased funding for youth and adult education improves employability, which leads to enhanced employment opportunities and a deterrence of criminality (Mitra 2012, p. 14).

### **c. Learning and democratic participation**

The relationship between adult learning and democratic participation concerns the idea of adult education as a human right that enhances social equality for both the individual and society at large. The contribution of adult education can be evaluated from three perspectives: 1) The effect of adult education, particularly civic education, on local political activity, 2) the effect of adult literacy on democratic participation and knowledge, and 3) the connection between adult literacy, self-esteem and civic activity.

Although research on this topic is minimal, the data that do exist reveal that adult education, and particularly civic education, increases political participation in civic activities such as voting, and promotes democratic values. A study conducted in South Africa examined the effects of adult education through a survey that compared the answers of participants in civic education with answers from non-participants. The first group of participants

lend additional credence to the claim that democratic political culture can change significantly in response to short-term stimuli. Local political participation took the form of attendance at local council meetings, communication with local elected officials, and involvement with community problem-solving groups. Similar reports carried out in the Dominican Republic and in Poland showed that adult civic learning is most influential on local political participation, resulting in a nearly 20 per cent increase in the number of people who are highly active in local government (Finkel et al. 2000, p. 27). This signifies that adult education can be a means of promoting and developing democratic political participation (Finkel et al. 2000, p. 108).

Adult literacy also has an influence on civic activity. As adults increase their literacy skills, information about their political surroundings, particularly the actions of their government, becomes more accessible to them. This drives individuals to become more involved in their community and to make their governments more receptive to the needs of citizens (Stromquist, 2005, p. 2). This phenomenon was demonstrated in a 2002 study of Nepali women, which compared the results of a questionnaire among two cohorts: participants and non-participants in literacy programmes. After two years of programme participation, participants demonstrated more political knowledge and were more confident that they could serve as political representatives. Furthermore, the participants were more aware of political and human rights issues, such as domestic violence and the trafficking of women. These women were also more involved with community groups and civil society organisations (Stromquist, 2005, p. 6). The findings of the Nepali study were mirrored in a similar study conducted in Bolivia and Nigeria, which showed that higher literacy attainment increases voting behaviour and knowledge of legislation (Stromquist, 2005, p. 10).

An increase in adult literacy directly improves self-confidence, as the individual is equipped with greater skills to effectively participate in society. This drives greater participation in political activities, whether through voting or participation in town

meetings, motivating individuals to believe that they have the knowledge and tools to make a difference. According to a national evaluation of literacy programmes conducted under the Adult Education Act in the United States of America, 85 per cent of literacy learners reported an improvement in their level of self-worth and their concept of self, and 65 per cent of learners “felt better about themselves” after a three-year follow-up (Stromquist, 2005, p. 12). Similar reports show that time is also an important factor; the longer individuals participate in literacy programmes, the more extensive are the improvements in self-esteem and confidence.

#### **d. Learning and economic gains**

The World Bank (2010a) Skills Towards Employment and Productivity framework (STEP) shows how a sequential combination of education, training and labour market activities can contribute towards increased productivity and economic growth. The foundation of this model is high-quality basic education (including general employability skills such as literacy, numeracy and communication skills), followed by specific employability skills, encouragement of entrepreneurship and innovation, and facilitation of labour mobility and job matching (DfiD, 2011).

The state of Victoria in Australia supports an extensive adult and community education (ACE) network for its citizens, with 384 ACE providers and more than 130,000 adult learners a year. Among ACE participants in 2007, men aged between 25 and 49 experienced an average annual increase in individual income of AUD 12,829<sup>6</sup> (women AUD 1,336) (Victoria Department of Planning and Community Development, 2008).

The 2012 report by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training shows how the development of workplace training and skills, competencies, and innovation reinforce one another, resulting in greater opportunities for both technological and work for advancement. By expanding the knowledge of employees, companies increase their

capacity to compete in new markets and adjust to change (CEDEFOP 2012a). A learner-friendly workplace results in an environment of educational opportunities, enabling employees to become aware of their capabilities, to take greater responsibility for their tasks, and to develop and practise motivation for innovation (CEDEFOP, 2012a). Building further on this research, Dohmen et al. (2013) found evidence of a link between real growth rates of countries and participation rates in adult learning, based on the 2007 Adult Education Survey (AES).

Even when controlling for GDP per capita, the survey indicated that countries with higher growth rates also show higher participation rates in adult education.

The potential gains and losses stemming from education investment are also demonstrated in terms of large-scale statistics, such as Gross State Product (GSP)<sup>7</sup>. In Victoria alone, the projected net value of additional GSP credited to adult and community education for 2007–2031 is AUD 16 billion. There was a total of AUD 63.7 million additional GSP generated in 2007, and this is estimated to rise to AUD 1.7 billion in 2031. This GSP upsurge will, of course, produce higher tax revenues, predicted to cumulatively amount to AUD 4.26 billion over the period 2007–2031 (Victoria’s Department of Planning and Community Development 2008).

Literacy plays a large role in the development and financial growth of developing countries. Brazil serves as a clear example in illustrating the correlation between schooling, literacy and economic class (see Table 4.7). As an emerging player in the financial market, Brazil’s economic status is hampered by the government’s lack of investment in education. The Brazilian government spends, on average, 15 per cent of per-capita GDP on each student in formal education (primary to tertiary), compared to 25 per cent in wealthier developed countries (Di Pierro and Pinto, 2012, p. 17). As 14 million Brazilian youths and adults are still illiterate, heightened investment in education must

6 1 AUD = USD 0.9668

7 GSP is the sum of all value added by industries within the state or province

**Table 4.7**  
**Illiteracy, schooling and level of income of population aged 15 to 64 years**  
**in Brazil (2009)**

Income strata <sup>8</sup>	Average years of schooling	Illiteracy rate (%)	Combined absolute and functional illiteracy rate (%)
Extremely poor	3.4	32.7	54.1
Poor	4.3	24.6	43.9
Vulnerable	9.3	3.4	10.6
Not poor	9.5	2.3	8.9
Total	7.4	9.7	21.5

Source: Di Pierro and Pinto, 2012.

be achieved in order to narrow economic disparity, augment human capital and attain literacy for all.

The examples above clearly illustrate the links between education and economic gain. Based on the global needs of knowledge-based societies, one of the most effective antidotes to economic and social problems is increased investment in adult education. Research shows that a lack of literacy contributes to a society's financial burden. According to a 2012 report published by the World Literacy Foundation, illiteracy costs a developed nation 2 per cent of its GDP, 1.2 per cent of an emerging economy's GDP, and 0.5 per cent of a developing country's GDP. In total, there are estimated USD 1.19 trillion in losses to the global economy due to illiteracy. There may be arguments about the methodology of the research and whether it is illiteracy alone or a cumulative deprivation of skills and knowledge precipitated by illiteracy that results in the economic loss. Nonetheless, these findings point to a major negative economic impact arising from deficits in literacy, adult education and lifelong learning opportunities (Cree et al., 2012).

Each of the domains mentioned above provides evidence that investment in adult education can produce either an

improvement in outcomes or a reduction in expenditure that would bring benefits to both individuals and society. There are clear advantages to investment in adult learning and education. Apart from the fact that adult education is a human right, the gains that stem from adult education should serve as an incentive to increase investment. Although adult education investment outcomes may not be immediate, time and money devoted to adult education is necessary to ensure a thriving economy and society. This is demonstrated through health care improvements, lower crime rates, increased economic power for both individuals and society, and increased democratic participation.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that financial investment in adult education still remains low, although 35 countries (or 56% of the countries which provided data) witnessed an increase in financial resources from 2009 to 2010 in nominal terms. As financing usually emerges from national policies, this low level of investment may be caused by a lack of political interest among Member States in developing adult education. This is particularly true for developing countries, where there are competing priorities in circumstances of resource scarcity.

Clearly, the global financial crisis is influencing the allocation of resources to adult education. Many governments and international development partners will

<sup>8</sup> The study considers as "not poor" those living in families with a per-capita income equal to or greater than the national minimum wage (BRL 465 per month in 2012). The other categories comprise strata with lower incomes.

adopt austerity measures to reduce all forms of public spending on education and training in order to concentrate on offering short-term, clear and explicit returns on investment. As David Atchoarena (2009) points out, in developing countries and countries in transition, most resources available for social services are still absorbed by basic needs. A side-effect of the EFA commitments made in Dakar in 2000 has been to concentrate funding and policy attention on basic education, particularly at the primary level, to the detriment of other areas.

Increasing financial resources for adult learning and education contributes to the guarantee of adult literacy and adult education as a human right. Member States cannot avoid their responsibility to finance the provision of literacy and adult education programmes. Data from recent studies on the wider benefits of learning present strong arguments for increased investment in literacy and education, as participation in the programmes contributes significantly to improving health, reducing criminality, boosting individual and societal economic gains, and increasing democratic participation.

To increase funding for adult education, governments at national, regional and local levels need to make determined efforts to mobilise financial resources. Quality adult education is costly and methods need to be found through which governments, employers, civil society, international development partners and individuals contribute in different ways to guaranteeing adequate resources. It is evident that low-income countries with a large proportion of their population below the poverty line cannot mobilise the necessary resources by themselves. In order to close the resource gap for adult education in the poorest countries and the poorest segments of the population, richer countries need to fulfil their pledges.

There is evidence from some regions that money is being more carefully targeted towards those most in need, while those who can afford to pay for the benefits of learning, whether individuals or enterprises, are being asked to do so. A review of the use of different financial instruments available in adult education illustrates

the different cost-sharing systems being applied, but also shows that developing countries apply fewer financial instruments for individuals than developed ones. In many countries, pre-employment training, initial training and institution-based training are still considered to be a responsibility of the government, while financing continuing training and education is left to social partners.

Many countries were not able to provide the required information on financing in their national progress reports. This could indicate an absence of basic information about the costs and financing of adult education in many countries. Given the diversity of adult education programmes and the variety of financial channels, it will take much effort before reliable and valid data on the costs of adult education become available at either national and international levels. Robust empirical research and data collection tools on the financing of adult education are still needed, not only to deepen the understanding of the cost benefits from investment in the field, but also to mobilise more financial resources.

#### Key messages:

- Notwithstanding the difficulties Member States encounter in securing accurate and valid data, the reality of under-investment in the adult education sector is undeniable. Investment levels do not meet international targets and fall far short of meeting demand.
- Diversity is an inherent characteristic of the adult education sector, so mobilising resources requires multi-faceted and innovative strategies. Member State governments and their agencies at national, regional and local levels must find new ways to mobilise financial resources that can make a difference by assuring quality adult education provision.
- Basic information about financing systems and practices is still lacking, whilst the demonstration of the concrete and wider benefits of learning remains elusive. Member States, in cooperation with UNESCO, would benefit from a robust knowledge base upon which to shape effective and efficient financing models for adult learning and education.

“Increasing financial resources for adult learning and education contributes to the guarantee of adult literacy and adult education as a human right. Member States cannot avoid their responsibility to finance the provision of literacy and adult education programmes.”

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**ALFABETIZANDO  
COM SAÚDE**



CURITIBA

Formação de educadores para alfabetização em saúde  
Volume 1

## CHAPTER 5

# EXPANDING PARTICIPATION AND PROVISION IN ADULT EDUCATION

## 5.1 Introduction

Access to, and participation in, educational activities are essential if people are to play a role in transforming their lives and shaping the societies they live in. The agreement by governments in Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000) to enshrine youth and adult learning needs and adult literacy in Education for All Goals 3 and 4 reaffirmed the fundamental role learning and education play in society. Yet, according to the Global Monitoring Reports many countries are unlikely to meet precisely these two EFA goals by 2015.

This point was also made in the first issue of the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE), which reported that the provision of youth and adult education did not reach the majority of people, especially those most in need. The UNESCO Member States attending CONFINTEA VI therefore committed themselves to “promoting and facilitating more equitable access to, and participation in, adult learning and education by enhancing a culture of learning and by eliminating barriers to participation” (UIL, 2010, p. 8).

This chapter takes stock of Member States’ progress in providing more equitable access to participation in adult education. Since it is important to understand how participation rates are arrived at, the first section looks at measurement and monitoring mechanisms. Different models of data collection are presented, including various national and international participation surveys. The following section describes the policy targets for participation. The issue of diversity in adult education provision is then examined, showing how adult education has evolved towards the inclusion of all, with a particular focus on marginalised groups.

The final part looks at different measures to address low participation and exclusion, with a focus on two strategies: targeting specific groups and enhancing a culture of learning. Innovative ideas and programmes from a few countries are introduced as a way of sharing good practices for increasing participation in adult education.

## 5.2 Measuring and monitoring participation

In Belém, delegations from 144 Member States acknowledged “...the need for valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative data” (UIL, 2010, p. 9) to inform policies in adult learning and education. In particular, Member States committed themselves to regularly collecting and analysing “data and information on participation and progression in adult education programmes, disaggregated by gender and other factors, to evaluate change over time and to share good practice” (ibid., p. 9). The following section reviews the types of data and information countries have been collecting three years later, and the methods used to assess participation. It also presents some results of selected surveys.

### a. Data collection at national level

The measurement of participation poses many challenges, as adult literacy and adult education are broad concepts that are defined differently. One difficulty for measurement is created by the diverse forms of learning environments (formal, non-formal and informal). Another is the changing reference period, as every programme has its own duration and intensity.

In light of these challenges, comparing figures cited in national progress reports is not easy. While many countries collect data

on participation in adult literacy and adult education, the nature of these data varies as is shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2. Countries either collect information on enrolment in courses, the attendance at these courses, or the completion of a programme that is usually connected to a type of certificate.

Ninety-four countries answered affirmatively when asked if they collect information on literacy enrolment rates, with a slightly

higher number of countries (99) collecting enrolment rates for adult education programmes other than literacy. (Tables 5.1 and 5.2). Completion rates follow as the most frequent information collected, cited by 89 and 85 countries for literacy and adult education respectively, while attendance rates are the least cited. However, it is important to note that the majority of the countries report that they collect all three types of data.

**Table 5.1**  
Nature of data being collected on adult literacy programmes

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Enrolment</b>	25	9	14	25	21	<b>94</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	25	8	10	18	17	<b>78</b>
<b>Completion</b>	24	9	15	22	19	<b>89</b>
<b>All of above</b>	21	8	10	16	16	<b>71</b>
<b>Total number of national progress reports</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 5.8 "Does the government collect information on the following items: Enrolment in literacy programmes; Attendance in literacy programmes; Completion of literacy programmes?"

**Table 5.2**  
Nature of data being collected on adult education programmes other than literacy

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Enrolment</b>	14	7	17	36	25	<b>99</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	14	6	14	28	21	<b>83</b>
<b>Completion</b>	12	7	13	32	21	<b>85</b>
<b>All of above</b>	12	6	13	26	20	<b>77</b>
<b>Total number of national progress reports</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>129</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 5.8 "Does the government collect information on the following items: Enrolment in adult education programmes (other than literacy programmes); Attendance in adult education programmes (other than literacy programmes); Completion of adult education programmes (other than literacy programmes)?"

The comparison of the information above with what was available in the national reports in 2008–2009 indicates an increase of the number of countries collecting participation data on adult education and adult literacy since CONFINTEA VI. At that time, only 43 per cent of the countries (66 of 154 reporting countries) cited participation rates in adult literacy and adult education (UIL, 2010a, p. 59). In 2012, 73 per cent (94 countries out of 129) reported collecting at least one type of information on participation in adult literacy while 77 per cent (99 countries out of 129) indicated that they collected at least one type of information on adult education.

As the reporting template did not ask for further information on the corresponding numbers of learners, it is not possible to demonstrate whether there was an increase or decrease in participation over time within countries. However, some innovative practices for measuring participation at the national level are highlighted in Box 5.1.

Another approach to participation at the national level examines the motivation of learners. In Japan, public opinion surveys are undertaken to examine the disposition to participate in adult education programmes (Japan, 2009). A substantial gap between people's willingness to participate in learning activities (71%) and their actual participation (52%) was identified.

#### **b. Internationally comparable surveys**

Comparative surveys collectively undertaken by a number of countries with a coordinating international or regional body are a growing phenomenon in the field of education (e.g., PISA, TIMMS). Seven international surveys that are focused on gathering different types of information on participation of youth and adults in education and training are described in Table 5.3. Although countries do not conduct these surveys independently, governments finance and organise the collection and analysis of data. These processes may be carried out by national statistical agencies. Participation in international comparable surveys helps countries to improve their expertise and the quality of national surveys, as well as to learn from best practices and

#### **Box 5.1** **National surveys on participation**

The **Burkina Faso** Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy collected detailed data on literacy programmes for adults and non-formal education programmes for children in all districts for the first time in 2009. Following participatory development of questionnaires and training, involving regional/provincial offices and NGOs, data were collected and published at the central level. The report provides data on number of centres, educators, learners by region/province, gender, age groups, rural/urban contexts, language of literacy programmes, and types of centre. The 2009 data indicate the enrolment of 429,851 learners (60% women) in three different types of adult literacy programmes. Subsequent annual statistical reports in Burkina Faso focused on formal education programmes for children. Collecting these kinds of data on adult education on a regular basis will be useful for analysing trends and gaps in the provision of adult literacy and non-formal education.

*Source: Burkina Faso, 2010*

In **Canada**, information is collected on individual adults' participation in learning activities through sample surveys to measure enabling factors and barriers to participation. The Access and Support to Education and Training Survey (ASETS) in Canada was conducted from June to October 2008 by Statistics Canada, the national statistical agency, with the cooperation and support of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), the Department of the Government of Canada responsible for developing, managing and delivering social programmes and service. It replaced the Survey of Approaches to Educational Planning, the Post-Secondary Education Participation Survey, and the Adult Education and Training Survey. The target population for ASETS are Canadian residents aged 65 years and younger. The total sample size comprised 72,000 telephone numbers. The federal government of Canada will fund the 2013 ASETS with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the opportunities and barriers adults face when engaging in education or training. ASETS will also examine the role of information and student financing in terms of adult participation in learning and training.

*Source: Statistics Canada, 2009*

The report *Alphabétisation au Maroc – Pour une pleine participation de tous dans la société* (Literacy in **Morocco** – For an extensive participation of everyone in society) published by the *Direction de la lutte contre l'analphabétisme* (DLCA) provides a holistic overview of trends in adult literacy and adult education programmes in the country over the past five years. In tandem with surveys carried out by NGOs in the different regions (interviews with 552 associations), the DLCA collected qualitative and quantitative data. A review of these data suggests an impressive development. Over the past ten years (2002–2012), the number of participants tripled compared to the twenty-year period 1982–2001. Further surveys on qualitative impacts are in progress.

*Source: Morocco, 2012*

*(cont. overleaf)*

(cont.)

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) in the **United Kingdom** conducts an annual survey of adult participation in learning, which “deliberately adopts a broad definition of learning, including a wide range of formal, non-formal and informal learning, far beyond the limits of publicly offered educational opportunities for adults” (Aldridge and Hughes, 2012, p. 4). Five thousand adults aged 17 and over were asked whether they had taken part in some learning activity, either recently or over the past three years, and whether they were likely to participate in learning during the next three years. Since 1996, annual results have indicated that around 40 per cent of adults participate in learning, while one-third have not participated since leaving school. Eighty per cent of the group of adults participating in learning intend to continue, but only 17 per cent of adults who have not participated indicated interest in further training activities in 2012 (ibid., pp.1 and 4). This finding calls for special attention and incentives to increase the participation of adults who have less interest in learning. In-depth data disaggregated by age, gender and socio-economic background available from this survey are widely used by adult education researchers.

Sources: Jones, 2010; White, 2012

share experiences. The disadvantages of these surveys recently held are the costs involved and the high level of technical expertise needed. In this regard, it is important to mention that half of the surveys recently held involve European and/or OECD countries.

The experiences from these surveys, which are becoming more standardised, provide a foundation for international comparative analysis of participation in adult education. Based on data from these surveys, government institutions responsible for adult education can invest resources in a more systematic way.

Following the recommendations to coordinate a monitoring process at the global level in the *Belém Framework for Action*, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics piloted a regional questionnaire for Latin America and the Caribbean on Statistics on Adult Education in 2012. As the analytical report is expected in 2013, some preliminary findings are presented in the next section.

### c. Results of the surveys

The variety of surveys and the complexity of data on participation clearly show that assessing progress on participation rates

globally is difficult. Currently, specific information is mainly available for European countries.

At regional level, countries of the European Union systematically collect participation data. Table 5.4 below shows adult participation rates in 2009 and 2011 disaggregated by gender, migration background, educational and professional situation in 27 countries. Countries with higher participation rates before CONFINTEA VI tended to record an increase in participation, but many of those on the lower end have recorded a decrease. On average, women’s participation has declined three times more than men’s in the European countries. In the United Kingdom, the participation rates of women declined by 5.8 percentage points between 2009 and 2011.

The role of adult learning as a “lever for increasing economic performance, developing social cohesion and encouraging active citizenship” (Boeren et al., 2012, p. 247) is stressed in the European region. In May 2009, the European Council adopted a renewed set of benchmarks for adult participation in lifelong learning by 2020. Although the former benchmark of a 12.5 per cent participation rate in adult lifelong learning has not been reached in many countries in the region, a higher benchmark of 15 per cent of adults participating in lifelong learning was established (European Commission, 2010, p.10). Table 5.4 indicates that the average participation rate in the region decreased from 9.3 per cent in 2009 to 8.9 per cent in 2011.

Complementing the participation data from the European Labour Force Survey, countries of the European Union have also agreed to collect more detailed data every five years starting from 2011. Data concerning participation rates by gender, age-groups, modes of learning (formal, non-formal and informal learning), type of obstacles and access to information on learning possibilities are included in the Eurostat Statistics Database.

The data presented in Table 5.4 show that participation in adult education is very high in Scandinavian countries. Rubenson and Desjardins argue that the long tradition of aiming for social equity in Nordic welfare

“On average, women’s participation has declined three times more than men’s in the European countries.”

**Table 5.3**  
**Overview of international surveys on participation in adult education**

<b>Title of survey</b>	<b>Organisation/ Institution</b>	<b>Recent data year</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Type and scope of survey</b>	<b>Type of learning covered</b>	<b>Age group of sample</b>	<b>Number of participating countries</b>
The European Labour Force Survey (ELFS)	European Union	2012	Quarterly	Household sample survey of labour participation and labour status, trends in the EU labour market, distinctions between permanent/temporary and full-time/part-time employment situation, and reasons for inactivity and unemployment rate	Any training or education undertaken over the four weeks preceding the survey	25–64	27 European countries
The Adult Education and Training Survey (AES)	European Union	2011–2012	Every five years	Survey using a standard questionnaire on engagement in lifelong learning activities, reasons, costs, types and intensity of participation. Includes obstacles to participation based on national, social and cultural contexts	Any formal, non-formal and informal learning or training undertaken over the 12 months preceding the survey. Supplementary questions address informal learning activities in the family, through educational broadcast material, and visits to libraries, museums and learning centres.	25–64	29 European countries
The Programme for the International Assessment for Adult Competencies (PIAAC)	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	2013	Occasional	Household, cross-sectional, international survey measuring the extent of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving adeptness in technology-rich environments. Assesses the impact of these competencies for educational and professional success.	Work-related learning activities and participation in adult learning and education including types of courses, training, private lessons, seminars or workshops undertaken over the 12 months preceding the survey	16–65	23 OECD countries
UNESCO/OECD/EUROSTAT (UOE)	UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) OECD Statistical Office of the European Union	2012	Annually	Country questionnaire monitoring domestic educational activities	Participation in and completion of adult education and continuing education programmes equivalent to formal primary and secondary education	All	43 countries
The World Education Indicator Programme (WEI)	UIS	2012	Annually	Country questionnaire monitoring domestic educational activities	Participation in and completion of adult education and continuing education programmes equivalent to formal primary and secondary education	All	13 countries

(cont. overleaf)

<i>(cont.)</i>							
<b>Title of survey</b>	<b>Organisation/ Institution</b>	<b>Recent data year</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Type and scope of survey</b>	<b>Type of learning covered</b>	<b>Age group of sample</b>	<b>Number of participating countries</b>
Regional Questionnaire for Latin America and the Caribbean on Statistics of Adult Education	UIS	2010	N/A	Country questionnaire on literacy, primary and secondary education programmes for youths and adults	Participation in and completion of adult education and continuing education programmes equivalent to formal primary and secondary education as well as adult literacy programmes	All	30 countries
The Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP)	UIS	N/A	N/A	Household, cross-sectional survey using common questionnaires to assess literacy participation.	Assessment of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills using ICTs; reading, evaluation and understanding of information, effective and ethical use of information, and its application to create and communicate knowledge	15+	14 countries

Sources: Eurostat, 2012; Eurostat, 2012a, Eurostat, 2013; Eurostat, 2013a; Eurostat, 2013b; OECD, 2012; OECD, 2013; UIS 2011; UIS 2012; UIS 2012a; UIS 2012b

states contributes to higher adult learning participation rates. While the “labor market is structured around a high-skill strategy” there is a “civil society that fosters learning for both social and personal development” (Rubenson and Desjardins, 2009, p. 202), ensuring the continuation of learning into adulthood for disadvantaged groups, thus increasing the employability of these groups. This perspective has been very effective in removing individual and structural barriers to adult education.

Meanwhile, the OECD reported both an increase in participation rates in formal education among youth (on average 86% of the 15–19 age group, and 44% of the 20–24 age group, across OECD countries), and an increase in the number of 15–29-year-olds who are neither in education nor employment (16% in 2010). In certain countries, such as Mexico and Turkey, young women are more than twice as likely as young men to be neither in education nor employment. There is an age gap in participation in OECD countries with just 27 per cent of 55–64-year-olds compared to 50 per cent of 25–34-year-olds participating in formal or non-formal education (OECD, 2012). Data from previous OECD surveys on participation (International Adult Literacy Survey in the

1990s and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey in 2002–2006) provide baseline data and research on determinants of participation in adult learning. Results from PIAAC, expected to be released in late 2013, will provide more recent information on participation (Thorn, 2009, p. 19).

Meanwhile, the results from the Regional Questionnaire for Latin America and the Caribbean, conducted by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (see Table 5.5), show that governments requiring larger-scale provision of adult literacy for illiterate populations are resorting to shorter programmes. Countries with programmes of longer duration cover a smaller share of the illiterate population in a given year. The efficiency and effectiveness of programmes that are less than six months in duration must be examined to understand the extent to which learners who complete the programme are able to sustain their literacy skills.

The preliminary analysis of the results also indicates a strong presence of youth and women in adult education programmes. Furthermore there is clearly more participation in secondary education programmes than in those focusing on primary education in absolute terms, as

**Table 5.4**  
**Percentage of the population aged 25–64 participating in adult education in Europe**

	2009			2011			Changes (2009–2011)			Low educated	Unemployed
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female		
<b>EU</b>											
<b>(27 countries)</b>	9.3	8.4	10.2	8.9	8.2	9.6	-0.4	-0.2	-0.6	3.9	9.1
<b>Austria</b>	13.8	12.8	14.7	13.4	12.2	14.5	-0.4	-0.6	-0.2	4.1	18.6
<b>Belgium</b>	6.8	6.4	7.2	7.1	6.7	7.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	3.1	8.9
<b>Bulgaria</b>	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.2	-0.2	-0.1	-0.3	:	:
<b>Cyprus</b>	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.5	7.2	7.8	-0.3	-0.6	0.0	(1.3)	6.9
<b>Czech Republic</b>	6.8	6.5	7	11.4b	11.2b	11.6b	4.6	4.7	4.6	2.8b	7.5b
<b>Denmark</b>	31.2	25.3	37.2	32.3	25.6	39	1.1	0.3	1.8	23.4	35.1
<b>Estonia</b>	10.5	7.6	13.2	12	9.2	14.5	1.5	1.6	1.3	:	(8.5)
<b>Finland</b>	22.1	18.5	25.9	23.8	19.9	27.7	1.7	1.4	1.8	10.7	19.7
<b>France</b>	5.7	5.3	6.1	5.5	5.2	5.9	-0.2	-0.1	-0.2	2.5	5.2
<b>Germany</b>	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.8	7.9	7.7	0.0	0.1	0.0	3.1	5.1
<b>Greece</b>	3.3	3.2	3.3	2.4	2.6	2.3	-0.9	-0.6	-1.0	0.4	2.7
<b>Hungary</b>	2.7	2.5	3	2.7	2.6	2.9	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.5	2.0
<b>Italy</b>	6	5.6	6.4	5.7	5.3	6	-0.3	-0.3	-0.4	1.2	5.5
<b>Ireland</b>	6.3	5.7	7	6.8	6.3	7.2	0.5	0.6	0.2	2.8	6.4
<b>Latvia</b>	5.3	3.6	6.9	5	3.8	6.1	-0.3	0.2	-0.8	:	(4.0)
<b>Lithuania</b>	4.5	3.6	5.4	5.9	4.6	7.1	1.4	1.0	1.7	:	(3.5)
<b>Luxembourg</b>	13.4b	13.4b	13.5b	13.6	14.2	13	0.2	0.8	-0.5	(4.5)	(15.3)
<b>Netherlands</b>	17	16.5	17.5	16.7	16.5	16.9	-0.3	0.0	-0.6	10.5	17.3
<b>Malta</b>	6.1	5.9	6.3	6.6	6.3	6.9	0.5	0.4	0.6	3.3	:
<b>Poland</b>	4.7	4.3	5.1	4.5	4	5	-0.2	-0.3	-0.1	(0.8)	4.8
<b>Portugal</b>	6.5	6.2	6.8	11.6b	11.1b	12.1b	5.1	4.9	5.3	8.0b	17.1b
<b>Romania</b>	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5	0.1	0.3	-0.1	(0.3)	(1.5)
<b>Slovakia</b>	2.8	2.2	3.3	3.9	3.4	4.4	1.1	1.2	1.1	:	1.7
<b>Slovenia</b>	14.6	12.9	16.4	15.9	13.7	18.2	1.3	0.8	1.8	(3.3)	16.4
<b>Spain</b>	10.4	9.6	11.3	10.8	10	11.6	0.4	0.4	0.3	4.6	13.2
<b>Sweden</b>	22.2p	16.1p	28.5p	25	18.4	31.9	2.8	2.3	3.4	16.9	40.4
<b>United Kingdom</b>	20.1	16.8	23.3	15.8p	14.0p	17.5p	-4.3	-2.8	-5.8	7.2p	14.8p
<b>Non-EU countries included in Eurostat analysis</b>											
<b>Croatia</b>	2.3	2.4u	2.1u	2.3	2.3u	2.3u	0.0	-0.1	0.2	1.4	5.5
<b>Iceland</b>	25.1	20.4	30	25.9	22.8	29	0.8	2.4	-1.0	:	:
<b>Norway</b>	18.1	16.8	19.5	18.2	17.1	19.2	0.1	0.3	-0.3	16.1	30.9
<b>Switzerland</b>	23.9i	22.8i	25.0i	29.9	31	28.7	6.0	8.2	3.7	(0.3)	(2.3)
<b>The former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia</b>	3.3	2.4	2.1	2.9	3	2.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	9.9	23.0
<b>Turkey</b>	2.3	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.3	0.1	0.2	-0.1	10.4	18.9

Sources: Eurostat, 2012; Eurostat, 2013c

b = break in series    p = provisional  
i = see metadata      u = unreliable



**Table 5.5**  
Share of adult illiterates in Latin America and the Caribbean participating in (public) literacy programmes according to their duration

Duration	Countries and territories	Adult literacy rate <sup>1</sup>	Participants/ Illiterate population <sup>1</sup>
<b>6 months and longer</b>	Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica <sup>2</sup> , Dominican Republic, Jamaica <sup>2</sup> , Mexico, Paraguay, Puerto Rico <sup>2</sup> , Uruguay	93.5	5.2
<b>Both types of programmes</b>	Antigua and Barbuda <sup>2</sup> , Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru	88.1	11.4
<b>Less than 6 months</b>	Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua	89.7	24.2

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2013)

there are almost three times as many people enrolled in the former programmes than in the latter ones. The participation in literacy programmes, especially in countries offering programmes with a duration of more than 6 months, is very moderate, representing on average 5.2 per cent of the people reported to be illiterate (UIS, 2013).

Given the challenges in raising participation, even in countries where investment in adult education is already high, it is important to consider the information available on factors that inhibit or prevent participation, such as through small sample surveys. To start collecting participation information beyond specific education programmes, each government could identify regional or national surveys that target the adult population. Questions on who is participating in formal and non-formal learning opportunities and what reasons they have for not participating could be added to these existing surveys.

“Given the challenges in raising participation, even in countries where investment in adult education is already high, it is important to consider the information available on factors that inhibit or prevent participation.”

The political commitment to inclusion of all learners is an important feature of the *Belém Framework for Action*. Governments agreed that “inclusive education is fundamental to the achievement of human, social and economic development”, and that “there can be no exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment” (UIL, 2010, p. 8). In this regard, the formulation of certain targets is understood as an

indicator of the value a government places on participation in adult literacy and adult education.

Since CONFINTEA VI, a number of targets have been set by countries and regional bodies on participation in adult education. As mentioned previously, the European Union has increased its overall target of 12.5 per cent in 2010 to 15 per cent of all adults (aged 25–64) participating in learning activities by 2020 (European Commission, 2010, p. 10).

Some countries have set even higher participation targets. Austria, for example, aims to increase its adult learning participation rate from 14 per cent (2010) to 20 per cent by 2020 (Austria, 2011, p. 4). While many countries ensure the right to education at the basic level, others, such as Sweden, are extending that right to adult education at the upper secondary level to allow qualification for higher education (Sweden, 2010, p. 7–8).

Meanwhile, in Asia, Japan’s New Growth Strategy (2010–2020) mentions three participation targets: 1) to increase the

<sup>1</sup> The values presented are unweighted averages. Literacy rates and the adult illiterate population include the most recent data for each country (June 2013 Data Release: Reference years 2005–2011). The reference year for data on participants is 2010, with the exception of Bolivia (2008) and Chile and Guatemala (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Programmes provided by the public sector only.

**Table 5.6**  
Examples of quantitative participation goals on adult literacy in national policies

Country	Quantitative Goals	Timeframe
Afghanistan	Provide literacy programmes for 3.6 million illiterates	by 2015
China	Provide Basic universal 9-year compulsory education	by 2020
Colombia	Reduce illiteracy rate from 6.7% to 5.7%; Provide adult literacy programmes to 600,000 persons aged over 15	by 2020
Côte d'Ivoire	Reduce proportion of illiterates by 35% through provision of basic literacy and post-literacy education to 250,000 youths and adults annually	by 2020
Denmark	Engage 40,000 persons to participate in literacy courses	by 2014
Eritrea	Narrow the existing gender literacy gap to less than 10%	annual
Myanmar	Reach a 99% adult literacy rate	by 2015
Niger	Provide adult literacy programmes to 1.5 million adults	by 2015
Senegal	Provide adult literacy programmes to 300,000 persons	by 2020
South Africa	Enable 4.7 million illiterate adults to become literate	annual
Thailand	Engage over 50,000 persons to participate in literacy programmes	by 2015
Tunisia	8% reduction in illiteracy rate among the working-age population	annual
Uganda	Provide a community-responsive adult literacy service to 2 million adults, especially poor and disadvantaged populations	2016
Wales (United Kingdom)	80% of working-age adults reach at least literacy level 1	by 2016

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 2.3: "Has your country set any goals and deadlines that national policy/ies in [...] adult literacy are expected to reach? If yes, please specify the goal and, if applicable, relevant timeframe."

number of adult students in universities to 90,000 and in professional colleges to 150,000; 2) to increase the participation of full-time employees and part-time employees in learning activities to 70 per cent and 50 per cent respectively; and 3) to have half of the adults participating in social or community development activities by 2020 (Sawano, 2012, p. 668).

The national progress reports show that many countries with low adult literacy rates have adopted Education for All Goal 4 of reducing the adult illiteracy rate by 50 per cent by 2015. In a few cases, countries have set specific literacy targets for women.

Tables 5.6 and 5.7 show examples of goals and deadlines reported by several countries regarding quantitative outreach of learners in adult literacy and adult education programmes.

The above information shows that literacy targets have been set across regions, despite wide variance in literacy status. For example, Denmark, which has the highest participation rate of adults in formal and non-formal learning in the European Union, has set a goal for participation in adult literacy classes in response to PIAAC. In 2011, a study on the literacy level of adults in Germany showed that 14 per cent of the German-speaking working-age population (aged 18–64) are functionally illiterate, which translates to 7.5 million people (Grotlüschen and Riekmann, 2011). The European Labour Force Survey in 2011 found out that many of Europe's 73 million low-educated adults (aged 25–64) are likely to have literacy problems (European Union, 2012, p. 78) (see Chapter 1). This evidence has started to influence adult literacy provision in the European Region.

**Table 5.7**  
**Examples of quantitative participation goals on adult education in national policies**

Country	Quantitative Goals	Timeframe
Bolivia	50% participation rate of individuals aged 15 and over in programmes to obtain a training equivalent to 6th grade of elementary school	by 2015
China	Attain a 50% participation rate of continuing education for on-the-job learners	by 2020
Latvia	Increase the participation rate of the population aged 25-64 to 15% Population aged 18–24 without secondary education or professional qualification who are not involved in formal or non-formal education reduced to 13.4%	by 2020
Malaysia	Attain a 50% increase in participation rates in lifelong learning among people aged 15 and over	by 2020
Malta	Reduce early school drop-outs to less than 10%	by 2015
Serbia	Reach a participation rate of at least 10% of the adult population in formal or non-formal adult education	by 2020
Slovakia	Reach 15% of the population aged 15–64 with adult education provisions	by 2020
Slovenia	Achieve 18% participation of the population aged 25–64 in lifelong learning Achieve 6% participation in non-formal general education (verified literacy programmes, foreign languages, leisure, and liberal educational programmes) One-third of adults without elementary school attainment reach elementary level of education 60% of the population aged 25–64 attain at least 4-year upper secondary education	by 2015
United States of America	Achieve the highest proportion of college graduates in the world – 10 million more graduates from community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities Create and support opportunities for every American to complete one year or more of higher education or advanced training in his/her lifetime.	by 2020

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 2.3 “Has your country set any goals and deadlines that national policy/ies in adult education [...] are expected to reach? If yes, please specify the goal and, if applicable, relevant timeframe.”

In contrast to the regional dispersion of countries who have set goals on literacy, it is mostly European countries and the United States of America who refer to specific goals in adult education in the national progress reports (see Table 5.7).

In addition to quantitative goals, a few countries, such as Scotland (United Kingdom), have developed qualitative goals for provision and participation in adult literacy and adult education. Four expected outcomes have been identified by the

Scottish government’s policy document *Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020*:

- 1) Scotland’s adults have access to literacies learning opportunities in which they can achieve their goals and progress;
- 2) Adult literacy learners receive high quality learning and teaching so that they can achieve their goals;
- 3) Scotland has a coherent and effective adult literacies infrastructure that enables and supports continuous enhancement of provision; and
- 4) evidence of the impacts and the value of literacies learning for individuals and society (Scottish Government, 2011, p. 14).

### 5.3 Diversity in adult education provision

Chapter 2 on Policy described the conceptual underpinnings and policy implications of the wide range of understandings of adult education. When analysing the provision and delivery of learning opportunities comprehensively, it is necessary to see the relationship of the policy mind-set to the areas of learning that are offered by different actors. The following categories of learning activities were provided in the template for the national progress report:

1. literacy (reading, writing and numeracy);
2. vocational education (technical, income-generation-related);
3. life skills or health issues;
4. use of information and communication technologies;
5. official/local language;
6. foreign language;
7. human rights or civic education;
8. liberal education or personal growth (i.e. artistic, cultural); or
9. any other area of learning which might be important in a specific context.

Table 5.8 shows the areas of adult education provided by sectors as reported in the national progress reports. In general, it can be seen that, regardless of region, the public sector provides most adult literacy, technical and vocational education and life skills or health programmes (between 87 and 100%). Human rights, civic education and language courses, however, tend to be provided by a broader range of actors in all regions.

The extent to which such provision is sufficient cannot be solely determined from this table or the national progress reports. However, these sources seem to indicate that levels of provision are not correlated with countries' social and economic status. The typology of provision between countries with high, medium and low Education for All indices, as suggested in the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*, needs to be re-examined. As stated at that time, "profiles of adult education provision are dynamic and tend to change in relation to social and economic development" (UIL, 2010a, p.

53). Three years later, and following a time of economic and social turmoil all over the world, patterns of provision appear to have changed. Overall, the number of areas of learning reported by countries in 2012 has increased, suggesting that the range of provision is broader, regardless of countries' state of development.

In 2009, for example, 77 per cent of countries reported government provision of basic education and general competences such as literacy (ibid., p. 50), whereas in 2012, 92 per cent of countries indicated public provision of literacy (reading, writing and numeracy). The figure for technical, vocational and income-related learning activities went up from 68 per cent of reporting countries in 2009 to 92 per cent three years later. In terms of life-skills and health issues, 40 per cent reported provision through a public entity in the first *GRALE*, whereas in 2012, 84 per cent reported public provision of these areas of learning.

Interestingly, more European countries reported the provision of adult literacy programmes than in 2009. At that time, only 26 of the 38 reporting European countries mentioned basic skills such as literacy as part of their overall adult education provision (ibid., p. 45). In 2012, the number rose to 37 out of 40 reporting countries (or 93%). This may be a response to recent surveys showing literacy challenges in the European region (see Chapter 1). It is also worth noting that provision of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is reported by more countries across all regions. Major regional differences in provision can be found in the areas of liberal education, and personal growth, such as artistic or cultural activities, foreign languages and human rights and civic education.

In general, adult education programmes are characterised by multiple providers across the public, private and civil society sectors. Table 5.8 shows that literacy, TVET and health/life skills are the main areas of learning provided by the public sector and civil society organisations. While the private sector focuses on work-related education (i.e., TVET and ICT), it also provides literacy education in more than half of the countries responding. In regional terms, all three

"The number of areas of learning reported by countries in 2012 has increased, suggesting that the range of provision is broader, regardless of countries' state of development. "

**Table 5.8**  
**Number of countries providing adult education by areas of learning and sector**

Public Sector	Literacy	Technical and vocational education	Life skills and health issues	ICT	Official / local languages	Foreign languages	Human rights/ Civic education	Liberal education/ Personal	Other	Total no. of national progress reports
<b>Africa</b>	30	27	29	22	26	15	23	18	6	31
<b>Arab States</b>	9	8	7	4	6	4	3	4	2	9
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	18	23	23	16	17	15	17	14	4	24
<b>Europe and North America</b>	37	39	32	37	35	33	32	30	9	40
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	25	22	19	20	12	7	16	10	7	25
<b>Total</b>	119	119	110	99	96	74	91	76	28	

Private Sector	Literacy	Technical and vocational education	Life skills and health issues	ICT	Official / local languages	Foreign languages	Human rights/ Civic education	Liberal education/ Personal	Other	Total no. of national progress reports
<b>Africa</b>	20	19	19	18	16	11	14	13	3	31
<b>Arab States</b>	4	3	3	4	2	3	1	1	0	9
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	12	14	13	10	10	11	6	8	5	24
<b>Europe and North America</b>	16	28	22	25	16	25	8	18	9	40
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	15	15	11	15	6	7	8	9	2	25
<b>Total</b>	67	79	68	72	50	57	37	49	19	

Civil Society	Literacy	Technical and vocational education	Life skills and health issues	ICT	Official / local languages	Foreign languages	Human rights/ Civic education	Liberal education/ Personal	Other	Total no. of national progress reports
<b>Africa</b>	27	26	26	122	19	12	21	20	7	31
<b>Arab States</b>	7	5	6	3	4	3	4	3	1	9
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	21	22	20	14	13	10	14	12	4	24
<b>Europe and North America</b>	22	26	27	29	18	25	26	28	9	40
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	20	16	16	15	6	5	14	9	5	25
<b>Total</b>	97	95	95	83	60	55	79	72	26	

Source: National progress reports for GRALE, 2012; Responses to Question 5.1 "Please indicate the areas of learning that are addressed by different organisations."

sectors are involved in providing literacy programmes and health education in the majority of responding sub-Saharan African countries, although the private sector seems slightly less active. Foreign language training is mostly provided in Europe and North American countries, as is liberal education or learning activities for personal growth.

In spite of this wide range of offerings that are meant to cater to different target groups with specific objectives, many are still excluded and unable to participate in adult education.

#### 5.4 Measures to address low participation and exclusion

When discussing factors affecting participation in adult education, researchers usually categorise three different types of barriers (identified by Cross, 1981): 1) situational barriers (those arising from one's situation in life); 2) institutional barriers (practices and procedures that hinder participation); and 3) dispositional barriers (attitudes and dispositions towards learning). These have been explained in detail in the first *GRALE* (UIL, 2010a, p.67ff). Rubenson considered that a fourth category should be added to the list: informational barriers (lack of information on education, learning opportunities and benefits). Although there are different ways of conceptualising barriers, "one common view is that barriers are obstacles that prevent certain groups from participating" (Rubenson, 2010, p. 224).

First of all, it is important to note that many of the studies on participation cover Europe and North America. Given this, one needs to be careful when examining these studies, especially in relation to how the variables affect participation across the regions. One of the common sense assumptions is confirmed in the literature, which indicates that socioeconomic background is a key predictor of participation in adult education and training. People with more social, economic and cultural capital tend to participate more than those with less. Related to this is a participant's employment status. That is, the employed tend to participate more, and, conversely, those outside the labour

market participate the least (Aldridge and Hughes, 2012; Aldridge and Tuckett, 2011; Jones, 2010; White, 2012). Eve-Liis Roosmaa and Ellu Saar, in their study of participation in non-formal learning in European countries, argue that "inequality in participation reflects the distribution of occupations (or workplaces with different requirements) more than it reflects the available qualifications of the workforce" (Roosmaa and Saar, 2012, p. 48). This means that, in market-centred societies, the impact of the market is greater than the output of the education system in predicting participation in education.

That is not to say that previous educational experiences are not a factor; in fact, prior learning plays a large part in determining participation. People who continued in initial education until age 21 or later are far more likely to participate in adult education than those who left school at an earlier age (Aldridge and Hughes, 2012; Aldridge and Tuckett, 2011; White, 2012; Jones, 2010).

With regard to the effect of gender in participation, while a gap has existed for some time, it is narrowing and there is a move towards parity (White, 2012; Jones, 2010). However, a gender gap remains. To illustrate this, Jones (2010) refers to the Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning (IFLL) study, which found that men are more likely to learn at work or independently and women are more likely to learn within either publicly funded or community facilities.

Age is another factor in participation; the older people are, the less likely they are to participate in learning (Aldridge and Hughes, 2012; Aldridge and Tuckett, 2011; White, 2012). Furthermore, Aldridge and Tuckett (2011) show that people aged 17–54 participate for work or career reasons, while those over 65 tend to participate for personal and leisure interests.

As a major step towards equitable access for all, Member States agreed in CONFINTEA VI on removing these "barriers to participation" (UIL, 2010, p. 8) that prevent people from learning. The elimination of such hurdles is a multi-layered process, which cannot be tackled in a single step. An initial step would be to identify and map the barriers for each target group.

### **a. Addressing specific target groups**

A major obligation formulated in the *Belém Framework for Action* is “to enable all young people and adults to exercise” their right to education. It was agreed that exclusion from educational activities was not acceptable and that all stakeholders should work to combat “exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment” (UIL, 2010, p. 8). This sub-section describes what countries are concretely doing against the exclusion of specific target groups. The target groups chosen for analysis are those groups of adult learners most cited in the national progress reports.

#### **i. Women and men**

As Member States explicitly committed themselves to improving “access to, and participation in the full range of adult learning and education programmes for women, taking account of the particular demands of the gender-specific life-course” (UIL, 2010, p. 8), it is interesting to see, three years later, if and how countries are addressing women, as well as men, in their provision. Table 5.9 shows the differences in participation by men and women reported by regions.

In the African region, the Arab States, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, women seem to participate more in adult literacy classes than men. In Europe and North America women are reported to participate more in adult education. Meanwhile, in Asia and the Pacific the information from reporting countries does not show significant differences in participation between men and women, either in adult education or adult literacy. Fifty-eight countries report that more women participate in adult education, while 30 indicate that more men participate (Table 5.9).

However, only half of the total (44 countries reporting) are actively working to improve gender equality in adult education (see Table 5.10). With regard to adult literacy, 54 of the 94 countries experiencing differences in the participation rates of men and women indicate that they are undertaking measures to address these. Table 5.10 explains how many countries

reported that they are taking action to address these differences in participation between men and women. What can be seen is that literacy programmes seem to be addressing these inequalities more often than adult education provision.

Reducing gender-related differences and improving equity in adult education and adult literacy was mentioned as a major objective by several countries from all regions. This is also highlighted by the examples given in Box 5.2, of initiatives undertaken to improve gender equity in adult education participation.

#### **ii. Vulnerable youth**

The *Belém Framework for Action* also spelled out the need to address the learning needs of young people within a holistic and comprehensive system of lifelong learning. This is urgent in light of data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2013a), which indicate that 123.2 million youth worldwide, 61.3 per cent of them women, lack basic reading and writing skills. Regionally, sub-Saharan Africa stands out with 3 out of 10 youths reported illiterate in 2011 (28.4 million young women and 19.2 million young men) (*ibid.*). The majority of countries who submitted national progress reports have listed youth as a particular target group of their educational policies and programmes.

In order to enhance the capacities of UNESCO Member States to reduce the education barriers that young people with little or no school experiences are facing in many different contexts, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) undertook a research and policy-dialogue process in 2010 in partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Its objectives are to identify appropriate means for literacy and life skills provision to improve young people’s life chances, including access to employment and/or technical and vocational training. As an initial step, UIL conducted multi-country research to map policies and practices in 15 countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean.

This literature and policy review revealed that effective programmes for vulnerable youth have common features. It is important that a specific group of young

**Table 5.9**  
Countries reporting differences in participation between men and women in adult education and adult literacy

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
Number of countries that report <b>more women</b> participating in <b>adult education</b>	12	2	6	22	16	<b>58</b>
Number of countries that report <b>more men</b> participating in <b>adult education</b>	12	2	7	4	5	<b>30</b>
Number of countries that report <b>more women</b> participating in <b>adult literacy</b>	25	9	10	14	17	<b>75</b>
Number of countries that report <b>more men</b> participating in <b>adult literacy</b>	3	2	7	3	5	<b>20</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 5.10 "Are there differences between men and women in terms of their participation in adult education and/or adult literacy programmes?"

**Table 5.10**  
Countries taking measures to address differences in participation between men and women by regions

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
Number of countries who report undertaking measures to address differences in participation in <b>adult education</b> between men and women	15	2	9	10	8	<b>44</b>
Number of countries who report undertaking measures to address differences in participation in <b>adult literacy</b> between men and women	23	6	11	7	8	<b>55</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 5.10 "If there are differences: Have measures been undertaken to address these differences in adult education/adult literacy programmes?"



**Box 5.2****Improving equity: examples of measures to improve gender equity in adult literacy and adult education****With a focus on women:**

**Burkina Faso** promotes positive discrimination in favour of women. The “principle of parity” was established by the government, which ensures a 60 per cent female enrolment quota in adult literacy and adult education centres.

**The Dominican Republic** facilitates participation of women and mothers in literacy programmes through the “Hand-in-hand with your children” project, “De las Manos con sus Hijos/as”, offering parallel activities for their children. This project was implemented by the Department of Adult Education with financial support from the Ministry of Education and Culture of Spain.

In early 2012, **Gambia** launched a training programme for women and girls in male-dominated skill areas with the support of the national Social Development Fund. These training programmes are run by the Gambia Technical Training Institute.

**Honduras** has attracted greater participation of women in literacy and basic education programmes since offering a child care programme during class hours. If mothers know their children are well taken care of, not only do more participate, but usually their learning outcomes are better, as their level of concentration during classes is higher. Child care has also been introduced as an additional subject area.

**With a focus on men:**

**Cape Verde** targets men by specifically offering educational and vocational training programmes for men only in areas where men’s participation is very low.

**Ethiopia** attracts men, particularly young men, in search of employment, by linking income-generating activities and literacy programmes at grassroots level, which are implemented by local NGOs.

In **Jamaica**, special training for teachers was developed to provide them with methodologies to enhance the motivation, interest, participation and retention of men in learning activities, in order to increase male participation in adult education and literacy.

**Malawi** has opened literacy classes for men only to increase their participation. An initiative to link graduates to income-generating activities and English lessons has also been introduced.

**Malta** is directing adult education campaigns towards men since 2011 by featuring male adult educators and male adult learners on radio programmes’ that advertise for classes. Furthermore, photographs of mixed adult learning classes have been chosen for the catalogue of courses offered by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning.

After conducting a survey on why men do not attend literacy classes, **Oman** started to tackle the reasons for their reluctance by changing their programmes’ appeal more to men. The survey revealed that the main reasons are the lack of time to participate due to family responsibilities, lack of financial incentives to encourage them to study, and lack of awareness of the benefits of literacy.

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012

people is targeted by identifying their structural and personal reasons for vulnerability. The research also showed that effective programmes tend not to be “stand-alone”, but rather integrate basic education and literacy with vocational and skills training, and build active partnerships with a variety of stakeholders. Involvement of youth at different stages, from policy design to programme formulation, was also recognised as a key factor for the success of any practice (UIL, 2011). Box 5.3 shows effective programmes for vulnerable youth.

### iii. Groups with multiple disadvantages

Several research studies (for example by OECD and IALS) from industrialised countries have shown that people with lower educational and/or socioeconomic background, those who are unemployed, low-skilled or belong to a disadvantaged group, are least likely to participate in adult education (Desjardins, 2010, p. 208).

As elaborated in the first *GRALE*, such a pattern of exclusion can be observed across all regions, showing that those who “have acquired more education tend to get more and those who do not, find it difficult to receive any at all” (UIL, 2010a, p. 70). To reach these non-participating groups and break the cycle of exclusion, several countries have developed specific programmes for “anticipating and responding to identifiable groups entering trajectories of multiple disadvantage”, as set out in the *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010, p. 8). Box 5.4 illustrates what Germany and South Africa are doing in this regard.

Another step towards the greater participation, inclusion and equity that Member States committed to in the *Belém Framework for Action* involves “developing effective educational responses for migrants and refugees as a key focus for development work (UIL, 2010 p. 8). In Bangladesh, Cameroon, Chad and Guinea, the World Food Programme (WFP) has developed, together with these countries’ respective line ministries, adult education programmes that aim to increase food security among vulnerable groups. For example, in Cameroon the “Food For Assets” and “Food For Training” programmes are based on an integrated approach to food distribution

#### Box 5.3

#### Examples of programmes for vulnerable youth

The “Boys’ Recycling School” programme in Cairo, **Egypt**, targets children of waste collectors, who do not have access to formal school education. It is designed to incorporate basic education, work experience, environmental protection and income generation to create a matrix where actions benefit an impoverished community on many levels. The parents bring their collected plastic bottles to the school, which in turn sells them to the recycling industry. The income generated covers the salaries of the teaching staff and the school’s running costs. One of the main lessons from this project is that providing basic education requires sustainable and long-term provision and support, as individuals do not become sustainably literate and educated through short-term courses (UIL, 2011a).

To address an alarming increase in the number of out-of-school youths, the **Marshall Islands** developed a Basic Education and Life Skills (BELS) course that involves the acquisition of computer skills, English literacy, and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By means of a multidisciplinary approach, young people between 17 and 23 years of age engage in group, individualised and independent learning. The programme has proven that out-of-school youth possess a broad repertoire of knowledge and skills that can be enhanced (UIL, 2012).

and training, with classes on topics such as literacy, health and nutrition (Essential Nutrition Activities), livelihood support, agriculture, fishing, environment protection, beekeeping, income-generating activities and farming for refugees and host populations from the Central African Republic (CAR). Since the programmes’ inception in 2011, 7,338 participants (and 36,690 food beneficiaries) have been reached. Inclusion in these programmes of members of the host communities surrounding the refugee sites (49% of participants) helped to integrate the CAR refugees and strengthen social cohesion (WFP, 2013).

#### b. Enhancing a Culture of Learning

In the *Belém Framework for Action*, UNESCO Member States committed themselves to “promoting and facilitating more equitable access to, and participation in, adult learning and education by enhancing a culture of learning” (UIL, 2010, p. 8). There are various ways to enhance a culture of learning, both at community

**Box 5.4****National programmes addressing needs of groups with multiple disadvantages**

In **Germany**, the pilot project *Migrantinnen lotsen Migrantinnen* [‘Migrants guiding Migrants’] works with migrant women who speak German well and have been living in the country for a longer period, who accompany other migrant women from the same cultural background to their German literacy classes. These assistants can explain grammar and difficult contexts in their first languages to the learners, thereby intensifying and deepening the learning process. Trainers use non-written approaches such as drama, audiovisual materials and suggestive pedagogy to promote learners’ oral language skills. The assistants are trained through tutorials in education, health, nutrition and new media. Two years after the inception of the project, the group consists of 17 women from seven countries, aged between 21 and 52. The project is mainly funded by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. Between 2008 and 2010 it reached more than 1,000 participants, who mostly provided positive feedback.

Source: *Mannheimer Abendakademie, 2012*

In **South Africa**, the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign addresses the needs of illiterate persons with disabilities. The campaign, which targeted 4.7 million adults above the age of 15, ensured the inclusion of people with disabilities and was developed in concert with international norms and standards, including the United Nations *Education for All* (EFA) goals; the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD), which was ratified by South Africa in 2007.

The provision of literacy for the disabled was conceptualised, not as an ‘add-on’ of the programme, but as core to the planning and budget, taking into account the specialised equipment and modifications required to open access to the disabled. The campaign has been able to play a role in the alleviation of poverty in communities through its deployment of people with disabilities who were unemployed and who could teach learners who were disabled. Approximately 8 per cent of the learners enrolled in the South African Kha Ri Gude Campaign are people with disabilities.

Source: *Kha Ri Gude Unit, 2012*

and country levels. These may include stand-alone initiatives or concerted efforts as practiced in learning cities and regions. Key institutions alongside formal and non-formal education organisations may include museums, libraries, educational media, learning festivals and campaigns.

The following two sections present examples of how a culture of learning can be fostered by creating community

learning spaces, and expanding learning opportunities through ICTs.

**i. Creating community learning spaces**

One concrete commitment that was made in the *Belém Framework for Action* involves “creating multi-purpose community learning spaces and centres” (UIL, 2010, p. 8) to enhance access to learning activities. Community learning centres have been rapidly expanding in 24 countries in Asia and the Pacific, as well as in the Arab States and Latin America through South-South cooperation. The practices applied and challenges faced by grassroots mechanisms in delivering learning opportunities across the globe are well documented and disseminated through annual conferences on community learning centres organised by UNESCO in the region of Asia and the Pacific (UIL, 2012a; UNESCO Bangkok, 2013; dvv international, 2010).

Two community learning centres in Mindanao, a less-developed region of the Philippines, found ways to raise participation and address the issue of distance to the centres. At one centre, transport costs are covered by a local government development fund. In addition, absenteeism among indigenous people was reduced by providing a feeding programme. The second centre developed a home assistance programme, whereby instructors visit adults and out-of-school youths to conduct lessons and deliver learning materials. These tailored approaches are best delivered by people from the same community, who have the opportunity to participate in non-formal and informal learning activities in a multiplicity of ways, as learners, facilitators or managers. Active participation of the community and ownership of the learning spaces are important success factors for community learning centres. The financial sustainability of these centres is an important issue, as they require continuing external support from the national government (Domingo, 2012).

Organising learning activities close to target groups is one effective strategy for reducing situational barriers to learning. The “Lifelong Learning Centres” in Slovenia are a successful example. “Lifelong Learning Points” have been set up in various

learning organisations (e.g., libraries and post offices) to offer non-formal education on-site and to provide information and counselling services. Mobile guidance is also provided through visits to homes, workplaces, prisons etc., to identify learning needs and to guide people to suitable Lifelong Learning Points. For female migrants with lower educational levels, one of the Lifelong Learning Centres in Slovenia designs individual learning plans and supports them through two cultural mediators (Vrečer, 2012).

The Mongolian Government values non-formal and adult education as an integral part of its education system, indicating its equal importance with other areas of education in the Master Plan to Develop Education of Mongolia in 2006–2015 (Government of Mongolia, 2006). As a result, and supported by Article 17 of the Mongolian Law of Education “to organize [Non-formal Education (NFE)] training in provinces, the capital city, slums and districts and assist self-learners, either through independent NFE centres or NFE centres acting at other institutions”, the NFE Enlightenment Centres were established. As of 2011, there were 370 NFE Enlightenment Centres across Mongolia. The centres provide literacy training, equivalency programmes and other NFE projects and programmes. When assessing the current NFE structure through a Non-Formal Education Sector Analysis, most participants acknowledged that this structure is appropriate for the Mongolian context, including 99 per cent of the school principals, 92 per cent of the learners and 100 per cent of the NFE teachers/facilitators. To meet the needs and demands of the target group and to ensure relevant programmes of good quality, the analysis stated that 54 of the 98 participating Centres (55%) collect data on the population education level and renew the data on a regular basis, while 25 centres (25.5%) collect data, but in an insufficient way, and 19 per cent organise their activities without surveys or research (Batchuluun, 2009, pp. 56–59).

Community learning spaces also contribute to sustaining a culture of learning, by raising the attention of the broader society. One example of this is the Faróis do Saber project [‘Lighthouses of Knowledge’],

which was initiated in the town of Curitiba in Brazil. These free educational centres include libraries, other cultural resources and free internet access through the first public internet network in Brazil. The Lighthouses of Knowledge, which are used as venues for educational purposes and for the coordination of job training and social welfare, work jointly with public schools in each neighbourhood. In 2010 the number of Lighthouses of Knowledge reached 46 (Tavares da Costa Rocha, 2010).

In Finland, where public libraries are free of charge and offer free internet access, they are widely used, with 80 per cent of the population actively using library services. In 2011, there were an average of eleven library visits and 18 book loans per Finnish citizen (Wigell-Ryynänen, 2012). This shows that libraries which are supported by strong policies, strategies and adequate funding can achieve the inclusion of major parts of society.

Even in less well-off countries, community learning centres and libraries can provide practical and cost-effective solutions for creating a learning culture and a literate environment. Reading and educational materials have been shared with disadvantaged communities in a variety of ways: using donkeys in Columbia and Zimbabwe; camels, motor bikes and reading tents in Kenya; elephants in India; and boats in Argentina and Benin (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011). Since mid-2012 the colourfully painted BiblioTaptaps, Haiti’s first bookmobile service, have reached more than 15,000 people per month in those regions hardest hit by the 2010 earthquake (American Libraries Magazine, 2012). Learning cultures can be fostered even with minimal financial resources, for example through street and doorstep libraries in those “very places where children and their families are living in extreme poverty” (ATD Fourth World, 2012).

Since 1997, UIL has supported the establishment and maintenance of community libraries through ALADIN, a global network of 100 documentation centres, information services and libraries sharing adult learning and literacy resources, information and expertise.

These examples show that community learning spaces and centres can be a major vehicle for extending widespread learning opportunities that are responsive to learners' needs and circumstances. Individual responses by countries have indicated the existence of varying models and show the feasibility and potential for their large-scale replication as an institutional base for adult and lifelong learning.

## **ii. Expanding learning opportunities through ICTs**

Another promising approach for providing more access to learning is through the support of information technology. Between 2000 and 2012, the number of mobile phones in use worldwide grew from one billion to around six billion. Today 75 per cent of the world's population has access to a mobile phone, with most phones owned by people in low-income regions (World Bank, 2012). Mobile learning has become a viable option for the provision of education, as learning can take place simply through connection to a mobile device.

The analysis of national progress reports shows that use of ICTs in adult education and adult literacy programmes varies a lot between countries and areas of learning. Sixty-four per cent of the countries that submitted reports indicated that they are used in literacy programmes provided by the public sector. From a regional perspective, governments in Europe use ICTs most in literacy education (81% of responding countries), while African countries use ICT-supported literacy programmes least, with only 42 per cent of responding countries doing so. Technologies are also used in other areas of learning, as 66 per cent of reporting countries mentioned its use in human rights and civic education. Foreign-language classes are supported by ICTs in 60 per cent of cases. Yet, there is a lack of conclusive evidence that they support greater participation in adult education. A study conducted by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) in the United Kingdom showed that "there was no evidence that information and communications technologies were either increasing or widening access to education" (White, 2012, p. 153).

One concrete example for developing and sustaining literacy skills using mobile phones comes from Pakistan, where the country's leading cellular operator Mobilink, in collaboration with UNESCO, is strengthening the skills of basic literacy programme graduates after they return to a non-literate environment. The newly literate people receive post-literacy materials as messages, thereby involving them in literacy activities to maintain and improve their skills. In the first part of the programme, participants receive daily informative text messages in Urdu to which they are expected to respond. The second part is a monthly evaluation of their gain in knowledge to keep their interest in literacy knowledge alive (UNESCO Islamabad, 2012).

A different mobile learning programme was initiated by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in India in 2004. Its positive results prompted the replication of the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3 Farmers) programme in several countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Caribbean. This project proved to "add value to the developmental process by reaching the unreached and facilitating self-directed learning among farmers, landless labourers and various marginalized sections of the rural communities" (Balasubramanian et al., 2010, p. 193). Universities and local organisations develop mobile phone applications that provide farmers with agricultural updates and information. Participants gain valuable guidance on market access, fertiliser use, plant spacing, timely planting, local diseases, and other topics based on indigenous knowledge and contextualized to suit the local language and environment (ibid., p. 194; Commonwealth of Learning, 2012).

In the United Republic of Tanzania, a recent project has introduced the use of smartphones by farmers, who were previously familiar with mobile phones, but not with the Internet. Videos with advice on agricultural techniques and climate information are offered through the smartphones, so that farmers are in a better position to improve their harvesting (World Bank, 2012).

Alongside mobile phones, radio still plays an important role in getting messages to those who are not easy to reach. As the Director General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, stated on the occasion of World Radio Day in 2013, “radio is a key platform for education and for protecting local cultures and languages”. She highlighted that, although the world has changed tremendously since radio was invented in the nineteenth century, “it remains widely accessible, relatively cheap and very simple to use. It is still a medium that can carry any message to any place at any time – even without electricity” (UNESCO, 2013).

Especially in Africa and Asia, community radio stations are providing people in rural and isolated areas with valuable information and learning opportunities. They can create interactive platforms where issues relevant to the local community are discussed. This distinguishes them from commercial and state media. They are often small, non-profit and low-budget stations, and mainly run by volunteers.

For example, since 2006 three community radio stations have begun broadcasting in the slums of Nairobi, initiated by local youth aiming to improve the situation in their local community. Today, all three stations are produced by and focus on young people, the largest and most vulnerable group in the community. The programmes provide entertainment with an educational focus, raising awareness about crucial topics that affect their audience’s lives, such as drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and domestic violence. Through the radio station, they receive useful knowledge, advice and encouragement to change their lives for the better. Furthermore, by involving young people as volunteers in media production, marginalised youth are given a voice and an opportunity to gain professional skills and experience (Gustafsson, 2012).

In the remote mountains and valleys of Nepal, around 200 such community radio stations are operating, five of them managed entirely by women. Given the low rate of literacy (56.6% in 2011) and Nepal’s mountainous terrain and lack of infrastructure, radio is the medium that is able to reach the most people (86% of the population). In comparison just seven per cent are able to connect to the Internet (UNESCO Kathmandu, 2012).

Another tool that can support learning is television, in particular to create awareness of the benefits of learning among those who are difficult to reach. For example, Tunisia has established a television campaign to motivate young people under 30 to get involved in adult learning activities.

In general, these examples show that there are several tools that can enhance a culture of learning and facilitate more equitable access to, and participation in adult education. A variety of approaches have already been developed, depending on learners’ needs and contexts of life. The next step will be to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of such tools in increasing participation.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* highlighted not only the low overall participation in adult education in most countries, but also inequities in access and participation both within and between nations. To address these interrelated issues, the Report underlined that “more data on participation is needed for middle- and low-income countries” in order to advocate for more appropriate programmes (UIL, 2010a, p. 77). In 2012 close to one hundred countries reported that they collect information on participation in adult literacy and/or adult education. On the one hand, this includes information on enrolment, attendance and completion, mostly collected through specific programmes. On the other hand, this also includes countries taking part in international surveys that collect information on participation through population samples.

As this available information on participation in adult education covers different types of learning and different measuring methods, the data could be useful in tracking progress over time but not in comparing across countries. By gathering and reporting on practices in measuring and monitoring participation data, this chapter tried to draw lessons about what works in different contexts.

“Evidence regarding barriers to participation from national surveys indicates that low education attainment and low income negatively affect participation.”

The monitoring of participation and provision in terms of targets and objectives in national policies is still a learning process. It is therefore essential for many countries to design a monitoring framework that serves the purposes of their national policies and governance structure. Such monitoring frameworks should ideally include the wide range of providers and be compatible with global or regional frameworks. The results of international comparative analysis could inform countries on where they stand in comparison to other countries facing similar issues. To promote and support this process, further strengthening of statistical and analytical capacity in adult education is an area for regional and international cooperation.

Given the challenges in raising the participation of disadvantaged groups, it is important to study carefully the information available on factors that inhibit or prevent participation. The elimination of such hurdles is a multi-layered process, which cannot be tackled in a single step. One could start by identifying and mapping the barriers for each target group, for example through small sample surveys.

Evidence regarding barriers to participation from national surveys indicates that low education attainment and low income negatively affect participation. In short, “those who have least education continue to get least” (UIL, 2010a, p. 77). The different learning needs and demands of individuals and groups can be hampered by various obstacles, and among some groups exclusion continues to be severe. In order to motivate learners, young and old, it is important to first understand the different types of barriers to participation.

Another step may be the sharing of experiences among countries and within regions through structured programmes (e.g., the Grundtvig programme in Europe and the Ibero-American Plan for Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education in Latin America). This is also an effective strategy for promoting participation of excluded groups in adult education through the provision of target-specific funding in many countries. Another platform for disseminating good practices in local learning provision is a network of Community Learning Centres in Asia that

is promoted through annual conferences and social networks. The centres are also a popular way of bringing adult learning and adult literacy activities closer to the target groups and reducing situational barriers to learning.

Overall, the national progress reports indicate that several issues related to the exclusion of adult learners are connected to the availability of information on excluded groups and their demands for learning. Furthermore, a low level of information flow among those with poor access to education seems to hinder inclusion. The challenge for a majority of Member States remains to reach those who are difficult to reach. All told, there is a huge amount to be done by governments and adult educators alike if fair and equal access is to be extended to all and the barriers to participation are to be broken down. Collective will and action could lead to the provision of well-designed programmes that directly address youth and adult needs, enabling them to reach their full potential, serving not only their own interests but also contributing to their societies’ transformation.

#### Key messages:

- It is essential for countries to design effective monitoring frameworks that track the depth and breadth of participation in adult education and learning. These should include the full range of providers and be compatible with global or regional frameworks.
- International comparative studies are needed to inform countries where they stand in relation to other countries facing similar issues. To promote and support this process, UNESCO could help to build statistical and analytical capacity.
- It is important to study carefully the factors that inhibit or prevent participation. The elimination of such hurdles is a multi-layered process, which cannot be tackled in a single step. An initial step would be to identify and map the barriers for each target group, for example through small sample surveys.

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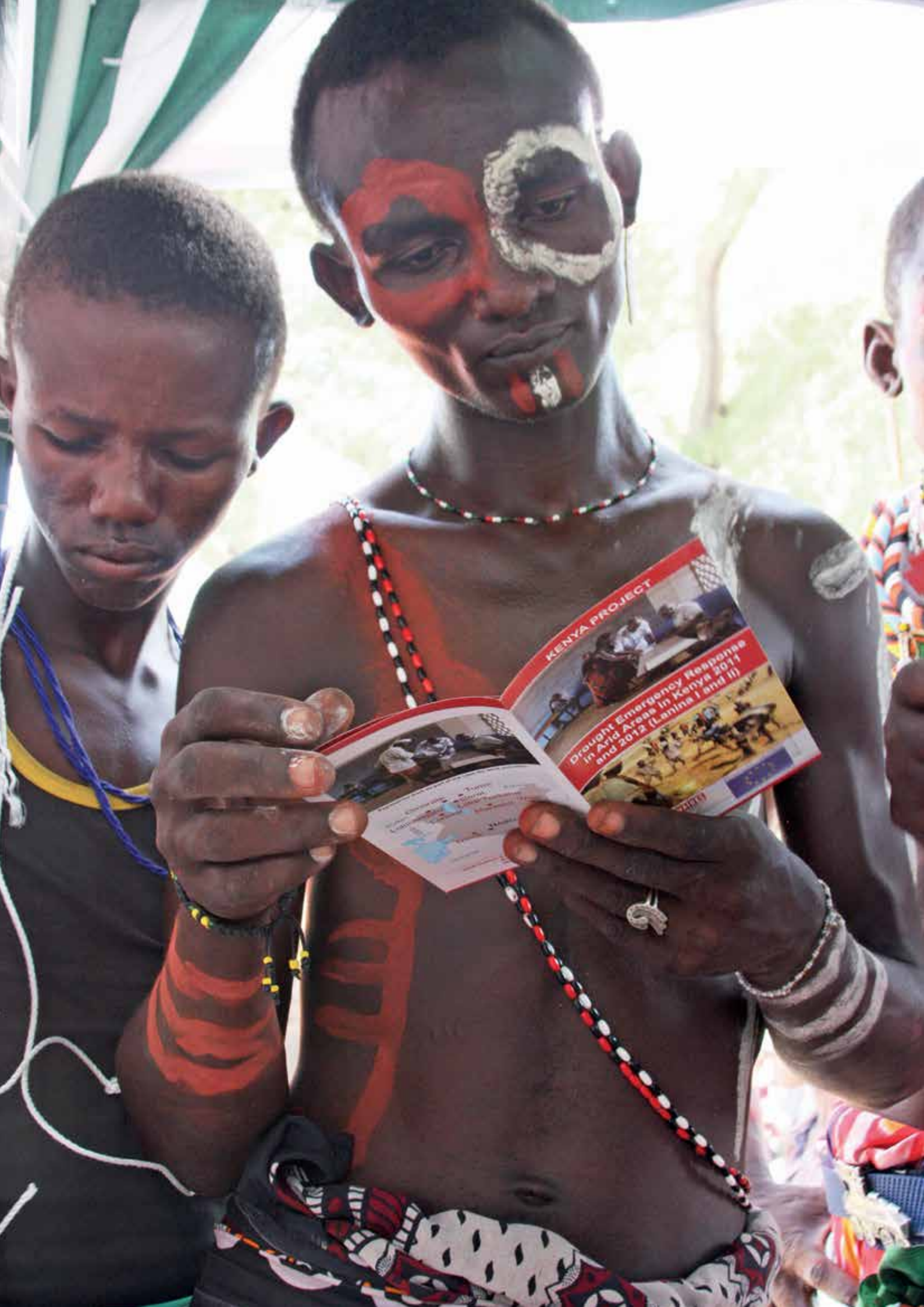
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## CHAPTER 6

# ENSURING QUALITY IN ADULT EDUCATION

## 6.1 Introduction

Relevance, equity, effectiveness and efficiency were the four dimensions of quality in adult education identified in the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UIL, 2010). Relevance means that provision is aligned with the needs of all stakeholders, so as to achieve personal, sociocultural, economic and educational goals. Equity is about fair access to and participation in adult education. Effectiveness expresses the degree to which programme aims are achieved. Efficiency concerns both the capacity of a system to achieve aims and the relationship of financial and other inputs to benefits. Ensuring quality in adult education, including adult literacy, means paying attention to these dimensions.

The *Belém Framework for Action* also mentions the importance of quality in adult learning and education. It states: "Quality in learning and education is a holistic, multidimensional concept and practice that demands constant attention and continuous development" (UIL 2010a, p. 8). Furthermore, it identified the following tasks in addressing quality:

- (a) developing quality criteria for curricula, learning materials and teaching methodologies;
- (b) recognising the diversity and plurality of providers;
- (c) improving training, capacity-building, employment conditions and the professionalisation of adult educators;
- (d) elaborating quality criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes;
- (e) putting in place precise quality indicators; and
- (f) lending greater support to research in adult learning and education, complemented by knowledge management systems.

This chapter examines how Member States have progressed vis-à-vis the above tasks. It starts by presenting a conceptual framework of how quality could be understood and, consequently, operationalised. It then describes the application of learning outcomes in a range of areas: curriculum, qualifications frameworks, programmes, and the validation of non-formal and informal learning. This is followed by a presentation of the quality criteria for the different aspects of adult education:

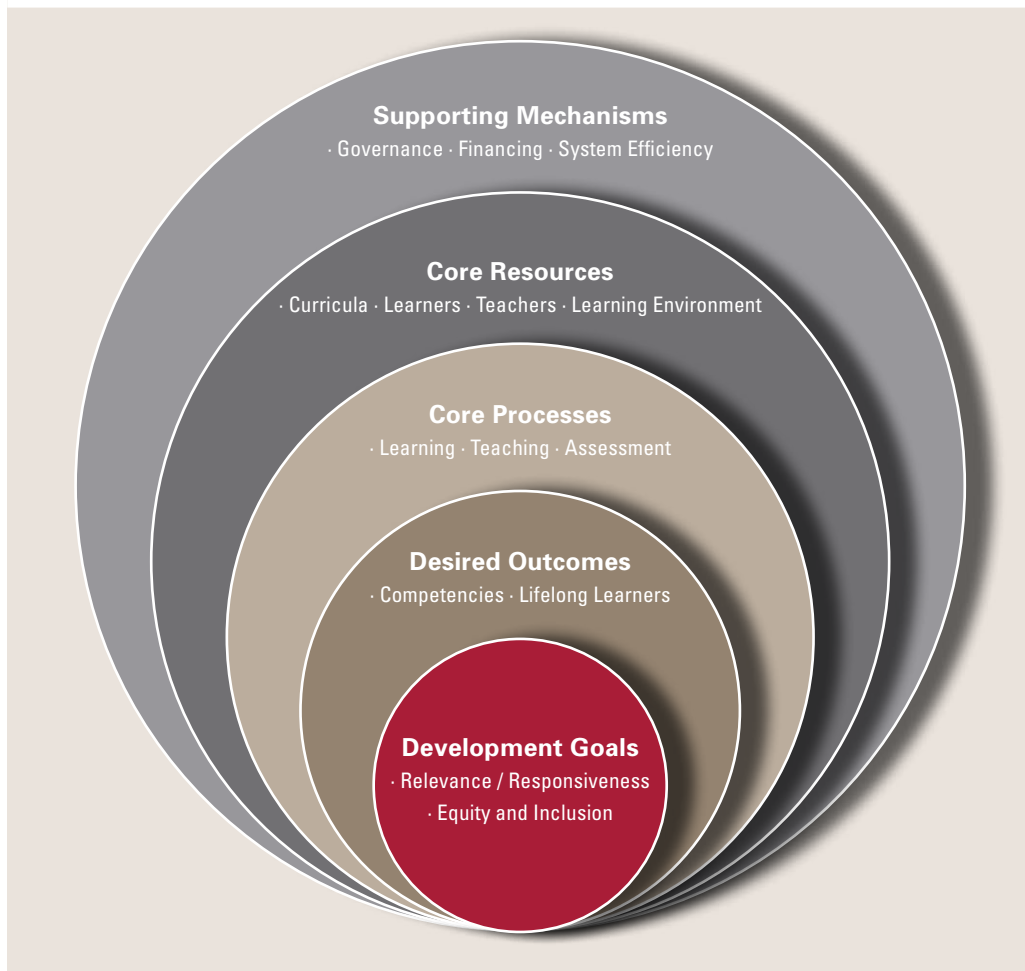
- a) teaching and learning methodologies;
- b) professionalisation of adult educators;
- c) monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance; and
- d) research.

"Quality in a generic sense denotes the factors that make learning and education worthwhile and purposeful."

## 6.2 Conceptualising quality

Quality in a generic sense denotes the factors that make learning and education worthwhile and purposeful. Naik (1975) highlighted the significance of the relationship between ends and means, and between the individual and social goals of development. Winch (1996) emphasises the importance of the public character of education and the role quality should play in shaping educational policy. A common way to make normative judgements on the quality of adult learning and education is to break down the components of quality into *structural* components (such as aims, curricula, resources, personnel and providers of services), *process-related components* (teaching and learning and organisation and management) and *results-related components* (accountability, assessment, outcome and impact). A General Education Quality Analysis/Diagnosis Framework (GEOAF) suggested by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2012) helps

**Figure 6.1**  
**UNESCO General Education System Quality Analysis/Diagnosis Framework (GEQAF)**



Source: UNESCO, 2012

to visualise the interaction of actors, mechanisms, processes, resources and goals in quality assurance.

The quality of adult learning and education is not only a responsibility of the educational and training sector. A wide range of stakeholders, including local, regional and national authorities; actors in social and economic development (such as employers and employees, academics, researchers, and the communications media); and non-governmental organisations and agencies share this charge.

### 6.3 The different uses of learning outcomes

The concept of learning outcomes occupies a prominent position in educational reforms. In the most general sense, learning outcomes are descriptions of what a learner knows, understands or is able to do at the end of a learning process. Identification of learning outcomes is important to increase transparency, flexibility and accountability of systems and institutions; to facilitate learning and support the individual learner; and to clarify the objectives and aims for learners as well as for teachers and administrators (Bjørnåvold, 2008). Education standards are increasingly expressed in terms of learning outcomes. While there is agreement on

the importance of learning outcomes in all learning settings, and their use is becoming prevalent in both developed and developing countries, there are differences in how countries understand and define learning outcomes.

In general, learning outcomes are understood in three possible ways:

- as overall aims or vision underpinning curricula;
- to describe national qualifications frameworks (NQFs); or
- based on learning objectives of specific programmes.

**a. Learning outcomes construed as overall aims or vision underpinning curriculum**

The first construction of “learning outcomes” defines the overarching goals or the vision underlying the adult learning and education curriculum. Central to quality in adult learning are aims of contributing to national development goals. As a public good, adult education serves broad goals of educational, economic, vocational, sociocultural and individual development.

In many African countries, the aims underpinning curriculum are inspired by developmental goals. In Sierra Leone, the Quality Assurance and Results Department of the Gender and Social Development Division has expanded curricula to include new topics. These cover peace and conflict, life skills in religious and moral education, guidance and counselling sessions, sexual and reproductive health and social studies (African Development Bank Group, 2011, p. 28). In Egypt, the overall aims of adult education curricula are cross-sectoral. They include reproductive health, job-related literacy programmes, childhood and motherhood and human rights. The reasons for introducing these goals are to address issues of overpopulation, rural development, social integration, citizenship and poverty alleviation, and to bridge the gender gap (Ministry of Education of Egypt, 2008).

In Europe, Germany and Scotland (United Kingdom) define overall aims of curriculum in terms of learning outcomes (Frommberger and Krichewsky, 2012). The German concept of *Handlungskompetenz*

(ability to perform) and the “outcomes and experiences” defined in the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence set overarching goals as reference points for adult vocational education and training, based on the specific understanding of competence in each of these societies (Scottish Government, 2012). The German *Handlungskompetenz* includes a national understanding of competence that includes social, moral and civic dimensions.

Some researchers have contrasted this integrative view with the task-based notion of skill applied in England (United Kingdom) (Brockmann et al., 2011, p. 9). Several countries, including France and the Netherlands, emphasise a multi-dimensional understanding of competences as knowledge, skills and attitude in practice.

**b. Learning outcomes used to describe national qualifications frameworks (NQFs)**

The second use of “learning outcomes” is in national qualifications frameworks (NQF). The NQFs developed after 2005 differ in important ways from the first generation of frameworks developed in England (United Kingdom), New Zealand and South Africa. The early frameworks were based on what may be described as an “outcomes-led” rather than “outcomes-based” approach. Many countries are in the processes of developing qualification frameworks, particularly in areas where specific tasks and skills can be identified. Michael Young (2009) argues that such behavioural output measures employed in England (United Kingdom), South Africa and, until recently, in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), represent an attempt by industry to wrest control of educational outcomes from educational institutions, particularly when “competence” is understood in narrowly behavioural terms.

Recent developments in learning outcomes-based NQFs have triggered action in numerous developing countries (Singh, forthcoming; Singh and Duvekot, forthcoming). Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ghana, India and Namibia have either developed or are in the process of developing an NQF in the technical and



“Competence-based outcomes must be complemented by inputs; i.e., the knowledge that a learner needs to acquire if he or she is to be capable of moving beyond their existing performance.”

vocational education and training (TVET) sector. Many of these countries are specifically developing NQFs to introduce equivalencies between formal and non-formal learning, and to align literacy and adult basic education to vocational qualifications. With regard to developing learning outcomes-based qualifications in developing countries, Young and Allais (2011) warn that competence-based outcomes must be complemented by inputs; i.e., the knowledge that a learner needs to acquire if he or she is to be capable of moving beyond their existing performance. Sultana mentions a related concern: “while there is no single, authoritative definition of the word “competence”, there seems to be an increasing consensus that the term should not be used in a narrowly technicist manner to just refer to skills, precisely because of the implications this has for education and training” (Sultana, 2009, p. 20).

The EQF originally represented an attempt to adopt a transformational approach to learning outcomes-based qualifications by regulating national systems in broadly behavioural terms (Raffe, 2011). Brockmann et al., (2011, p. 9) criticise the manner in which the term ‘competence’ is used in the EQF as a separate category from knowledge and skill, thereby making it potentially non-integrative. However, this ambiguity in the concept of competence has been addressed by several countries as reported in the European Inventory on NQF (CEDEFOP, 2013). This shows that the focus on learning outcomes in most European countries is frequently combined with a consideration of institutions and programme structures. The Inventory also reports that a significant group of countries insist on the overarching character of competence and warn against reducing it to a question of autonomy and responsibility.

### **c. Learning outcomes based on learning objectives of specific programmes**

The third use of “learning outcomes” is as learning objectives for an adult education programme. These can be related to learning inputs and have a more pedagogical purpose, such as the English National Curriculum, which has programmes of study (prescribed content)

and attainment targets at different stages of the learning programme. Assessment instruments are devised to ascertain whether and how well the standard has been reached. There is thus a conceptual relationship between the prescribed content (which aims to satisfy the learning outcome descriptor) and the assessment of whether the learning outcome has been achieved (Brockmann et al., 2011).

In the Republic of Korea, the Academic Credit Bank System (ACBS) allows citizens to accumulate credits from curriculum-based formal education and accredited non-formal learning courses, and from informal learning experience in work-related or self-directed learning contexts. In Indonesia and other countries in South-East Asia, where equivalency programmes are widespread at the level of basic education, learning objectives of non-formal programmes are recognised as equivalent to primary, junior secondary, or senior secondary learning objectives. South Africa has an NQF which includes four adult basic education and training (ABET) levels, the completion of the fourth level being equivalent to the completion of compulsory schooling; i.e., ten years of formal basic education. Even initial adult literacy is seen as a stepping stone to more formal ABET. These examples show how learning outcomes defined as learning objectives can increase equity in adult education.

In the United States of America and Canada, some institutions design degree programmes around student learning outcomes, or competences, rather than academic content for college credits. The institutions then award degrees based on what students have demonstrated that they know and can do. In the United States of America, Ganzglass et al. (2011), report, however, that only a small number of institutions currently offer competence-based programmes.

## **6.4 Assessment and accountability**

The shift to an outcomes-based approach has many implications for assessment, validation and certification. Traditionally, assessment has been based on the requirements of, and expected performance in, formal education and training. This

process, however, is not suitable in adult education, where there is a diversification of learning paths. The development of an approach based on learning outcomes opens up new perspectives for the process of validation. It allows for a diversification of courses leading to the same learning outcomes and qualifications; a diversification of assessment methods of learning outcomes, depending on the type of course and the type of learner; a diversification of the terms of validation; and a relaxation of the rules for certification. Assessment can either be at the end of the learning process (final examination) and/or partial exams (accumulation of learning outcomes) and/or continuing assessment, and/or mixed assessment processes.

Recognition of learning outcomes irrespective of when, where and how learning has taken place has become a part of policies and practices in adult education in many countries. Eighty-seven (68%) of 129 countries have reported that they have a policy framework for recognising, validating and accrediting non-formal and informal learning. Seen regionally, these comprise 29 (74%) of the European and North American countries; 21 (68%) countries from Africa, followed by 15 (62 %) and 14 (58%) from Latin America and the Caribbean, and from the region of Asia and the Pacific, respectively. Eight (89%) countries from the Arab region have reported having recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) frameworks in place (see Table 6.1).

According to the definitions in the UNESCO *Guidelines* (2012) "recognition is a process of granting official status to learning

outcomes and/or competences, which can lead to the acknowledgement of their value in society. Validation is the confirmation by an approved body that learning outcomes or competences acquired by an individual have been assessed against reference points or standards through pre-defined assessment methodologies. Accreditation is a process by which an approved body, on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes and/or competences, awards qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles), grants equivalencies, credit units or exemptions, or issues documents such as portfolios of competences" (UIL, 2012, p. 8).

It is important to differentiate between assessment and accountability. Assessment has several purposes, including formative assessment to enable learning, certification for educational progression or labour market entry, and to ensure programme or institutional accountability. A variety of instruments (including certification rates) may be used to ensure accountability; that is, efficient and effective use of public monies.

As already noted, a high percentage of countries emphasise learning outcomes in assessment of educational programmes. This is evident from the number of countries stating they have developed quality criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes in both adult education (88) and adult literacy (78) (Tables 6.2 and 6.3). To the question "How does the government measure the learning outcomes of adult learning programmes?", 66 (52%) countries answered that "learning outcomes are measured

"Recognition of learning outcomes irrespective of when, where and how learning has taken place has become a part of policies and practices in adult education in many countries."

**Table 6.1**

**Countries reporting the existence of a policy framework to recognise, validate and accredit outcomes from non-formal and informal learning**

Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
21 (68%)	8 (89%)	14 (58%)	29 (74%)	15 (62%)	<b>87</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 2.5 "Does your country have a policy framework to recognise, validate and accredit non-formal and informal learning?"

### **Box 6.1** **UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA)** **of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning**

#### **“Purposes**

The overall aim of these guidelines is to propose principles and mechanisms that can assist Member States in developing or improving structures and procedures to recognise the outcomes of all forms of learning, particularly non-formal and informal learning”. (p. 3)

#### **“Principles**

- Ensuring equity and inclusiveness in access to learning opportunities. Every individual should have the right to access and engage in any form of learning suited to his/her needs, and have their learning outcomes made visible and valued.
- Promoting the equal value of learning outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning should be treated on a par with those that are obtained through formal learning.
- Ensuring the centrality of individuals in the RVA process. The process should respect and reflect individuals’ needs, and their participation should be on a voluntary basis.
- Improving flexibility and openness of formal education and training. Education and training systems should consider diverse forms of learning.
- Promoting quality assurance in the entire RVA process. Criteria and procedures for assessing and validating non-formal and informal learning should be relevant, reliable, fair and transparent.
- Strengthening partnerships among all stakeholders. It is important to emphasise shared responsibility, from design to implementation and evaluation of the RVA system”. (p. 4)

#### **“Key areas of action at national level**

1. Establishing RVA as a key component of a national lifelong learning strategy
2. Developing RVA systems that are accessible to all
3. Making RVA integral to education and training systems
4. Creating a coordinated national structure involving all stakeholders
5. Building the capacities of RVA personnel
6. Designing sustainable funding mechanisms”. (pp. 4–6)

*Source: UIL, 2012*

through standardised tests for certification processes”, while 65 (51%) responded that “learning outcomes are measured by teachers or facilitators” (Table 6.2).

For adult literacy, 73 countries (or 57%) report that measurement of learning outcomes is carried out by the teacher, followed by standardised tests for certification in 54 countries (or 42%) and standardised tests for statistical purposes in 20 countries (or 23%). (Table 6.3). Seen regionally, a high number of countries from Africa and Europe report that learning outcomes are measured by the teacher.

A closer look at countries’ responses reveals specific mechanisms. Botswana reports that the Botswana Examinations Council (BEC) is in the process of developing an appropriate alternative mode of assessment for adult basic education and out-of-school education for children. Chad mentions both summative, formative and self-assessment methods. Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe all refer to the use of tests, exams, instruction, and external evaluation. In South Africa, the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign adopted an assessment approach through which learners

**Table 6.2**  
Regional distribution of how governments measure the learning outcomes of adult education programmes

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Only by teachers / facilitators</b>	12	6	11	22	14	<b>65</b>
<b>Standardised tests for statistical purposes</b>	8	3	7	8	6	<b>32</b>
<b>Standardised tests for certification purposes</b>	15	4	14	20	13	<b>66</b>
<b>Other</b>	4	2	2	11	1	<b>20</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 5.9 "Does the government measure the learning outcomes of [adult education programmes]?"

**Table 6.3**  
Regional distribution of how governments measure the learning outcomes of adult literacy programmes

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Only by teachers / facilitators</b>	18	6	15	19	15	<b>73</b>
<b>Standardised tests for statistical purposes</b>	11	3	6	7	3	<b>30</b>
<b>Standardised tests for certification purposes</b>	15	7	8	15	9	<b>54</b>
<b>Other</b>	3	1	1	6	1	<b>12</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 5.9 "Does the government measure the learning outcomes of [adult literacy programmes]?"

demonstrate their growing competences in a “Yes I can” portfolio. This structured portfolio assesses learners’ competences against outcomes aligned with specific unit standards, and all learners’ grades are recorded. In Thailand, non-formal and informal learning is evaluated through paper and pencil tests or through portfolios, interviews and observations.

In the Republic of Korea, the Lifelong Learning Account (LLA) System, which was initiated in 2008, allows individuals’ diverse learning experiences to be managed within an online learning account, and learning results are recognised as educational credits or qualifications. The national education system comprises formal and non-formal education, which has equivalencies at all levels of the education and training system. In Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand certification is granted upon completion of equivalency programmes in non-formal education. The Philippines have a system for accrediting informally acquired skills from post-secondary or college-level providers of continuing education outside the formal system (e.g., colleges and universities).

In Palestine, students in literacy classes take national examinations, receiving a certificate equivalent to successful completion of sixth grade. There are also national examinations for students in parallel non-formal education, providing certification equivalent to successful ninth grade completion. Finally, there is a national qualifications framework (NQF) in the process of approval and accreditation at the national level.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, several countries have established a national system of assessment of learning outcomes for the certification at the basic education level. As mentioned in Chapter 1, when asked about the way adult literacy rates are determined, a majority of countries indicated that population census or household surveys use a self-reporting approach. Teacher-administered standardised tests to measure learning outcomes do not seem to have been widely used to assess literacy rates because national authorities consider them to be pedagogic or administrative actions, not generally used to determine

the literacy rate of the population. This situation highlights the need for developing and introducing a credible and workable methodology and mechanisms for assessing the learning outcomes for adult education.

### **6.5 Whether quality criteria exist for adult learning and education**

The importance of quality criteria for adult curricula was confirmed by the national progress reports. Of the 129 countries that responded, 96 (75%) highlighted the importance of curricula; 88 (69%) highlighted assessment of learning outcomes; 87 (68%) emphasised educators’ training, 85 (66%) highlighted teaching and learning methods; while 83 (65%) mentioned learning materials as quality criteria. Thirty three countries answered they have not formulated quality criteria. In terms of regional distribution, the largest proportion of countries with quality criteria for curriculum and learning materials (74%) was found in Africa. In the Arab States, only a few countries reported applying any quality criteria. In Asia and the Pacific, the importance accorded to quality is seen across all relevant areas. In Europe, quality criteria are important in all areas, but particularly curriculum quality, assessment of learning outcomes and educators’ training. In Latin America and the Caribbean, equal importance is given to all dimensions of quality.

In response to the same question, but in relation to adult literacy, a similar pattern emerges. Of the 129 countries that responded, 81 (63%) have quality criteria for their curricula, followed by 78 (61%) with quality criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes (Table 6.5).

While the recognition of the importance of quality criteria by a large number of countries is obviously a necessary first step in raising the quality of adult education, a major issue remains to be tackled: How do countries link the different phases of the adult learning and education process (input, process, output and outcome) to curriculum specifications (syllabi, teaching methods, qualification standards based on learning outcomes) (Sloane and Dilger, 2005)?

**Table 6.4**  
Number of countries reporting the existence of quality criteria for adult education

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Curricula</b>	23	3	18	35	17	<b>96</b>
<b>Learning materials</b>	23	3	16	25	16	<b>83</b>
<b>Facilitators' training</b>	21	3	17	31	15	<b>87</b>
<b>Teaching and learning methods</b>	21	3	16	29	16	<b>85</b>
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	20	2	16	33	17	<b>88</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 6.1 "Do quality criteria for adult education [...] exist in the following areas: curriculum, learning materials, facilitators' training, teaching/learning methodology and assessment of learning outcomes?"

**Table 6.5**  
Number of countries reporting the existence of quality criteria for adult literacy

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Curricula</b>	26	4	16	21	14	<b>81</b>
<b>Learning materials</b>	26	3	14	14	14	<b>71</b>
<b>Facilitators' training</b>	25	4	15	20	13	<b>77</b>
<b>Teaching and learning methods</b>	25	4	15	17	13	<b>74</b>
<b>Assessment of learning outcomes</b>	24	4	13	22	15	<b>78</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 6.1 "Do quality criteria for [...] adult literacy exist in the following areas: curriculum, learning materials, facilitators' training, teaching/learning methodology and assessment of learning outcomes?"

“Outputs (measured against standards) do not, by themselves, constitute quality. Rather they must be considered alongside the processes that underlie them.”

Furthermore, adults need the option of changing learning tracks and should be given the choice of whether or not to take an exam. In countries where curricula are responsive to adult learners, qualifications and competences can be acquired formally, non-formally or informally; the learning path is individualised, assessment taking the form of a portfolio rather than a test; there is no standardised duration or learning place; and curriculum modules can be assessed for the purpose of gaining credits before the completion of all programme modules. The rationale for such an approach is to make provisions inclusive and responsive to needs and circumstances of potential learners.

## 6.6 Teaching-learning methodologies

Teaching-learning methods for adult education are an important quality issue in the *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010a). It emphasises that outputs (measured against standards) do not, by themselves, constitute quality. Rather they must be considered alongside the processes that underlie them. It is possible to look at quality criteria in teaching-learning methodologies in terms of two dominant pedagogical approaches (see Frommberger and Krichewsky, 2012).

In the “teacher-centred” approach, the adult learner reproduces knowledge or behaviours as instructed by the teacher or trainer. Learning is arranged in discrete subjects with few explicit links to “real-life” contexts, while evaluation has the primary goal of measuring performance in tests. The “learner-centred” approach, on the other hand, emphasises active learning, integration of theoretical and practical learning in learning, and the use of evaluation for learning purposes. The following quality indicators could be useful for comparing pedagogical approaches and identifying the dominant approach.

Country analysis reveals a high degree of consensus on the principle of learner-centred teaching and learning, but differences in how this principle is applied. From the country data it is evident that a variety of interrelated quality, equity and relevance concerns influence teaching and learning. Some countries rely heavily on national curricula specifications, while others depend on learning materials, assessment practices and informal exchanges among peers. The professional background of teachers and the local strategy of adult learning are also important influences on teaching-learning standards and practices. The importance of participative methods and strengthening

**Table 6.6**  
Quality criteria in teaching-learning processes

Quality criteria	Teacher-centred	Lerner-centred
<b>Learning context (learning materials)</b>	Discrete subjects	Integrated curriculum
<b>Learning methods</b>	Instruction	Active learning, self-directed learning
<b>Assessment</b>	Summative	Formative and summative
<b>Work experience</b>	Separation between theory and practice	Experiential learning, integration of theory and practice; work-related learning
<b>Clustering of competences</b>	Competences	Learning outcome approaches

Source: Frommberger and Krichewsky, 2012

feedback from the learner is emphasised in the national progress reports from Cape Verde, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Key Competence frameworks can support better teaching and learning. By clustering competences into key or transversal competences, as in the European Framework of Key Competences (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2006), it is possible to develop new adult curricula at the basic and upper secondary level which are more cross-sectoral than subject-oriented. Such curricula promote quality assessment that goes beyond whether certain specific skills have been achieved. Another European Union Project – Qualified to Teach 2009–2011 – conducted in eight countries (England [United Kingdom], Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, Sweden and Wales [United Kingdom]) identified the adult competences likely to be important in the future. These included open-mindedness, use of media, self-motivation and taking responsibility for learning, and flexibility. The Dominican Republic has established a flexible model of basic education for young people and adults above the age of 15, which promotes linkages between formal and non-formal/informal learning experiences, focusing on competences of adults.

The practice of *fostering active learner-centred learning practices* is given high priority in New Zealand. There, the Community Learning and Development Strategy supports learning in communities. In France, accompanying materials for teachers, developed by the national education administration, provide support in implementing more individualised learning arrangements in vocational education. In the African context, in Gambia, each training institution develops its own quality criteria for pedagogy. Chad adapts its adult education curriculum according to the environment of the learner. In Zimbabwe, the curriculum is made relevant and learner-centred, while in Sierra Leone the curriculum is “harmonised” with learner needs. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, attention is given to “internal validity” based on learner-centred approaches.

In order to *utilise ICTs and distance learning*, the Ministry of Education in Colombia has implemented online literacy programmes, incorporating video interaction between learners and educators. Cell phones are also used in literacy promotion. While the potential of this modality is still to be fully realised, it has clear implications for learner motivation and participation.

*Targeting marginalised groups:* in Paraguay, basic education programmes are conducted for domestic helpers to improve their working conditions and remuneration.

In Uganda, while *material development* is carried out at national level, the process is consultative and involves local communities, language boards, training institutions and civil society agencies. In the Solomon Islands, the Literacy Association facilitates workshops in which communities compose lesson contents. In many European countries literacy materials are produced nationally in line with adult education and literacy curricula while learners develop their own learning plan. In Jamaica there is a trend towards contextual material development, guided by learners’ circumstances. In the United States of America, states and local programmes generally develop literacy learning materials or use materials that are commercially available.

A framework for the *recognition, validation and accreditation* of prior learning (RVA) is necessary for maintaining quality standards and improving teaching and learning. At the same time, use of an RVA framework in adult learning activities depends on ensuring acceptable levels in teachers’ capabilities and their performance, which is discussed further in the following section.

## **6.7 Training, employment conditions and professionalism of adult educators**

A key prerequisite for an education system to achieve its potential is the quality of educators (Hattie, 2009). Establishing, maintaining and improving professional personnel in adult education, and creating the working environment to foster professionalism are critical issues.



“Establishing, maintaining and improving professional personnel in adult education, and creating the working environment to foster professionalism are critical issues.”

### a. Employment conditions

In the majority of countries, the status, conditions of employment and remuneration of adult education staff, including adult literacy, is below those of personnel in other education and training sectors. Generally, teaching and training in adult education is poorly regulated, though measures in this regard are under consideration in some countries. For example, in Cape Verde, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nigeria and Thailand salaries are fixed according to profession and qualifications. In Suriname, salaries are set according to national standards in the formal system, depending on type and level of education. In other countries, such as Bangladesh, Ecuador, Ireland and Madagascar it has been reported that there are no set standards or criteria for remuneration and salary of adult educators, particularly when they offer their services as voluntary, or ad hoc literacy facilitators. In Mongolia, part-time, non-formal adult educators do not have fixed salaries. Some countries have reported differences in employment conditions between government and private sectors (Gambia, Luxembourg, Mozambique, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia and Yemen).

### b. Continuing professional training

Adult education personnel come from a variety of backgrounds, often working on short-term contracts in addition to another job and tending to join the profession

later in life after gaining work experience elsewhere. The existence of pre-service and continuing professional development through short courses, work-based learning, induction programmes and in-service training were reported by many countries. Most pre-service training for adult educators takes place in universities (68), followed by government institutions (59), non-governmental organisations (42) and private organisations (25). With regard to in-service training, 59 out of 129 countries report that they provide in-service training in government institutions, 48 countries report that universities provide in-service training. Forty-six countries report that in-service training is provided through non-governmental organisations; and in 34 countries, private agencies are providers of such training (see Table 6.7).

In some countries national standards describe the competences required of an adult educator – what they are expected to know, understand, and be able to do. In Malaysia, for example, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) has this responsibility, and in Palau adult educators receive professional training that links learning outcomes to the standards defined by the United States Dept. of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education (DOE OVAE). Standards for professional continuing development in England (United Kingdom) are based on frameworks formulated by designated authorities.

**Table 6.7**  
Countries with providers of pre-service and in-service training

	Pre-service	In-service
<b>Governmental institutions</b>	59	59
<b>Universities</b>	68	48
<b>Private companies</b>	25	34
<b>Non-governmental organisations</b>	42	46

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 6.2 “Are there pre-service and in-service training programmes for educators/facilitators for adult education and adult literacy?”

These bodies include the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED). Guidelines such as the Skills for Life strategy on literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) also set standards of professional development. In Wales (United Kingdom), the Common Inspection Framework regulates the quality of professional staff. Special legal requirements on professional standards have been created in a few countries. In the Netherlands, there is an Act on Vocational and Adult Education. In Sweden, the professional development of adult education staff is described in the Act of Education and Adult Educators' curriculum. Local adult education providers are obliged to document quality assurance and to meet national goals. In Finland, the Act on Liberal Adult Education lays down specific requirements for the skill set of teachers in non-formal adult learning and education.

Institutional accreditation provides a basis for quality in professional development in several countries, including, for example, Trinidad and Tobago. In Slovenia, a distinction is made between accredited programmes for adult educators and non-accredited non-formal programmes for which there are no officially approved public quality indicators, but which may have internal quality criteria. In many eastern European countries, such as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, professional development of staff takes place through support from a national capacity building agency, the Centre for Adult Education Development, which provides programmes for adult education, literacy and elementary education.

### **c. Qualification requirements**

Qualification requirements for adult educators also vary greatly between countries. In Lesotho, educators may have Diplomas, Bachelor's or Master's degrees. In Croatia, there are no legally mandated qualifications for teaching staff in formal adult education. In Portugal, a university degree (qualification as a teacher) or certification as a qualified trainer is required. In Lithuania, teacher certification is also necessary. Switzerland follows a three-level modular training system which has accredited 120 course providers

since 1996. In Austria, the Academy of Continuing Education recognises and accredits adult educators using a curriculum which includes the required competences. The Academy is ISO-certified. The qualification and training of adult literacy facilitators are contentious issues. Several studies have shown that literacy teachers' formal qualifications or pedagogical training is less important than their positive attitudes and rapport with the community (Lind, 2008).

### **d. Developing a reference framework for adult education practitioners**

As professional development and improvement of adult education staff has been receiving greater priority, there have been attempts to identify a common set of key competences contributing to the development of a reference framework for Europe. There also has been the effort to describe pathways for acquiring these competences by adult education staff (Buiskool and Broek, 2011). Learning aims and contexts and key competences were identified as criteria for clustering skills, as described below.

- Learning aims and contexts: a) providing qualifications for the labour market (vocational education and training); b) basic skills not directly related to the labour market; c) increasing knowledge in culture and art; and d) increasing social cohesion and citizenship (Buiskool and Broek, 2011);
- Key competences: a) the repertoire of organisational activities; b) professional capabilities; c) specific pedagogical competences; and d) individual competences.

## **6.8 Monitoring, evaluation and quality management systems**

Monitoring and evaluation are often mentioned in the same breath, as if both were one. They are in fact distinct activities, though they are related through overlap in processes and purposes. In this section, the two sets of activities are discussed, focusing on their contribution to enhancing and ensuring quality in adult education.

Eighty out of 129 countries reported the existence of monitoring mechanisms in adult education. Just over half (68 out of 129) reported having evaluation mechanisms. In terms of regional distribution, the prevalence of monitoring systems ranges from in one-third of countries in Europe and North America to 5 per cent of countries in the Arab Region. In respect of evaluation, the range is 31 per cent in Europe and North America to 7 per cent in the Arab States (see Table 6.8).

### Monitoring and evaluation at the system and local levels

Generally, monitoring and evaluation take place at two levels: 1) system or policy level, often through collaboration with decentralised organisational units; and 2) local or municipal level, by the operators of adult education and literacy programmes. In Burkina Faso, for example, external monitoring and evaluation of literacy activities is carried out at the system level through the General Directorate of Literacy and Non Formal Education (DGAENF) and the Fund for Literacy and Non-formal Education (FONAENF). They ensure compliance with regulations and specifications for the provision of education and enforce minimum standards. At the decentralised level, each provider/operator develops its own internal monitoring and evaluation process, which describes clearly for each actor (i.e., coordinator, supervisor, trainer and facilitator), tasks, tools, periods, methods of collecting, analysing and reporting. The beneficiary communities are often, but not always, involved in the design of programmes, programme management and monitoring/evaluation of activities.

The Arab states which reported about their monitoring and evaluation system – Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen – indicated that monitoring usually takes the form of regular field visits to literacy and adult learning classes, whereas evaluation is mostly conducted through annual reports. At the system level, Morocco reported that indicators related to management, training, supervision, coordination among stakeholders, advocacy and communication are used to monitor implementation of the government strategy. At the programme level, the National Programme of Adult Education (NAEP) in Tunisia has indicators based on the objectives and priorities of each programme. Currently, the NAEP is being revised to take account of new developments in adult learning.

In the United States States of America, at the system or policy level, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, conducts monitoring visits to ensure states' compliance with relevant federal law. States are required to monitor and evaluate local providers of adult education and literacy services to ensure compliance with applicable rules and to ensure that programmes achieve measurable outcomes for their participants. At local level, community organisations perform monitoring through various methods such as on-site visits, informal surveys after each course, and written evaluation. These are meant to monitor trends in funding, participation, service delivery, volunteer engagement, relevance to grant objectives and performance.

**Table 6.8**  
Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in adult education in countries by region

	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total
<b>Monitoring</b>	18	4	15	26	17	<b>80</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>	17	5	11	21	14	<b>68</b>

Source: National progress reports for GRALE 2012; Responses to Question 6.5 "Have the national or sub-national governments implemented monitoring and evaluation mechanisms?"

In Europe, quality assurance is increasingly a shared process between governmental regulation and market forces. Germany provides several models of quality management, the most popular being DIN EN ISO 9000ff, followed by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and the Learner-Oriented Quality Certification (LQW). The latter is most suited to adult education while the former two models were originally designed for Industry (Aust and Schmidt-Hertha, 2012). Generally speaking, these models operate more at the organisational level than at the level of teaching-learning arrangements. In the Netherlands, the CEDEO quality mark has been established to reduce the number of existing models. In England (United Kingdom) and France an inspection system exists for monitoring quality in further education and training. In both of the latter cases, monitoring in quality management is not only directly anchored in the adult continuing education system, but the criteria and indicators for quality are directly under state control. The government authorities are responsible for external control, whereas internal quality control is primarily in the hands of adult learning institutions.

### 6.9 Research and collection of data and good practice

Governments in Europe and North America have prioritised research capacity and resources, which is evident in the quality and character of policy decisions and programme strategies in adult education. Governments from other regions must also give importance to enhancing capacity and resources for policy-relevant research.

Overall, more differentiated data are needed than are currently available at national and sub-national levels. The interplay between participation as an input factor, processes and outcomes needs to be emphasised when collecting and disseminating data for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Participation is an important input factor, but needs to be related to output factors, such as progression and retention rates.

Cuba is one of the few developing countries that have dedicated knowledge management systems for the collection,

analysis and dissemination of data and good practice. Its government promotes the study of adult education in the doctoral programmes of departments of adult education. In addition to pedagogical and didactic processes, its authorities are also looking at how to transition adults from adult learning centres to continue their studies in higher education and universities. Research on transitioning literacy and English language learners to adult basic and adult secondary education has been conducted in the United States of America.

In New Zealand, research takes place at the practical pedagogical level, particularly with regard to the “learning workplace”. It concentrates on formative evaluation of literacy and numeracy projects run by industry training organisations (Ryan et al. 2012), as well as the transfer of literacy, language and numeracy skills from learning programmes to the workplace (Cameron et al., 2011). Research has also been conducted into “Increasing the engagement of employers in workplace literacy programmes” (New Zealand Department of Labour, 2010). Similarly, a Welsh study looks at the experiences of and levels of satisfaction amongst those participating in work-based learning programmes.

Research conducted to inform policy and programme design and implementation in England (United Kingdom) deals with economic impact, learner satisfaction, the wider benefits of learning, and longitudinal surveys of adult learners in college-based literacy and numeracy courses. The relevance of adult education programmes for economic development has also been the subject of research in Croatia.

### 6.10 Conclusion

The key dimensions of quality, identified as relevance, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, structure, process and results of programmes, are not new constructs in the discourse on adult learning and education. The renewed emphases arising from the *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL 2010a) are the juxtaposition of equity and quality, justification and validation of input and process by outcome criteria, and the placing of adult education within the framework of lifelong learning.

“Participation is an important input factor, but needs to be related to output factors, such as progression and retention rates.”

Conceptualising quality in terms of learning outcomes and results of programmes, and assessing learning that emphasises recognition, validation and accreditation of diverse learning experiences, are important steps towards lifelong learning. As noted above, 70 per cent of the 129 responding countries reported that an RVA framework was used in assessing adult skills and competences. The use of learning outcomes in a broad sense can promote clarity and thus enhance participation through emphasising the relevance of programmes.

Learning outcomes require attention to the following aspects:

- levels determine whether learning outcomes are overarching at the level of policy, deal with intended learning outcomes at the level of qualification standards, or deal with specific learning outcomes at the level of learning programmes;
- learning outcomes should not be formulated in narrow and restricted ways, limiting rather than broadening expectations of learners;
- learning outcomes should not be tied to rigid output measures but should be used in conjunction with process and content data; and
- assessment approaches and methodologies must incorporate different levels and contexts.

Three-quarters of the countries who submitted data to this report had developed and used quality criteria for adult education programmes. However, there was wide variance in the understanding of quality, and in how quality indicators are defined and used. The responses from countries suggest that state authorities will continue to assume a major responsibility in regulating and setting standards of quality in adult literacy and adult education, and quality should play an essential role in shaping educational policy. This state role includes promoting and applying the lifelong learning perspective in adult education by ensuring diversity of pathways, encouraging all stakeholders, including the private sector and non-governmental organisations to create programmes responsive to different learning contexts and learning needs of adults.

It is important for research to contribute to quality management in adult education, taking into account the causal chain between input, process, output and outcome. Emphasis needs to be placed on the interests at stake for the different stakeholders. It is important for countries to highlight the link between quality inputs and the achievement of equity, social inclusion and economic development. Resources and capacities for research need to be enhanced to disseminate and apply “best practice” in adult education within and across countries. These measures are needed to complement assessment and accountability procedures, in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency of adult education systems.

#### **Key messages:**

- Recent years have seen the continuing development of national qualification frameworks (NQFs) in Member States, which in turn have prompted the development of mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and competence (RVA). VET systems face the challenge of accommodating a broader range of vocationally relevant adult learning, merging general with vocational education, and formal with non-formal and informal learning modalities. These developments are part of the redesign of education and training systems and practices in conformity with the paradigm shift towards lifelong and life-wide learning.
- Professionalisation and regulation, together with research, monitoring and evaluation, still require concerted action. Professionalization and regulation require judicious calibration in the interests of affirmative consolidation of both experienced and novice practitioners.
- Many Member States have developed and apply quality criteria, yet with wide variance in their conceptualisations, definitions and uses of quality indicators. UNESCO could act as a global clearing-house for an integrated and critically reflective debate with respect to the benefits of heterogeneities for quality in adult learning and education.

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# SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Adult learning is no longer on the margins of educational theory and practice, but has gained new impetus within lifelong learning as a paradigm for inclusion and empowerment. To some extent, this process reflects theoretical and socio-political evolution: access to diverse kinds of learning is a universal right and a democratic entitlement for people of all ages, whatever their personal, social and economic circumstances. However, the drivers of contemporary change – globalisation, digitalisation, mobility and ecology – are at least as forceful as democratic principles, and demand the redefinition and redesign of education in all its dimensions.

The first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UIL, 2010) showed that while educational policymakers in many countries had begun to grasp the importance of adult learning and its core positioning within lifelong learning, the adult education sector was poorly resourced and posed challenges for effective governance. Moreover, inequalities of access, participation and outcome persist everywhere in the world.

The *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010a) gave UIL a mandate to prepare GRALE reports at regular intervals. This second *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* concludes that thus far – on the basis of the information included in the national progress reports – not much has changed since CONFINTEA VI in 2009. The key themes and core messages of the *Belém Framework* have, however, found their way into national debates and, in some cases, have permeated policy reform processes. At the same time, UNESCO's EFA (Education for All) targets and the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are not prominent in the

national progress reports that inform this second Global Report. This was to be expected, since their potential for rekindling policy action in the adult education sector has not been realised to the extent initially hoped. International policy goals give direction to UNESCO Member States. One important lesson for the post-2015 development agenda is to ensure that adult learning within lifelong learning is accorded much greater priority, backed up with commitments open to mutual monitoring.

The second edition of GRALE has placed literacy at the forefront for several reasons. Firstly, far too many people – and in particular, women of all ages – continue to live with poor literacy skills. 774 million people cannot read and write, and 123 million of these are 15–24-year-olds; that is, young people and young adults. Given the imprecise nature of the data on which these figures are based, it is almost certainly the case that poor literacy skills – including in the most highly developed countries – are much more widespread than reported (UIS, 2013; European Commission, 2012).

Secondly, the consequences of poor literacy skills are becoming more significant than ever before for life chances and quality of life. Digital technologies increasingly pervade everyday life and demand more complex literacy skills. Literacy frames personal and social development potential, and the quality of the resourcing environment in which people live determines their access to those literacies.

Thirdly, literacy does not simply denote reading and writing competence levels, but a range of competences grounded in multiple forms and processes of human and social communication. These are acquired, used and renewed – and on

occasion lost – throughout life and across all spheres of life. Literacy is therefore the unassailable foundation of all education and learning, and it is continuously relevant for all people, in all phases of life and in all regions of the world.

For all of the above reasons, this report situates literacy at the centre of lifelong learning, and in so doing enjoins policymakers and practitioners to reconsider how to conceptualise literacy, how to measure literacy competences more accurately and usefully, and how to provide a sustainable palette of targeted literacy programmes for highly diverse populations of (potential) learners. As the EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2005) noted, the past six decades have seen multiple phases of literacy definition in the international policy world. The *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010a) seeks to anchor the concept of **literacy as a continuum** in Member States' policy and action. The national progress reports reflect a diverse range of approaches, including those that were initially adopted in the 1960s.

If literacy is to take its rightful integral place in the implementation of lifelong learning for all, policy and action must be underpinned and guided by the state of the art – conceptually, methodologically and practically. The focus should be on the creation of rich literate environments and learning societies, rather than simply on reducing illiteracy per se. Such environments and societies can best emerge when literacies and learning are embedded in broad-based educational perspectives with life-wide reach – encompassing work-related and work-based learning, community education, social and political participation, family life, health and environmental action.

The complexities that emerge in producing valid evidence about levels and dimensions of literacy offer a prime example of the measurement and monitoring challenges faced by the adult education sector as a whole. Many Member States continue to use simplistic, unreliable and proxy indicators to estimate literacy rates. They are largely aware of their limitations, but are no less aware of how difficult it is to generate better-quality data and

how constrained, in the majority of cases, their resources are. Meanwhile, international surveys – such as the Adult Literacy and Life-skills Survey (ALL), the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) together with LAMP (Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme and the on-going RAMAA (Action research on measuring literacy programme participants' learning outcomes) – have spearheaded the development of richer sets of indicators and opportunities for inter-country comparisons. However, all those involved in these initiatives are aware of how much more development work still lies ahead. For example, cultural and linguistic diversity pose significant challenges to designing and operationalizing effective measures and fieldwork methods, most of all in poor and isolated communities. And at the same time, it is important to bear in mind that evidence can take a variety of forms – that is, quantitative surveys and testing instruments do not exhaust the options. Understanding the ways in which literacy is developed, sustained and used demands a range of complementary evidence sources, including ethnographies, biographical methods and action research studies. These approaches may well be more viable and more fruitful in contexts whose physical, economic and cultural parameters are not easily conducive to conducting conventional inquiries.

#### **Key messages on literacy:**

- Substantial progress has been made towards meeting Education for All Goal 4 (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), but many disadvantaged individuals and groups are still left behind.
- Literacy is a continuum, not a dichotomy. Learning and using literacy skills is a continuous, context-bound process that takes place both within and outside explicitly educational settings and throughout life. This understanding implies concerted development of cross-sectoral policy.

- Literacy policy must focus on raising and developing basic skills as a whole and include creating rich literate environments and learning societies. The lens of lifelong and life-wide learning is the most promising perspective for addressing the literacy challenge.
- Literacy rates are largely based on simplistic and unreliable data and methods. Direct testing is gaining momentum, but is complex and expensive. To move forward, a dual approach is needed: developing culturally appropriate measurement tools and methods, and improving the quality of conventional, cost-effective self-reporting surveys.
- The generation and exchange of reliable and comparable research is indispensable for informed policymaking at all levels, including the international level. Consensus-building in the community of Member States to identify policy-relevant research needs and demands would bring benefits for all. It would be appropriate for UNESCO to moderate this process.

This second GRALE report focuses on the issue of literacy, but also monitors progress made since 2009 in the five fields of policy and action specified in the *Belém Framework for Action*. The conclusions reached for each field, together with the key messages and recommendations arising from the analysis, are summarised below.

## Policy

The *Belém Framework* stipulated that policies and legislative measures for adult education need to be **comprehensive, inclusive and integrated within a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective**, based on sector-wide and inter-sectoral approaches, covering and linking all components of learning and education.

Although a significant majority of reporting countries have formulated adult education (92%), adult literacy (88%) or lifelong learning (87%) policies, success in translating policy into action has been limited. The reports show that little has changed on the ground since the first Global Report: broader aims are usually mentioned in policy ‘headlines’, but in reality human resources development in the service of labour markets dominates thematic priorities and implementation measures. In some regions, lifelong learning is now firmly situated in mainstream national and transnational policy dialogue and discourse, both in its own right and as a means to achieve other social and economic goals. But there is a danger that lifelong learning is being ‘undersold’ as the latest policy panacea, both for countering growing social and economic divisions within and between countries, and for meeting the challenges of social and technological change everywhere in the world.

The critical importance of learning and education in youth and adulthood continues to be unevenly recognised in policy-making around the globe. Definitions remain confused and cloudy, while non-formal and informal learning modalities and pathways remain at the margins of recognition and reward. It may still be too early to see tangible progress that can be clearly attributed to following-up on the *Belém Framework*. Yet the general tenor of the reports suggests that post-CONFINTEA VI policy debates and dialogues have absorbed and are incrementally transmitting the Belém messages into on-going policy formulation and implementation processes.

It is crucial that adult learning and education and lifelong learning are given prominence in the post-2015 strategic agenda’s priorities, with human capability

enhancement balancing the weight of economic rationales. The increasing acceptance and application of the principle of lifelong learning in framing education agendas is a positive trend, demonstrating a growing awareness of the integrated nature of different formats and modalities of education.

#### **Key messages on policy:**

- Adult learning and education is integral to lifelong and life-wide learning as a framework for fostering and sustaining the development of active democratic citizenship. Policy visions have still to unfold their potential with respect to youth and adults beyond formal systems and pedagogies.
- Four years after CONFINTEA VI is too soon to assess tangible impact, yet the national progress reports clearly show that debates and dialogues have taken up the key themes and are incrementally relaying core messages into on-going policy formulation and implementation processes.
- The gaps between policy and research discourses remain wide, and constructing more robust bridges between the two is a key task for international organisations and agencies. The Asia-Europe Meeting's Lifelong Learning Hub (ASEM-LLL) may be seen as an example of good practice.

## **Governance**

Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of government services is a current priority for many countries. Decentralisation to regional and local levels is the main instrument to achieve these ends, but both funding and capacity building are pre-requisites for success. Decentralisation processes are differentially effective for several kinds of reasons, but capacity (or its relative lack), together with coherent monitoring and evaluation, are key framing factors. This is especially so in the field of adult education, characterised by the distribution of formal and practical responsibilities across a wide spectrum of actors and instances. Strong coordination capacity is therefore of the essence. But in many countries, the further the view shifts 'downstream', the more good governance for capacity building tends to dwindle; and capacity building is a long-term investment.

The *Belém Framework for Action* adopted **two key principles** for the promotion of good governance: **effective, transparent, accountable and equitable implementation** of policy and programmes; and **stakeholder representation and participation** to guarantee responsiveness to learners' needs. It also recommended three modes of applying these principles: creating and maintaining mechanisms for participation; undertaking capacity-building measures to support informed involvement; and promoting inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation. The national progress reports show an overall shift towards mixed governance models between state and NGO actors. National ministries of education are usually prominent, but responsibility is shared in a variety of ways, even more so for adult literacy than for adult education as a whole. More than 80% of reporting countries confirm that they have national coordinating entities for adult education, and even more for adult literacy. These are generally located within the national ministry of education.

The involvement of all relevant actors remains a key requirement for good governance in adult education, and mixed governance models require highly effective consultation and coordination mechanisms

and practices. There is no single solution, but a shared goal: assuring a critical mass of trained professionals and well-networked providers who together ensure effective policy action at all levels, especially regional and local.

**Key messages on governance:**

- Decentralisation to regional and local levels has become a key instrument, but its effective implementation demands both adequate funding and comprehensive capacity building. Strong coordination capacity is of the essence.
- The involvement of all relevant actors remains a key requirement for good governance in adult education, and mixed governance models require highly effective consultation and coordination mechanisms and practices.
- Adult learning and education is an inherently complex sector of policy and action, yet capacity-building activities and coordination mechanisms remain at an early stage of development. UNESCO could act as a clearing-house for the exchange of good practice between Member States.

**Financing**

The first challenge for analysing the financing of adult education is that accurate assessments of both investment needs and investment realities are very difficult to make. Adult learning and education is linked to a range of social and economic policy goals, so is also funded in a myriad of direct and indirect ways across ministries and between public and private sources. Underreporting of investment is therefore inevitable.

Many Member States were unable to provide accurate information on financing in their national progress reports.

Given the diversity of adult education programmes and the variety of financial channels, it will take much effort before reliable and valid data on the costs of adult education become available at national and international levels. Robust empirical research and data collection tools on the financing of adult education are still needed, not only to deepen the understanding of the cost benefits from investment in the field, but also to mobilise more financial resources.

The country reports suggest three current trends in public financing of adult learning and education: rising attention to equity and adoption of pro-poor policies; greater efficiency in the direct public funding of institutions; and decentralisation of funding and delivery to regional and local levels. Countries report the application of various innovative and effective funding mechanisms, including cost-sharing partnerships, tax breaks for educational spending, subsidised or paid educational leave, education/training vouchers, and interest-free/low-interest personal loans.

Because the concrete benefits of learning can be difficult to measure and demonstrate, those making the case for increased funding have adopted mechanisms such as Social Return on Investment (SROI), which assigns monetary values to the benefits of adult education, and to the costs it saves in other sectors, such as health, law and order or social welfare. Nonetheless, global investment in adult education remains low, despite declarations of nominal funding

increases from 2009 to 2010 by more than half of reporting countries. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that lack of political will plays a significant role.

Quality adult education is costly, and methods need to be found by which governments, employers, civil society, international development partners and individuals contribute in different ways to guaranteeing adequate resources. It is evident that low-income countries cannot mobilise the necessary resources by themselves. In order to close the resource gap for adult education in the poorest countries and among the poorest segments of the population, richer countries need to fulfil their pledges.

#### **Key messages on financing:**

- Notwithstanding the difficulties Member States encounter in securing accurate and valid data, the reality of under-investment in the adult education sector is undeniable. Investment levels do not meet international targets and fall far short of meeting demand.
- Diversity is an inherent characteristic of the adult education sector, so mobilising resources requires multi-faceted and innovative strategies. Member State governments and their agencies at national, regional and local levels must find new ways to mobilise financial resources that can make a difference by assuring quality adult education provision.
- Basic information about financing systems and practices is still lacking, whilst the demonstration of the concrete and wider benefits of learning remains elusive. Member States, in cooperation with UNESCO, would benefit from a robust knowledge base upon which to shape effective and efficient financing models for adult learning and education.

## **Participation**

While many Member States have reported that they provide for a wide range of adult education programmes beyond literacy, there are no comparative global data showing the numbers and backgrounds of learners these programmes reach. The national progress reports indicate the existence of varying models, some of which show potential for large-scale replication. As this information covers different types of learning and different measuring methods, the data could be useful in tracking progress over time but not in comparing across countries.

The evidence regarding barriers to participation indicates that low education attainment and low income negatively affect participation. As national and international studies have repeatedly and consistently shown, those who have more get more. In order to motivate learners, whatever their age and stage of life, it is important first to understand the different barriers to inclusion and participation, and which strategies have been successful in overcoming such barriers.

This may be facilitated by the sharing of experience between countries and within regions through structured programmes (for example, the EU's Grundtvig programme in Europe and the Ibero-American Plan for Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education). This is also an effective strategy for promoting participation of excluded groups in adult education through the provision of target-specific funding in many countries. Another platform for disseminating good practices in local learning provision is the network of Community Learning Centres in Asia. These centres bring adult learning and adult literacy activities closer to the target groups and thereby reduce situational barriers to learning.

Overall, the national progress reports indicate that exclusion of adult learners is connected to the availability of information on excluded groups and their demands for learning. Furthermore, a low level of information flow among those with low access to education seems to hinder inclusion. The challenge for a majority of Member States remains to reach those

who are difficult to reach. All told, there is a huge amount to be done by governments and adult educators alike if fair and equal access is to be extended to all and the barriers to participation are to be broken down.

**Key messages on participation:**

- It is essential for countries to design effective monitoring frameworks that track the depth and breadth of participation in adult education and learning. These should include the full range of providers and be compatible with global or regional frameworks.
- International comparative studies are needed to inform countries where they stand in relation to other countries facing similar issues. To promote and support this process, UNESCO could help to build statistical and analytical capacity.
- It is important to study carefully the factors that inhibit or prevent participation. The elimination of such hurdles is a multi-layered process, which cannot be tackled in a single step. An initial step would be to identify and map the barriers for each target group, for example through small sample surveys.

## Quality

The *Belém Framework for Action* defines quality as **holistic, multidimensional and as a continuous cycle of action and reflection**. Many countries are now developing national qualifications frameworks to introduce equivalences between formal, non-formal and informal learning, and to align literacy and adult basic education to vocational qualifications. These could contribute to equity and effectiveness in adult learning and education.

At the same time, the shift to learning outcomes-based assessment and certification can contribute to relevance and efficiency, since it permits diversification of provision and pathways. Eighty-seven of 127 countries (68%) now have a policy framework for recognising, validating and accrediting non-formal and informal learning (though this is less prevalent in Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean).

The principal focus of the quality criteria currently in place is on curricula, but attention is quite evenly divided in all regions and between all quality dimensions (curricula, learning materials, training, methods, and assessment of outcomes). The assessment of learning outcomes is less prominent in Africa, whereas curricula and assessment are particularly to the forefront in Europe and North America.

The professional quality of adult learning and education teachers/trainers also plays a significant role in quality policies. In the majority of countries, adult education practitioners' training, qualifications, professional status, pay and working conditions are lower than those of teachers/trainers in other sectors. The adult education sector remains generally poorly regulated in relation to professionalization, though some countries have established national competency standards, including with legal frameworks and institutional accreditation. Formalised professionalization can be a contentious issue, especially in the case of adult literacy practitioners, where some argue (with research-based support) that personal and social qualities are pedagogically more effective than formal training and qualifications.

**Key messages on quality:**

- Recent years have seen the continuing development of national qualification frameworks (NQFs) in Member States, which in turn have prompted the development of mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and competence (RVA). VET systems face the challenge of accommodating a broader range of vocationally relevant adult learning, merging general with vocational education, and formal with non-formal and informal learning modalities. These developments are part of the redesign of education and training systems and practices in conformity with the paradigm shift towards lifelong and life-wide learning.
- Professionalisation and regulation, together with research, monitoring and evaluation, still require concerted action. Professionalisation and regulation require judicious calibration in the interests of affirmative consolidation of both experienced and novice practitioners.
- Many Member States have developed and apply quality criteria, yet with wide variance in their conceptualisations, definitions and uses of quality indicators. UNESCO could act as a global clearing-house for an integrated and critically reflective debate with respect to the benefits of heterogeneities for quality in adult learning and education.

In conclusion, today's societies are heterogeneous and multi-faceted. Their potential – at both individual and community levels – can best flourish in rich and open environments that foster learning and development throughout life. Such environments include all actors – not only those who design, fund and manage educational systems and learning opportunities of all kinds, but also active learning citizens and critically reflective educational professionals and facilitators. Decentralised, mixed governance models are an effective way to ensure the sustainable development of these kinds of social and educational environments. They provide the foundation for assuring quality in lifelong and life-wide learning processes and outcomes.

Contemporary societies and their educational needs and demands set challenging agendas for governments in the decades to come, and there can be little doubt that cross-sectoral policymaking that rests on a robust evidence base will prove to be an essential component for addressing these agendas successfully.

Finally, the global landscape of adult learning and education depicted in the first GRALE finds its confirmation in this second report: a sector characterised by distinctive guiding principles and diverse practices that faces demanding challenges in a persistently difficult resourcing environment, but which is determined to improve the quality and effectiveness of its contribution to cultural, economic and social development for all.



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# ANNEX

## Reports submitted in the standard format<sup>1</sup>

(Available from:  
<http://uil.unesco.org/home/programme-areas/adult-learning-and-education/confintea-portal>)

### Africa

Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

### Arab States

Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Yemen

### Asia and the Pacific

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam

### Europe and North America

Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan<sup>2</sup>, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland,

Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland<sup>3</sup>, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland<sup>3</sup>, United States of America, Wales<sup>3</sup>

### Latin America and the Caribbean

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

## Reports submitted in a different format<sup>4</sup>

### Africa

Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Mali

### Arab States

Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Sudan

### Asia and the Pacific

Cook Islands, Fiji

### Europe and North America

Canada, Monaco

### Latin America and the Caribbean

None

<sup>1</sup> This means in form of the reporting template sent to all UNESCO National Commissions.

<sup>2</sup> For statistical adjustment to UIS and GMR data Azerbaijan was included in Asia and the Pacific in the analysis.

<sup>3</sup> England, Scotland and Wales have submitted separate progress reports.

<sup>4</sup> This either means they submitted a reporting template with too few answers to be used for analysis or in a narrative format.

The second *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* is based principally on 141 national progress reports submitted by UNESCO Member States. Its objective is to review the implementation of the recommendations made by governments at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in Belém in December 2009. The Report provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to assess progress in adult education vis-à-vis the recommendations contained in the outcome document of CONFINTEA VI, the *Belém Framework for Action*. This second Global Report has as its special theme “Rethinking literacy”. UNESCO hopes that this will contribute to the debate on how to strengthen literacy efforts, and help to position literacy as the foundation for lifelong learning.



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