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United Nations
Literacy Decade
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United Nations Literacy Decade

International Strategic Framework for Action

September 2009

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UNLD: vision and perspectives

The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD, 2003-2012) proposed a new vision of literacy by situating *Literacy for All* at the heart of Education for All (EFA). The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the Decade in December 2001, reaffirming the central role of literacy in development and it was officially launched in February 2003. The vision of ***Literacy as Freedom*** and ***Literacy for All*** continues to drive the Decade, and the four outcomes envisaged by the UNLD International Plan of Action remain its overarching objectives:

- Significant progress towards the 2015 EFA goals;
- Attainment of useable literacy, numeracy and other basic competencies;
- Dynamic literate environments;
- Improved quality of life as an impact of using literacy.

The first half of the Decade saw positive and encouraging progress in raising the profile of literacy. Strengthened action in many countries made literacy rates rise and there is a stronger awareness that literacy needs everywhere are changing and must be addressed in innovative ways. There are many examples of what works - important initiatives, policy shifts, stronger institutions and effective programmes in many countries which provide a stronger basis for literacy efforts. However, progress overall is insufficient and the literacy challenge in today's world remains urgent and large-scale. In a world increasingly driven by knowledge and technology, a staggering 776 million adults are illiterate and 75 million children are out of school. We are far from the EFA goal of halving the number of illiterate people around the world by 2015: projections suggest that their number is likely to be reduced only by 10 per cent. Even though literacy rates have risen, the absolute number of illiterates has increased in some regions due to population growth. This represents a genuine threat for human development. Various editions of the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) have pointed to this unacceptable situation and have noted that youth and adult literacy remains one of the most neglected EFA goals; the GMR also documents on an annual basis the statistical progress in literacy and presents a statistical analysis of remaining needs. This underlines the urgent necessity of revitalizing the Literacy Decade and harnessing all possible energies and resources up to and beyond 2012. This is even more pressing at a time of global financial and economic crisis, when maximizing human potential through education and skills training is a key strategy for renewed growth and development.

As one of the three EFA initiatives created by UNESCO (together with TTISSA¹ and EDUCAIDS²) and as the main operational tool for the United Nations Literacy Decade, the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE)³ was launched by UNESCO in 2005. It has been designed as a ten-year policy and partnership framework (2006-2015) and key operational mechanism for achieving the goals and purposes of the UNLD. As a priority, LIFE targets 35 of the most challenged countries, where 85 per cent of the world's population without literacy competencies reside. As a framework of collaborative action for national governments, NGOs, civil society, the private sector, UN agencies and bi-/multilaterals, LIFE provides a vigorous platform for accelerating literacy efforts in countries with illiteracy rates more than 50 per cent and/or an illiterate population of 10 million or over. The overall objectives of LIFE are to reinforce national and international commitments to literacy, to strengthen capacities for the articulation of sustainable policies and programme delivery, and to enhance countries' innovative initiatives and practices in providing good quality literacy learning opportunities.

In pursuit of the outcomes of the Decade, the UNLD International Plan of Action, as endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2002, presented six key areas of action: policy, programme modality, capacity-building, research, community participation, and monitoring and evaluation. The plan also underlined that "all actions must address the gender equality perspective in all its ramifications." A separate section dealt with resource mobilization. For each of the six key areas, the plan listed aspects where intervention was necessary - in effect, an agenda for the acquisition and sustainable use of quality literacy.

In preparation for the UNLD mid-Decade review undertaken in 2007-2008, the UNLD Expert Group revisited the six key areas of action so that the resulting mid-Decade report would reflect progress and challenges in implementing these key areas over the first five years and would also enable a clear sense of forward development in the second half of the Decade to emerge. Thus, the mid-Decade report⁴ addressed all six areas, treating capacity-building and community participation as cross-cutting issues, devoting separate space to gender issues, and giving considerable attention to resource mobilization and the impact that LIFE had achieved within the UNLD. This report was presented to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in October 2008 and provided the basis for the publication entitled *The Global Literacy Challenge*⁵, which complements the more formal report.

Six Regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy were organized by UNESCO in the Arab Region, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean in 2007 and 2008, subsequent to the White House Conference on Global

¹ www.unesco.org/en/ttissa

² www.educaids.org

³ http://www.unesco.org/ui/en/UIPDF/focus/LIFE_ressources/LIFEVision_Strategy.pdf

⁴ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A%2F63%2F172&Submit=Search&Lang=E

⁵ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001631/163170e.pdf>

Literacy which was held in September 2006 under the auspices of the Honorary Ambassador for the UNLD. Each conference discussed main challenges and achievements, presented effective practices and formulated recommendations to be pursued at global, regional and national levels.

In addition, key national stakeholders from LIFE countries, in a series of regional meetings and experience-sharing workshops held in 2007 and 2008 reviewed the progress, challenges and lessons learned from implementing LIFE. This resulted in a strengthened commitment to future action to place literacy high on political agendas, mobilizing additional resources, strengthening capacities and intensifying South-South cooperation.

Literacy in general and the objectives of UNLD and LIFE in particular were also substantially covered and addressed through the monitoring of CONFINTEA V and most extensively through the comprehensive preparatory process of CONFINTEA VI. As a component of adult education and a foundation of lifelong learning, literacy featured prominently in the national reports submitted by about 150 Member States, the regional synthesis papers and the regional outcome documents officially adopted by representatives of Member States.

The UNLD mid-Decade review and the resulting report submitted to the UNGA are the basis for the development of this Strategic Framework. Moreover, the outcomes of the Regional Literacy Conferences, the lessons learnt from LIFE implementation, *The Global Literacy Challenge* and the reports and outcome documents prepared in the framework of the preparatory process for CONFINTEA VI provided further important information on the status of literacy in the world and were extensively consulted in the drafting process. Those documents together furnish a more in-depth appraisal of the global situation and need in literacy, and an outline of the current status of literacy efforts.

Out of the mid-Decade review emerged also the first presentation of the three strategic objectives that are taken up in this Strategic Framework and which are an expression of what the UNLD aims at achieving:

- A. To mobilize stronger commitment to literacy;**
- B. To reinforce effective literacy programme delivery; and**
- C. To harness new resources for literacy.**

At the same time, it is clear that literacy promotion will continue beyond the Decade and beyond the EFA and LIFE target date of 2015; in this respect, the Strategic Framework should serve to guide action, collaboration and partnerships in the longer term.

In taking these strategic objectives forward into the remaining years of the Decade and beyond, two important perspectives have emerged:

- At the international level, it is abundantly clear that stronger political commitment and a higher level of resources are the core issues. Thus, one of the top priorities for the coming years will be advocacy - for commitment and for resources. This will be particularly challenging given the current global economic conditions. In these circumstances, the tasks of persuasion, advocacy and awareness-raising increasingly demand a robust evidence-base from which to argue the case for literacy.
- In promoting literacy and in putting policy into practice, it is essential to recognize the interconnected nature of all the actions necessary - upstream functions such as planning, management, research and capacity development, and downstream applications such as facilitators' training, material preparation, instructional methods, and regular monitoring and evaluation. Thus, the priorities of the second half of the Decade and beyond focus on facilitating the integration of all aspects to achieve higher quality and improved sustainability.

The underlying concern for stronger action, quality provision and sustainable use of literacy remains firmly in focus, and the over-arching vision of **Literacy for All** continues to inspire the efforts of the Decade and beyond. As a key component of quality basic education, the promotion of literacy through the Decade supports and strengthens the pursuit of the Education for All goals as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Defining literacy

Since literacy is a plural and dynamic concept, a universally accepted and valid definition is difficult to coin. In the report of an Expert Meeting on literacy assessment, UNESCO published a related working definition of literacy which reflects the emphasis on context and use:

'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 2005: 21).⁶

The notion of literacy as a *continuum of learning* is particularly important. There is no 'magic line' between literate and illiterate, but rather there are different levels of literacy competencies and skills. This understanding of literacy underpins the principles, strategies and actions of this Framework. Further, literacy learning is often associated with the improvement of other skills, such as oral communication, critical thinking, using computers and working with others.

⁶ UNESCO. 2005. Aspects of Literacy Assessment: Topics and issues from the UNESCO Expert Meeting, 10-12 June, 2003. UNESCO: Paris. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001401/140125eo.pdf>

Purpose of the International Strategic Framework for Action

This International Strategic Framework for Action has the following purposes:

- To guide action on literacy in a coherent and consistent manner until 2012 and beyond, and furnish a reference point for updating planning year by year;
- To provide a coherent framework of action for implementation for the rest of the Decade and beyond;
- To articulate the three strategic objectives identified from the experience of the first half of the Decade, based on key challenges;
- To identify priority target groups;
- To elaborate the consequent strategies to reach the objectives of the priority areas;
- To spell out actions at national, regional and global levels under each strategic thrust.

This Strategic Framework is intended to serve all partners and stakeholders active in literacy and for whom the UNLD provides a valuable framework and platform. These partners include governments, civil society, communities, and the private sector, as well as the bilateral and multilateral agencies which support them. The framework serves to orient action on basic literacy and on evolving literacy demands and needs, whatever the socio-economic context and at whatever level. Each partner will contribute to the implementation of this Strategic Framework on the basis of their own mandate, perspective, relative strengths and comparative advantage. Whether at global, regional, national or sub-national level, the aim is that partners can use the framework to situate and articulate their own work plans of detailed activities, spelling out at each level their key expected results and thus contributing to a coherent collective effort.

Global frameworks

In addition to the multiple uses of literacy and its value in improving life-chances, literacy is also mandated or implied by a number of existing global targets and objectives in education and development. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) are the two major internationally agreed sets of targets particularly relevant to global literacy efforts.⁷

The **Millennium Development Goals** do not list youth and adult literacy as a goal or a target. The importance of literacy, however, is implicit in the indicator for MDG 2 - the literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men. Literacy skills, moreover, are an

⁷ Please refer to Annex I for further detail on additional international and regional frameworks and initiatives.

essential basis for poverty reduction - MDG 1. Ultimately, each of the MDGs implies a learning process; literacy competence is a key condition of autonomous learning and thus indispensable to achieve the MDGs.

The six **Education for All** goals include adult literacy (goal 4), aiming at a 50 per cent increase in adult literacy rates by 2015, and explicitly mention literacy and numeracy competencies as key outcomes of quality learning (goal 6). The goals also aim at ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes (goal 3). Indeed, literacy is a cross-cutting theme of all the EFA goals, because literacy is a key learning tool at all ages. The objectives of the UNLD itself fall entirely within the scope of EFA, aiming to achieve literacy for all as a factor in individual and community empowerment and socio-economic development.

Several editions of the EFA Global Monitoring Report have drawn attention to the neglected goals 3 and 4, with the GMR 2006 having been particularly devoted to "Literacy for Life". However, the global mechanisms of the EFA initiative, such as the High-Level Group, the Working Group and the E-9 Initiative as well as the Fast Track Initiative as a recognized funding instrument, have fallen far short of their potential for moving the literacy agenda forward and for better addressing literacy needs globally.

Challenges

'Literacy for All' is an elusive target. As well as the powerful socio-political and economic factors which constrain development efforts of all kinds, the promotion of literacy has faced, and continues to face, a number of specific challenges, which the current Strategic Framework seeks to address. A number of key challenges were identified by the Mid-Decade Review of the UNLD submitted to the UN General Assembly in October 2008.

- **Low priority:** Literacy has low priority in many countries and in many international agencies relative to other pressing socio-economic issues. In addition, youth and adult literacy is most often regarded as a matter of secondary importance compared to the provision of schooling at all levels for children and young people.
- **Inadequate policies and planning:** Where there are no clear policies or strategies for literacy, where there is a lack of legal frameworks and no promotion of a literate environment, efforts lack coherence and may not contribute to broader national development goals. Unclear objectives and the absence of consistent planning lead to ad hoc programmes and possibly to the neglect of certain population groups, and haphazard outcomes.

- **Inadequate coordination and lack of partnerships:** Literacy is implemented not only by the ministry of education, but by several ministries as well as civil society. In most countries, there is neither comprehensive information on the activities the various stakeholders are undertaking, nor coordination among them. This leads to overlap, waste of resources, and the impossibility of monitoring and evaluating what progress has been made towards policy objectives.
- **Inappropriate organizational frameworks:** Promoting literacy for youth and adults must cope with its inherent diversity; highly standardized systems modelled on those that deliver schooling to children are not appropriate. The lack of an organizational framework which copes well with inherent diversity has led either to relatively short-lived standardized approaches with dubious results, or to an abandonment of literacy to scattered initiatives.
- **Insufficient information on what works:** Effective and sustainable literacy provision on the ground is intrinsically linked to sound policy and planning for quality programme delivery. This requires knowledge and understanding of good practice in the learning and teaching of literacy. In this perspective, information on and understanding of effective programmes are key strategies to improve practice in literacy and to facilitate evidence-informed policy-making. In addition to collecting information on effective literacy programmes, it is crucial to make this information available and widely disseminate it to allow transfer of knowledge and experience and for adaptation in other contexts.
- **Low quality:** In addition to other factors listed in this section, further reasons for the low quality of literacy provision and the results it produces are unsuitable learning contents which do not reflect the needs and interests of the learners, nor take into account their prior learning. Inadequate teaching methodologies are a further factor. A major reason, however, is the low level of professional capacity in all aspects of literacy planning, management and implementation. Quality demands a professional approach.
- **Lack of data on literacy levels and needs:** Developing relevant policies and programmes requires sound evidence on the literacy levels and needs of populations. This information is often lacking, which may lead to inadequate planning and funding for programmes, as well as to inappropriate programmes without clear knowledge of where learners are starting from or what they should be achieving. Which data are to be generated and how they are to be analysed depends of course on the context and purposes they are needed for.

- **Poor understanding of context:** Literacy programmes may be carried out with little reference to key aspects of the local context: use of languages, levels of access to print and digital materials, or the use and purposes of literacy. This results in unusable and unsustainable literacy competencies. In multilingual societies particularly, an emphasis on a single language for formal schooling and literacy acquisition leads to the exclusion of large proportions of the population. Multilingual societies require multilingual approaches to learning.
- **Lack of monitoring and evaluation:** No one can know whether literacy efforts are achieving sustainable and effective results unless there is a process of monitoring and evaluation. Where these processes are absent, valuable lessons leading to improved policies and programmes cannot be learnt.
- **Inadequate financial resources:** Within national education budgets, the amount devoted to youth and adult literacy is frequently less than 1 per cent, and resources are budgeted only for certain aspects of literacy programming, such as facilitator expenses or materials, and not for the support and development costs which are necessary for quality results. A benchmark of 3 per cent has been proposed, but precise financing needs must be assessed for each national case. The aim must be to increase the envelope for education as a whole, with more adequate resources for youth and adult literacy within that. The same principle applies to the neglect of the field in donor strategies and the allocation of external aid.

Rationale

For many years, the international community has linked **literacy and development**. Literacy rates are a component of the Human Development Index, and the distribution of illiteracy in the world corresponds closely with that of poverty. Literacy is an indicator of quality of schooling, access to information and, more generally, of the capacity of individuals and communities for autonomous learning, for the initiation and management of change and for active participation in society. The purposes and characteristics of literacy are multiple; from one context to another, from one language to another, and from one period of life to another, literacy demands change and different literacies come into play.

The **case for literacy** has been argued frequently and is well summarized in the 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report. As the rationale for revitalizing the remaining years of the Decade and literacy efforts beyond 2012, the following summary recalls the benefits of literacy as part of achieving broader development goals:

- **Fulfilment of human rights:** Literacy is part of the right to education and it is a means of learning about and claiming other rights.
- **Poverty reduction:** Literacy is one means, among others, to increase equitable access to new opportunities; it enlarges the options of individuals and communities to engage in enterprise and wealth creation, as well as being an essential condition of most formal employment opportunities. Literacy acquisition is often combined advantageously with learning skills to improve the quality of livelihoods.
- **Sustainable development:** Literacy is a means for development, enabling people to access new opportunities and learn new patterns of behaviour consistent with sustainability. Literacy is also a fundamental means of participating in knowledge societies, where accessing and processing text-based information are vital.
- **Participation and active citizenship:** Literacy is a key feature of the way democratic systems function and enables citizens to have access to text-based information and transactions so as to participate actively in the socio-political life of a community, municipality, province or country, both in terms of critically accessing information and expressing points of view.
- **Early Childhood Development:** Language cognition in early childhood contributes to the successful development of the child, which enables the adult to flourish in areas of social, physical, and emotional health. Literate parents and a rich and active literate environment in the family give children an excellent preparation for school.
- **Lifelong learning:** Literacy is a key tool in learning for all ages, in all domains of study and in all institutional contexts. In today's knowledge societies, lifelong learning is the norm, with the need to access learning opportunities, improve qualifications, or move into new work. None of this is possible without literacy, for adults, young people, adolescents or children. In support of developing learning societies, the promotion of family, inter-generational and community-based approaches to learning is increasingly important.
- **Inclusion and empowerment:** Acquiring literacy competence is a key step for marginalized populations to have access to the services and opportunities of their wider society. Often not well served by mainstream educational provision or literacy programmes, groups such as people living in rural areas, indigenous peoples, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities, young people and female populations can find new paths to empowerment through literacy learning that is relevant, multilingual, contextualized and accessible and that offers windows upon new horizons.

- **Gender equality:** Too often, literacy programmes have ignored gender-specific circumstances and learning needs. Where gender-sensitive approaches are used, they have resulted, for women and girls, in new paths to autonomy, enterprise, self-confidence and learning. Taking gender considerations into account in designing materials, pedagogy and infrastructure will enhance the impact of subsequent literacy use in the broader society. The same gender sensitivity to out-of-school boys in some regions of the world is becoming a pressing need.
- **Communication and information:** Literacy is above all an instrument of communication which serves to transmit and store information, express opinions, create ideas, and communicate over time and distance. These functions are often taken for granted by those who use literacy, but remain largely out of reach for those who have not had the opportunity to acquire literacy competencies. The chance to acquire and use literacy in the languages that learners habitually use is a key feature of achieving successful communication and information.
- **Information and Communication Technologies:** ICTs have entered almost every sphere of formal work and employment, and afford new opportunities to access knowledge and information. Computers and mobile phones have revolutionized patterns of personal communication. The use of these technologies depends on literacy - manipulating written text, alongside images, icons and pictures, is the minimal condition of participating in the benefits of ICTs. Thus the digital revolution has added new dimensions to basic literacy competences.
- **Literacy and the labour market:** Acquiring the necessary skills for the rapidly evolving labour market and at the workplace has become increasingly important in today's society. This includes having the necessary level of literacy skills to respond to new demands and developments. Moreover, mobility and adopting the new uses of literacy associated with migration - new languages, new scripts, new purposes of written communication - enable migrants to adapt to changing responsibilities and professional challenges.
- **Health:** Literacy, or the lack thereof, has been identified amongst the social determinants of health by the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH).⁸ Literacy contributes to one's ability to exercise control over personal and family health, as well as being a key factor in preventing and mitigating HIV & AIDS. Literacy serves to improve the "ability to access, understand, evaluate and communicate information as a way to promote, maintain and improve health in a

⁸ CSDH (2008). *Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health. Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health*. Geneva, World Health Organization.

variety of settings across the life-course".⁹ The responsibility for using literacy to promote health lies beyond the individual and includes the need for public and private sector actors to communicate health information in relevant and easy to understand ways.

Strategic principles

The following five strategic principles spell out critical aspects of literacy that are central for achieving the objectives:

Literacy is complex and multi-dimensional

As a means of communication, literacy intersects with most domains of life, and its use will serve many different purposes. This principle will be visible in the processes of acquiring literacy, the content of learning, and in the impact on those who use the resulting skills among other things. In consequence, strategies to promote literacy must open the way for these connections to be made as helpfully and as fruitfully as possible, neither reducing literacy to a mere skill or technical competence, nor limiting the domains in which literacy may be put to use. This also requires close links between literacy policy and programmes and other areas of development, creating joint ownership among a wide range of partners and thus promoting shared goals. Bold initiatives and innovative approaches are necessary to provide relevant literacy learning opportunities for all.

Literacy requires a professional approach

The quality and effectiveness of literacy programmes depend on a thoroughly professional approach. Promoting literacy is a process in which educational, cultural, sociological and relational parameters all have a significant part. These parameters are all in play simultaneously in the literacy acquisition situation (circle, group, class, etc.) and need full consideration in programme planning and design. Thus, the same professionalism is necessary as in any area of educational activity, with adequate capacity development and appropriate long-term investment. Strategies will assume that quality literacy programmes are the goal and thus consider investment in a professional approach fundamental.

⁹ Rootman, I. & Gordon-El-Bihbey, D. (2008). *A vision for a health literate Canada: report of the expert panel on health literacy*. Ottawa: Canadian Public Health Association.

Literacy requires close attention to context

Literacy will have the greatest impact where the socio-economic, cultural and linguistic context, as well as the learner's knowledge and prior learning experience are taken fully into account. Incorporation of local experience and content, use of multilingual approaches based on the mother tongues of the learners, validation of local learning processes, respect of social relations, consideration of local realities, circumstances and cycles are fundamental to literacy acquisition in the context of relevant and useful meaning. Strategies for literacy promotion will provide options for local solutions and for the contextualization of proposed measures.

Literacy requires solid evidence

Decisions about literacy provision should have a sound basis and this requires solid evidence of different kinds. It is clear from research on literacy practices that the literate/illiterate dichotomy is not adequate to understand the characteristics of the literacy-related challenges, and therefore, is not a good basis for adequate policy design, planning and action. Data from assessments of the various levels of literacy competence that exist among a population are essential for planning. In order to plan programmes, information is also needed on the uses of literacy, both actual and potential, in the learners' environment, as well as on the characteristics of the learners themselves. Other kinds of evidence include lessons from past experience, an understanding of the impact and benefits of literacy and an appreciation of what makes for effective programmes.

Literacy requires cooperation

The many connections and uses of literacy mean that a wide range of partners should participate in its promotion. Governments have primary responsibility for literacy provision as a foundational aspect of fulfilling the right to education of every citizen. Their political commitment and allocation of sufficient resources are vital to the success of the global literacy efforts. However, no single institution or organization can promote or deliver literacy for all the purposes for which people may wish to use it, even at the community level, let alone at national level. Fostering the cooperation of many partners (those actively engaged in promoting literacy) and stakeholders (those who may not be actively involved, but who have a stake in literacy in some way) will not only, enable literacy to be used in many different ways but draw on their relative strengths and comparative advantage. In terms of the impact of literacy in a community and beyond, active cooperation in literacy promotion will produce a result where the sum is greater than the parts. Strategies will therefore presuppose active cooperation and openness to a widening circle of partners.

Strategic focus: priority groups

In the International Plan of Action, the focus on *Literacy for All* led to the identification of three large priority groups: youth and adults with insufficient literacy levels, especially women; out-of-school children and youth, especially girls, adolescent girls and young women; and children in school without access to quality learning.

The experience of the first half of the Decade confirmed the need to focus strategically on vulnerable and marginalized population groups for the remaining years of the Decade and beyond. They are groups that have not been well served by literacy efforts so far and for which standardized literacy programmes are not appropriate to their lives and circumstances. It is not a matter of special treatment, but of investing in literacy in ways that are effective and sustainable - experience shows that lack of respect for context-specific characteristics leads to failure and further exclusion. Investing in these groups is also a means of achieving a major impact on literacy levels and on sustainable development. The priority groups are as follows:

- **Women and girls:** Women and girls account for two-thirds of the adult illiterate population in the world. For social, economic and cultural reasons, women and girls require particular approaches, such as their own circles, schedules, materials, or facilitators. In many cases, women and girls speak only the local language, which must therefore be used in literacy acquisition. Women have particular influence on the well-being and education of their children, so that investment in literacy for women has the added benefit of making it more likely that their children, especially their daughters, will also receive an education. In a broader gender perspective, boys in some places also need special attention.
- **Youth and out-of-school children:** Young people constitute up to half the population in some developing countries and represent huge potential for the future. Most children and young people acquire literacy and numeracy through the school system. However, many leave school without the level of basic competencies, including literacy, which they need to function productively in their social context; others may have dropped out of school or never had any schooling. Such reproduction of illiteracy through poor quality schooling is a serious concern and must be addressed in two ways. On the one hand, the improvement of the formal system is essential, and, on the other, there is a need for alternative, non-formal learning opportunities for those young people who dropped out of school

or did not benefit from any schooling. Equivalency programmes can provide second chance schooling for those who wish to be mainstreamed back into the formal system, addressing mostly older out-of-school children and adolescents. Appropriately designed literacy programmes for young people from the age of 15, particularly when combined with the learning of skills for income generation and other productive activities, can give hope and confidence and build on the energy and aspirations of this age group.

- **Marginalized groups:** Specially designed programmes, based on input from the groups themselves, will often be necessary for the poor, cultural and linguistic minorities, indigenous populations, nomads, migrants, people in rural areas, people with disabilities, prison inmates, and others. Learning styles, patterns of socialization, local and traditional knowledge, language, culture and orality are some of the facets to consider in designing programmes.

The emphasis on investing in high quality primary schooling to allow children to acquire useable literacy and numeracy competences has in fact grown within EFA, where a clear emphasis on quality has brought learning outcomes and their assessment, including literacy competence, to the forefront of policies and support for the school system. As mentioned earlier, this focus is entirely complementary to that of the UNLD as it helps preventing the reproduction of illiteracy. However, children in school, who constitute the third main target group of the original International Plan of Action of the Literacy Decade, are not a key target group of this Strategic Framework, as they are at the heart of the wider EFA movement. The Strategic Framework will thus focus on strategies and actions that are undertaken within the framework of the non-formal education sub-sector, i.e. outside the formal education system.

Strategic objectives

The objectives of the second half of the Decade reflect the outcomes foreseen in the International Plan of Action (recalled at the beginning of this Strategic Framework) and the lessons of the first half of the Decade. The resulting three priority areas are therefore an expression of what the UNLD aims at achieving by the end of 2012, as well as for guiding action in the longer term, and are articulated at the global level in such a way that regional strategies and those of particular partners may find their place. Of course, the three objectives do not represent everything that might be done in literacy - it would be impossible to set any priorities if that were attempted. Nevertheless, the objectives are

over-arching in character, to give both coherence to the global movement and also space for implementation in context. The three objectives are:

- A. To mobilize stronger commitment to literacy;**
- B. To reinforce effective literacy programme delivery;**
- C. To harness new resources for literacy.**

The three objectives provide the structure within which the process of implementation below is articulated.

Implementation

This section details the implementation of the three objectives for the remaining years of the Decade, as listed above. Under each objective, a number of strategies are presented, and these are broken down into a number of actions. These recommended actions also draw on lessons from good practice gained in a variety of countries and initiatives, among others through the UNESCO Regional Literacy Conferences and LIFE, and which have proven successful and effective in various contexts. Clearly, actions take place at different levels - global, regional, national and sub-national, and different kinds of institutions/organizations implement them. The recommended actions provide an indicative framework for specific work plans which each organization or partner would prepare according to its relative advantage, resources, geographical scope, and areas of expertise. Those populations with the greatest needs in literacy should receive priority support in the implementation of the following recommended actions.

Objective A: To mobilize stronger commitment to literacy

Challenge:

Youth and adults with low literacy skills or without any at all, while heterogeneous in their characteristics, constitute as a whole a group that needs greater attention, with particular concern to address issues of gender, young people, people in rural areas, poverty and marginalization. A much stronger recognition of the impact of no or low literacy skills not only on the life and future of every individual, but on their families, communities and society as a whole is needed. Policies and strategies which do not build on this recognition and are not informed by solid data on literacy levels and needs of populations, will not lead to effective action. Furthermore, stronger evidence and clear

argumentation are needed of the benefits of literacy and of the costs of no, few or insufficient literacy competencies across sectors in order to convince decision-makers to invest in literacy, to achieve change in policy and to place literacy at the centre of education plans and development efforts. Moreover, the implementation of adult literacy is often highly dispersed as it is carried out by many different providers. Thus, it requires a much more coordinated and strategic approach.

Strategy:

- (I) **Advocacy** on a much bigger scale, carefully tailored to various target groups, purposes and contexts, based on the right to education, the right to development, the essential need for literacy in today's knowledge-based societies, and the fundamental value of literacy as an enabling skill for further learning opportunities in the framework of lifelong learning, social inclusion, employment and health. Advocacy will aim to influence public policy, harness new resources and foster ownership.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Developing a communication strategy to promote literacy by bringing together a multi-stakeholder team at various levels for advocacy (national/regional/global), taking advantage of the Decade as a framework;
- (b) Identifying, articulating and disseminating key messages, case studies and sound data for particular audiences, including policy-makers, parliamentarians, the private sector, communities and others;
- (c) Stimulating/catalyzing media attention on literacy and advocating through innovative communication activities, including an increased use of ICTs and multimedia;
- (d) Using learners' stories for advocacy purposes and enlisting communities and learners to join advocacy efforts on the benefits of literacy, as learners themselves make excellent advocates;
- (e) Identifying and working with well-known personalities and goodwill ambassadors as champions of literacy, including the Honorary Ambassador for the UNLD and the UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development;
- (f) Using relevant national and international fora, conferences and initiatives to advocate for literacy (EFA events, CONFINTEA VI, Global Action Week, International Literacy Day, etc.);

- (g) Promoting literacy in the framework of working as "One UN" so that UN partners contribute to advocating for literacy in the framework of their respective areas of action and in joint planning, such as UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF);
- (h) Strengthening outreach efforts on the benefits of literacy which help stimulate demand and motivate people with low literacy skills to join literacy programmes;
- (i) Collecting and disseminating effective advocacy practices such as social marketing techniques.

Strategy:

- (2) Clear policy formulation** in literacy as an integral part of sector-wide approaches, particularly at national level. Literacy should be an integral part of education sector plans and national development strategies, and within wider contexts such as the MDGs, Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSP) and UNDAF. Policies must consider literacy as a continuum of skills to be acquired and sustained in an enabling literate environment and as an integral part of continuing education efforts and lifelong learning which requires a long-term commitment. Policies alone are not enough - they require sound strategies for their successful implementation as well as legislative frameworks. These strategies include ensuring effective institutional frameworks and partnerships, adequate financing, standard setting and quality control, good governance and decentralization, monitoring and evaluation.

Recommended actions:

Informing policy formulation:

- (a) Undertaking situation analysis of the policy, implementation strategies, institutional frameworks and practices at country level, as a basis for targeted policies;
- (b) Providing support for policy formulation and enhancement through capacity development, providing relevant data on levels of literacy, literacy needs and programme implementation as well as evidence from effective practice and making available policy briefs;
- (c) Dissemination of good practice in policy formulation;

Formulating clear and focused policies:

- (d) Putting in place adequate and strong policies and strategies embedded in education sector plans and backed by legislation and appropriate resources for the development, implementation and monitoring of programmes at national level;
- (e) Ensuring that national policies reflect and take full advantage of international planning and policy frameworks, such as UNDAFs and PRSPs;
- (f) Designing policies and strategies in such a way that sufficient attention is given to priority groups such as women and girls, young people, rural populations, the marginalized, etc.;
- (g) Including policies for multilingual approaches in literacy and the creation of literate environments;
- (h) Promoting better synergies between non-formal and formal education by strengthening initiatives such as equivalency programmes;
- (i) Strengthening institutional frameworks for the management and delivery of literacy programmes;
- (j) Ensuring accountability at all levels by maintaining a system of programme evaluation in terms of outcomes and cost-benefit;

Policy-making responsibilities:

- (k) Reinforcing the role of government in standard setting, quality control, financing, governance, monitoring and evaluation and benchmarking;
- (l) Strengthening inter-ministerial collaboration and partnerships in the area of literacy and non-formal education (NFE), which are often undertaken by several ministries, and aiming at mainstreaming literacy as part of policy formulation in other relevant ministries;
- (m) Enhancing good governance and decentralization by strengthening and supporting sub-national and local level implementation;
- (n) Associating civil society as well as learners and communities in the policy-making process.

Strategy:

- (3) Improving assessment, monitoring and evaluation** of literacy to provide policy-makers, planners and programme managers with timely, valid and reliable data on literacy levels, the needs of populations and the necessary information on the

performance of the system in order to take informed policy decisions, to monitor and evaluate the implementation of national plans as regards literacy and other related development activities undertaken in the non-formal education (NFE) sub-sector and to provide information on the outputs and benefits of programmes for mobilizing political commitment and funding.

Recommended actions:

Collecting and disseminating sound data:

- (a) Providing good evidence supported by relevant, reliable and valid data through further development and implementation of assessment of literacy levels of populations at country level, drawing on international assessment methodologies such as the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), and national surveys, etc.;
- (b) Fostering the use of household surveys on literacy levels and behaviours, and, when required, adding other domains such as an inventory of the literate environment;
- (c) Investing in situation analysis for mapping needs of and demand for literacy programmes;
- (d) Generating, analysing and interpreting data according to the purposes and needs of the end-users and in cooperation with them at micro, meso and macro levels;
- (e) Ensuring the use of data by producing reports which are easy to read and correspond to the information needs of the end-user;
- (f) Facilitating intergovernmental cooperation in evaluation at regional level in order to collect existing regional data, promote the use of direct surveys and strategic plans and providing technical support to countries of the region wishing to improve their information systems;
- (g) Assisting countries in setting up management information systems for NFE which includes youth and adult literacy;

Monitoring and evaluating literacy programmes:

- (h) Improving programme evaluation, including through the design of prototype evaluation methodologies;
- (i) Evaluating programmes in terms of their effectiveness (learning outcomes);

- (j) Fostering impact studies based on direct surveys to evaluate the use and effectiveness of programmes;
- (k) Promoting the development and use of benchmarks based on analysis of key criteria for effective programmes.

Strategy:

- (4) Stronger and more strategic partnerships** and alliances at national, regional and global levels based on a common understanding of the value of literacy, on mutual support and on the comparative advantage of each partner.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Mapping stakeholders and partners at various levels and identifying their roles and responsibilities in the area of literacy as well as their potential new and untapped roles;
- (b) Fostering North-South, South-South and North-South-South collaboration;
- (c) Fostering exchanges of experience and expertise between countries at the regional level, as regional and inter-regional networks provide opportunities for mutual learning;
- (d) Facilitating better cooperation between stakeholders at the national level (e.g. government, civil society organizations, voluntary associations, UN organisations, universities, and the private sector), and strengthening sub-national and local partnerships in the implementation of literacy programmes;
- (e) Further developing partnerships with universities and research institutions in supporting literacy in order to provide an evidence base for future development;
- (f) Networking with partners in the private sector to generate cooperation for literacy worldwide;
- (g) Organizing regular consultations of the key international partners for the UNLD to review the implementation of the Strategic Framework.

Objective B: To reinforce effective literacy programme delivery

Challenge:

Literacy programmes often suffer from insufficient quality, relevance and capacity, and are organizationally and managerially weak, limiting their impact on the literacy situation.

Facilitators, a key element to quality programme delivery, are often insufficiently trained, have a low status and an inadequate salary. Other elements of quality programmes do not receive sufficient attention, including: a) a basis of sound evidence of what works; b) capacity development at the institutional level as well as at the programme level; and c) ensuring that acquired skills are used and sustained. Poor orientation to the needs and characteristics of communities and key populations such as girls and women, youth and marginalized groups undercuts the relevance of programmes. Lack of demand-led programming impairs the achievement of learning outcomes that enhance the learners' capacities to improve their lives (programmes including life skills training, health, income generation, citizenship, etc.).

Strategy:

- (I) Increasing the scale and quality of delivery** while adapting management systems and structures, teaching methods and materials to respond to diverse contexts and needs. Account should be taken of the learners' knowledge and prior learning experiences. Further learning - including continuing education as well as other learning opportunities to meet evolving needs and new literacy and competency demands - should be provided in the framework of lifelong learning.

Recommended actions:

Improving programme quality:

- (a) Promoting collaboration among all stakeholders, i.e. relevant ministries, as well as with NGOs, private foundations and others for coordinated delivery of programmes;
- (b) Promoting high levels of community participation with appropriate decentralization of planning and management processes accompanied by capacity development;
- (c) Promoting innovative and flexible use of human resources for programme provision, which should cut across sectors, such as rural extension staff, health workers, university students, the private sector, community volunteers, etc.;
- (d) Developing quality assurance mechanisms and standards for literacy programmes at national level;
- (e) Putting in place certification of non-formal learning outcomes and recognizing prior learning;

Learning from effective practices:

- (f) Collecting and disseminating information on effective literacy practices, including innovative instructional methods, pedagogies and approaches, and fostering the use of this information;
- (g) Analyzing literacy practices to identify the factors that make a programme effective and use the lessons learnt for policy and strategy formulation, and on this basis, to consider the establishment or revision of benchmarks for youth and adult literacy programmes;
- (h) Encouraging exchange of knowledge on effective practices for their possible adaption and application in other contexts;
- (i) Providing advice for developing and planning quality literacy programmes including on teaching methods and materials specifically adapted to target groups on the basis of the analysis of a wide range of literacy practices collected all over the world;
- (j) Investing in bringing effective programmes to scale;

Tailoring content and modes of delivery:

- (k) Mapping groups which are most in need in order to better target literacy interventions and increase access for these priority groups;
- (l) Promoting modular, flexible curricula which can be adjusted according to changing needs and contexts;
- (m) Promoting multilingual approaches in literacy provision, using the mother tongue or first language of the learner as medium of instruction and as a basis for learning national and international languages and of acquiring literacy in these languages;
- (n) Fostering targeted programmes which have demonstrated impact, such as family literacy and intergenerational learning, literacy for economic self-sufficiency, literacy for health, literacy for rural development, etc;
- (o) Exploring diverse modes of delivery to increase access for priority groups and to ensure high quality literacy interventions, e.g. peer-to-peer, family-based and corporate volunteering approaches;
- (p) Fostering literacy acquisition as part of other development and learning programmes and in cultural activities, and integrating practical and productive skills into literacy programmes;

- (q) Enabling ongoing progression in the development of literacy skills, including vocational training;
- (r) Promoting, improving and expanding approaches to numeracy acquisition as a field which is linked to but pedagogically distinct from literacy, with particular attention to appropriate learning and teaching methods;
- (s) Promoting innovative and appropriate use of new information technologies in literacy programmes, especially to reach groups with special needs and in less accessible areas;
- (t) Using incentives to motivate learners in difficult circumstances (poverty, remoteness, physical handicap, fear of stigma, etc.) to attend classes and complete them, through for example food rations, reading glasses, distance learning programmes, intergenerational learning or workplace literacy programmes, etc.

Strategy:

- (2) **Enriching literate environments** to sustain skills, to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and access to knowledge, and to put literacy to use in meaningful ways. Literate environments vary according to context and thus encompass diverse languages, cultures and means of expression, including oral traditions. They should reflect the diverse and changing needs at all literacy levels in order to encourage continuous learning.

Recommended actions:

Understanding and analyzing literate environments:

- (a) Analyzing the multiple dimensions of literacy practices in particular literate environments and determining how to enhance these practices;
- (b) Collecting and sharing good practices for the development of literate environments;
- (c) Supporting research on the most appropriate approaches to creating literate environments and formats for promoting the use of literacy;
- (d) Developing guidelines for enhancing the literate environment and preparing policy briefs to support appropriate national policies and programme design;

Expanding and stimulating literate environments:

- (e) Building on oral traditions and expressions and supporting diversity of cultural context and knowledge;
- (f) Promoting access to quality materials which are of interest to learners and neo-literates and involving them in material development;
- (g) Strengthening local initiatives including libraries and Community Learning Centres (CLCs), through capacity development of their staff, and promoting mobile libraries and reading campaigns in schools and communities;
- (h) Promoting mutually supportive strategies for literacy use between families, schools and the community, and between formal and non-formal approaches to literacy acquisition;
- (i) Promoting local authors and writers, including in local languages as part of a multilingual approach, and supporting publishing and distribution of high quality local materials;
- (j) Promoting the use of multimedia, including ICTs, also as a cost-effective way of publishing and disseminating materials.

Strategy:

- (3) Capacity development in all aspects of literacy and at all levels,** catering for a wide range of partners, with a strong and effective training-of-trainers component; comprehensive strategies for capacity development, as an integral part of literacy planning and with funding provision in the core budget, will ensure long-term investments in literacy as part of a lifelong learning continuum.

Recommended actions:

Investing in capacity development:

- (a) Mapping existing capacities and gaps, and building comprehensive strategies for capacity development at all levels - as an integral part of moving to long-term investments in literacy programmes;
- (b) Giving special attention to literacy facilitators and investing in their training and promoting their professionalization and appropriate remuneration;
- (c) Investing in capacity development for monitoring and evaluation of literacy programmes within government and civil society - addressing both the evaluation of reading; writing and numeracy outcomes and the evaluation of wider impacts on development - to help build national dossiers on the case for literacy;

- (d) Undertaking joint capacity development programmes between ministries and CSOs thus building collaboration between these actors;
- (e) Undertaking capacity development for partners from various sectors (e.g. universities, the private sector, community associations, etc.) to effectively support their engagement in literacy initiatives;
- (f) Working with universities to ensure that courses are available for the professional development of trainers, supervisors, managers, planners, and others at district and national levels;

Developing capacities in the multiple dimensions of literacy:

- (g) Developing national institutional capacity in the relevant ministries in policy formulation, educational planning, policy simulation and dialogue, resource projections, sector management, development cooperation, donor coordination, etc.;
- (h) Developing capacity in putting in place comprehensive Management Information Systems for non-formal education, thus providing information on the provision of non-formal education and literacy programmes and improving their management and coordination;
- (i) Developing capacities and partnerships at all levels for the assessment of literacy rates, moving from a dichotomous approach to one that recognizes a continuum - in order to reveal the full scale of the literacy challenge;
- (j) Developing capacities for advocacy at the national and local levels;
- (k) Working with book and newspaper publishers, government agencies, NGOs and multi-media producers to develop their capacity to produce appropriate materials for adult learners and ensure capacities for wide distribution, especially to rural communities;
- (l) Supporting capacity development for materials development at local and district levels to ensure relevance of literacy programmes;
- (m) Developing research capacities at all levels, including in networking across countries (S-S, N-S, S-N) and building partnerships between researchers and practitioners.

Strategy:

- (4) Research** to provide sound data for advocacy and policy formulation and for improving programme quality. Research and development are inextricably linked;

and research must focus on informing change. Research must keep a clear focus on the key objectives, considering what must be achieved for whom and why and within a given timeframe.

Recommended actions:

Gathering and using research findings:

- (a) Identifying research gaps and facilitating relevant research including action-research on topics in the area of literacy policy, quality of programme content and delivery, including teaching and learning methods and approaches, and relevant thematic studies to inform policy making and improve programme delivery and thus determine priority areas for further research in literacy;
- (b) Deploying methods suited to the investigation of the multiple dimensions of literacy: situation analysis, household surveys, needs assessments, case studies, formative evaluations, evaluation of learning outcomes, impact studies, policy-oriented research, action-research, etc.;
- (c) Developing a research knowledge base and disseminating available research data and results in appropriate formats, focusing on key messages for different audiences, illustrated with case studies;
- (d) Translating research findings into practice, tailored to relevant audiences;

Fostering research networks and partnerships:

- (e) Fostering partnerships, collaboration and exchange of experience among universities and research institutions to strengthen their capacity in research design and methods and support young researchers in their work;
- (f) Further developing a network of universities and literacy researchers and providing a platform for sharing relevant existing research on youth and adult literacy and non-formal education;
- (g) Supporting joint North-South and South-South research projects;
- (h) Building and strengthening collaborative action-research programmes with NGOs, research institutions and private foundations;
- (i) Working with potential research funding institutions (e.g. trusts, research councils, government departments, donors) to identify and allocate funds to support the priority areas for research under the UNLD.

Objective C: To harness new resources for literacy

Challenge:

The general inadequacy of funding for literacy and the need for much enhanced levels of financing of literacy by national governments and donor agencies are a key constraint upon achieving the goals of the Decade. Funding of youth and adult literacy often takes second place to other needs, particularly the formal education system and, within that, primary schooling. Lack of integration of youth and adult literacy into education sector priorities leads to low funding allocations by governments or to leaving it to other actors, such as civil society. Whereas the financing of the schooling system is channelled through one or more dedicated ministries, the responsibility for financing youth and adult literacy may be dispersed or unclear. Moreover, there is, in some instances, little or no recognition, both at national and international level, of the importance of literacy and its social and economic impact, and this results in lack of attention to literacy in the planning of national budgets and international aid.

Strategy:

- (I) Recommend national governments to increase their allocation of budgets** for youth and adult literacy and to ensure that literacy is brought into the mainstream funding process.

Recommended actions:

Strengthening political commitment:

- (a) Promoting strong legislative frameworks to underpin adequate financial allocations;
- (b) Working closely with ministries of finance for adequate attention to long-term investment in literacy as an integral part of relevant core national budgets;
- (c) Strengthening civil society initiatives which lobby for an increased investment in literacy by national governments;
- (d) In a multi-sector approach (e.g. literacy and health, literacy and employment, etc.), working at linking together all sources of funding as part of national planning for literacy to maximize output and attract additional/complementary funding;
- (e) Lobbying for a clear commitment to include adult literacy investment in sector-wide approaches, PRSPs, UNDAFs and other national planning frameworks;

Investing effectively in literacy efforts:

- (f) Carefully studying the needs and using policy simulation and resource projection methods to properly determine investment requirements for literacy to be reflected in national education budgets;
- (g) At national level, basing resource allocations on prioritized needs, such as needs identified by local communities and for specific target groups;
- (h) At national level, basing resource allocation on outcomes and efficiency - putting in place a strong evaluation mechanism to ensure accountability at all levels;

Identifying additional funding mechanisms:

- (i) Mobilizing funds at national, provincial, municipal and community levels;
- (j) Promoting funding initiatives from local entities and communities as important complementary funding sources;
- (k) Building strong public-private partnerships for literacy.

Strategy:

- (2) Influence bilateral, multilateral and private donor organizations to fund literacy activities** and recognize the social and economic impact of literacy.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Raising awareness of bilateral and multilateral donors so that literacy is put on their agendas;
- (b) Further exploring and making use of relevant existing funding mechanisms at regional (e.g. funding frameworks of the European Commission) and international levels;
- (c) Lobbying for a clear commitment to include adult literacy investments in the EFA Fast Track Initiative, and other aid for poverty reduction, based on national development plans;
- (d) Promoting the newly established UNLD Fund to Advance Global Literacy and calling for contributions from bilateral, multilateral and Member States and private donors;
- (e) Encouraging in-kind contributions for literacy programmes, such as human resources and expertise, material, etc.;

- (f) Tailoring funding requests to specific interests and priorities of potential donors.

Strategy:

(3) Developing new models and systematically compiling evidence on literacy programme costs.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Designing and undertaking collaborative action-research on literacy programme costs, and studies on the opportunity costs of illiteracy;
- (b) Providing evidence on the costs and benefits of effective literacy programmes and on the costs of illiteracy to national governments, international organizations and the donor community;
- (c) Developing financial projection models for investment in youth and adult literacy to reach national policy targets and the EFA goals.

Partner responsibilities

Effective literacy promotion depends on the efforts of a wide range of partners, and the strategies and actions shown in the previous section will be carried out in practice by various kinds of institutions. Since literacy promotion is multi-dimensional, each category of partner may be involved in many of the actions listed, but will have major responsibility only in some of them. This section gives a brief overview of how the **major** responsibilities may be distributed. To avoid repetition of the previous section, where there is no mention of a strategy or action, this does not mean that a particular partner does not contribute in that area or that it may not do so in the future.

All partners should work to promote **stronger and more strategic partnerships**, with a pro-active commitment of each partner to identify areas of concern which they share with other partners and to work in complementary and mutually supportive ways.

- **National governments**, through their central and decentralized services, will be active in all aspects of literacy, but will have major responsibility for **policy formulation**. Policies require sound strategies for their successful implementation - and they need to be backed by legislation. These strategies include ensuring **effective institutional frameworks**, sound **delivery** mechanisms and the coordination of

partnerships. Through national budgets, governments have the primary role in **funding**, and must take the lead in setting **standards** and **coordinating** delivery which includes good governance and assuring quality in implementation and learning outcomes as well as **monitoring and evaluation.** Moreover, as **employers**, governments can ensure the delivery of literacy programmes of significant scale, relevance and quality as well as set a good example of institutional responsibility.

- **Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and networks**, at both national and international levels, play a key role in the delivery of literacy programmes on the ground. Civil society organizations have a responsibility to improve the **quality of delivery** through innovation, capacity development and creative enrichment of the literate environment, by linking literacy provision with other learning opportunities and development programmes and by responding to evolving literacy and competency demands. CSOs also have a particular role in **advocacy**, pointing to needs and gaps in the coverage and effectiveness of literacy and using their experience to **inform policy.**
- **Universities and research institutes** will support the objectives of the UNLD and the advancement of literacy mainly through focused **research activities.** This will include the mapping of information gaps, the identification of priority information needs and the generation of research-based data and evidence to inform policy-making, delivery and practices as well as advocacy. The strengthening of the **dissemination of information** and **knowledge exchange** will be another important contribution. Universities and research institutes will also play a significant role in **capacity development**, not only in the area of research, but also in the training of practitioners and educators. Further, university students can also be involved in literacy work through voluntary action.
- The **private sector** has a particular role in providing expertise for **capacity development** and can often offer **additional funding**, as well as in-kind contributions. By delivering literacy in the workplace in ways that are linked to the needs of employees and employers, private enterprises can contribute significantly to increasing the **scale** of delivery. Moreover, through outreach, volunteering and advocacy, private enterprises can visibly fulfil their **corporate social responsibility.**
- **Bilateral development agencies** have two particular roles to play: First, they provide significant and essential **external financial resources** to literacy efforts, through both government and civil society channels. Second, they can influence international **development agendas** so that literacy gains higher priority and greater integration as a component of other development goals and targets. In this regard, an explicit

commitment should be made to include youth and adult literacy investments in the EFA Fast Track Initiative, and other aid for poverty reduction.

- **Regional organizations and international development agencies** will serve as platforms for sharing and **disseminating the policies and practices** of literacy promotion, with a consequent role in capacity development. Improving quality through regional **monitoring and evaluation** is a further major role at this level.
- The **UN system** serves as a network for **raising awareness** on the urgent need to tackle the enormous literacy challenge worldwide and continuing **advocacy** for the benefits of literacy, as well as a platform for **disseminating information** and results. Relevant national and international fora, conferences and initiatives should be used to advocate for literacy. Through UN mechanisms at country level, greater synergy and **stronger partnerships** for literacy will be generated. Literacy should be an integral part of the Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Reduction Strategies and UN Development Assistance Frameworks. Furthermore, each relevant UN organization should promote literacy according to its own mandate and work plans. **UNESCO**, as the coordinator of the UNLD, will continue to stimulate and catalyse the activities of the Decade and literacy efforts beyond 2012. In particular, LIFE will continue to be UNESCO's key implementing mechanism of the Decade which will promote action at the country level. UNESCO's coordination and leadership role is expressed in more detail in the following Section 'Coordination of the Decade'.
- With regard to their contribution to the Decade within the context of this International Strategic Framework, **all partners** should identify areas of action and develop their own **work plans and timelines** on the basis of their mandate. These plans should be provided to UNESCO as a way to promote synergies and collaboration as well as to capture ongoing initiatives in the field of literacy. Partners will also take responsibility for **ongoing monitoring and evaluation** of their actions and for reporting on them when requested to do so as part of the regular reporting to the UN General Assembly on the implementation of the Decade.

Regional strategic concerns

The strategies and recommended actions presented above are valid at a global level and therefore, in a general way, for all regions. They already include priorities that were identified as common to all regions in the outcomes of the UNESCO Regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy (2007-2008), in regional analyses of EFA

progress, in regional progress reports on literacy which were commissioned for the UNLD mid-Decade review (2008), in the reports on the regional LIFE meetings, regional support strategies, the *Maputo Strategic Platform for LIFE* and national LIFE Action Plans, the regional and national reports on adult learning produced as part of the CONFINTEA VI and the outcome documents of the regional conferences in preparation of CONFINTEA VI.

The following regional strategic concerns represent specific priorities for each of the three strategic objectives, in addition to the global strategies presented above. In other words, what follows is based on the assumption that each region will adopt the global strategies at their own level, and will do so in the light of the emphases, priorities and special strategic concerns shown below.

Africa

Even though literacy is still not receiving the attention it deserves in Africa, important progress has been made during recent years: literacy is more prominent on the political agenda, the education budget has increased and various competencies have been transferred within a decentralization process. These new dynamics have been especially strengthened thanks to the important role that civil society plays in this crucial development sector.

However, over 150 million adults, 60 per cent of them women, have no literacy skills whatsoever. The literacy challenge is inseparable from problems such as poverty, the HIV pandemic, and conflicts. Out of 44 sub-Saharan African countries, only 7 have an estimated adult literacy rate above 80 per cent; 18 countries have a literacy rate under 50 per cent or an illiterate population of more than 10 million. These 18 countries, which are part of LIFE, are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

This lack of literacy skills stems from the fact that scant attention is paid to providing education to target groups in different contexts, such as adults who have never been to school, out-of-school youth, and young people and adults who have received primary schooling but lost a high proportion if not all of their literacy skills. Literacy efforts are allocated only minimum resources and are rarely integrated into sector-

wide education policies and intersectoral development agendas. Moreover, the sustainability of literacy is not guaranteed as little is done to establish the necessary literate environment.

Key issues to be addressed to tackle literacy challenges in Africa are:

Objective A: To mobilize stronger commitment to literacy

- Developing and implementing holistic, diversified, cross-sectoral and integrated policies, adequate strategic plans and budgets, while ensuring that local stakeholders and communities give input into the planning and implementation of high quality literacy policies and programmes;
- Encouraging multi-partnership coalitions at the local, regional and national level, involving the state, civil society and the private sector, supporting existing networks and promoting further regional and sub-regional networking;

Objective B: To reinforce effective literacy programme delivery

- Ensuring quality literacy at the heart of a lifelong learning framework, putting the learners' needs and interests at the centre of programme design;
- Paying particular attention to gender equality and taking actions that foster the participation of girls and women in literacy;
- Promoting the use of African languages in all domains of language use, especially through the implementation of multilingual language policies that recognize and respond to the vibrant role of African languages and enhance multilingual competences in the official and national languages;
- Investing in capacity-development at all levels by strengthening national and regional training centres;
- Sustaining strategies for the recognition and professionalization of facilitators, by upgrading their status, remuneration and qualifications;
- Supporting African universities and research institutions active in the field of literacy in research design and methodologies;
- Establishing mobile rural literacy teams to promote demand for literacy and set up sustainable literacy structures;
- Promoting the use of ICTs in literacy provision;

Objective C: To harness new resources for literacy

- Increasing the non-formal education allocation for literacy to at least three per cent of the education sector's budget;
- Including other financing sources through cooperation with other ministries and development agencies using a multi-sectoral approach;
- Strengthening partnerships with the private sector in order to obtain additional resources.

Arab States

The literacy rate within the Arab States region is estimated to be 72 per cent (GMR 2009). Some 60 million adults are considered to be illiterate, out of which 66 percent are girls and women. While there are significant disparities in literacy levels across countries in the region as a whole, illiteracy is concentrated in the poorest countries of the region as well as those affected by armed conflict. In addition to disparities based on gender, illiteracy also continues to be more prevalent in rural areas, where the majority of the poor reside. While progress has been observed in reducing illiteracy among youth and adults within the region, efforts need to be accelerated, particularly in the region's six LIFE countries - Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen, - where illiteracy rates and/or absolute numbers of illiterate adults are the highest.

Key issues to be addressed to tackle literacy challenges in the Arab States are:

Objective A: To mobilize stronger commitment to literacy

- Ensuring stronger political commitment at national and local levels including legislative, institutional and financial provision that are pre-requisites for successful literacy programmes;
- Using a broader concept of literacy encompassing skills necessary for productive and active participation in society, beyond merely reading, writing and numeracy, with integration into wider development strategies;
- Beyond basic literacy, the region needs to invest more strongly in sustainability and continuing education, in the framework of lifelong learning;
- Setting up a mechanism for effective coordination between governments, NGOs and private sector;

- Give high priority to out-of-school children, youth and adults in conflict and post-conflict countries;
- Reducing the reproduction of illiteracy among youth by enforcing implementation of legislation relative to compulsory schooling, strengthening measures to reverse patterns of school dropout, and improving levels of learning outcomes in basic schooling;
- Establishing and implement a strong and comprehensive advocacy plan making use of all forms of media;
- Establishing a regional working group where experiences and lessons in literacy can be shared and new ideas proposed;
- Reinforcing linkages between formal and non-formal education within a national qualification framework;

Objective B: To reinforce effective literacy programme delivery

- Giving greater attention to the scaling-up of successful effective programmes;
- Ensuring literacy learning for women and girls, both inside and outside the school system. Within that, female rural adult literacy needs special attention, with adequate focus on matching the context and purposes of literacy with the circumstances and needs of female learners;
- Producing reliable data to assess, monitor and evaluate literacy programmes;
- Basing literacy programmes on sound action-oriented research, both in terms of understanding particular contexts and needs, and in terms of learning lessons from previous experience or from programmes elsewhere;
- Mobilizing university students and other youth organizations to increase the scope of delivery of literacy programmes;
- Giving priority to capacity development for all aspects of programme delivery;
- Developing common quality standards for basic literacy in Arabic;
- Using innovative means and ICTs in literacy in effective ways to widen the scale of delivery and improve quality of provision;

Objective C: To harness new resources for literacy

- Requesting governments to provide necessary funds to implement the national literacy plan as an integral part of the national budget;

- Encouraging coordination between government and all stakeholders especially the private sector and civil society organizations, to mobilize financial resources;
- Calling upon joint Arab funds to help countries that face big challenges in combating illiteracy;
- Seeking international technical and financial support for LIFE countries in the region, especially in support of projects for education of girls and women;
- Ensuring cost-effectiveness, accountability and transparency in use of resources.

Asia/Pacific

In Asia, adult literacy rates vary from 28 per cent in Afghanistan to almost 100 per cent in several Central Asian countries. Bangladesh, China, India and Pakistan together still have 56 per cent of the 776 million illiterate adults in the world. Nine countries in the region are part of the UNESCO Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE); Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea. A serious gender gap persists in many countries and reflects the differential social status of women and men. The region as a whole is characterized by an enormous cultural and linguistic diversity, calling for a high level of attention to context in designing adequate literacy programmes and regional and sub-regional strategies. However, successful and sustainable local literacy policies and initiatives do exist and pave the way for replication in other places and contexts.

Throughout the region, illiteracy is concentrated in populations that are marginalized from the mainstream national population socially and economically and that often do not even have access to basic education. Reaching these disadvantaged groups is the overarching challenge for increasing literacy in Asia and the Pacific and will need particular efforts from governments, supported by other partners, such as civil society, communities and bilateral and multilateral agencies.

Key issues to be addressed to tackle literacy challenges in the Asia/Pacific region are:

Objective A: To mobilize stronger commitment to literacy

- Governments, as key stakeholders in literacy, should give space, support and encouragement to viable organizations at community, provincial and national levels which give committed support to community learning and which are essential for the sustainability of literacy efforts.

- Regional mechanisms and collaboration should be initiated and strengthened in order to understand and address the implications for literacy provision of urban/rural and cross-border migration and in small island states. A common platform and/or regional think-tank should be created that helps to coordinate common actions.
- Local stakeholders and communities should be involved in the planning and implementation of literacy programmes.
- The private sector in the sub-region should engage more strongly in multi-stakeholder partnerships for youth and adult literacy, emphasizing the links between literacy, skills and employability.
- Policies should emphasize the organic and mutually beneficial links between formal schooling for children and non-formal adult and youth learning programmes, as well as linkages between ECCE, primary and secondary education.
- Articulations between formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning should be forged so that learners may easily access lifelong learning opportunities, gain equivalency and validate their knowledge.

Objective B: To reinforce effective literacy programme delivery

- Existing regional mechanisms and collaboration should be strengthened in order to exchange good practices, innovative approaches and experiences and should be supported through technical assistance.
- Local stakeholders and communities should be actively involved in the development of meaningful learning material, building on relevant learning needs and responding to a multi-lingual context.
- Community-based structures, such as Community Learning Centres (CLCs), should be strengthened to provide programmes for the disadvantaged, with the sharing of lessons on CLCs across the region.
- Particular attention should be paid to gender equality at all levels of the education sector, especially by taking actions that foster the participation of girls and women in literacy.
- Partners in literacy should make innovative and appropriate use of new technologies, including ICTs, in all kinds of literacy programmes in order to reach groups with special needs and in less accessible areas.
- Programmes of family literacy and intergenerational learning should be considered as ways of integrating and strengthening both adult and child literacy.

- Governments should endeavour to ensure that literacy facilitators receive appropriate compensation comparable to teachers in the formal system.
- The development of a literate environment should be promoted in order to support literacy and post-literacy efforts.

Objective C: To harness new resources for literacy

- Literacy providers and funders should invest in long-term efforts within a framework of lifelong learning as evidence shows that short-term literacy programmes do not produce sustainable literacy competence and use.
- An effective advocacy strategy should be developed and launched in order to acquire additional resources and support.

Europe/North America

Recent surveys have revealed the size and shape of the problem of low skills and lack of basic competencies that the region is facing. Despite common assumptions, low literacy levels among youth and adults do not affect only minority groups. Within mainstream European and North American populations there are larger numbers than generally acknowledged who have weak foundations in literacy. In addition, early school leaving with insufficient skills is becoming an issue in the region. Europe, in particular, is a very heterogeneous region, and literacy and basic competencies challenges differ in Northern compared to Southern, or Western compared to Eastern Europe.

Individuals and societies confront many new demands: rapid social and technological change, economic and cultural globalization, growing diversity, competition and liberalization, inequality of opportunities, conflict and poverty in all forms. Today, other skills are also needed, particularly to assess, manage, integrate, interact with and evaluate knowledge.

Among the specific emphases and priorities in the region are the following:

Objective A: To mobilize stronger commitment to literacy

- There is, in general, very little demand for literacy and skills training in Europe and North America and important advocacy work is needed to motivate learners to join courses. The general public but also decision makers have to be convinced that illiteracy and low skills are an issue for minorities and migrants, as well as for the whole society.

- In a region where the dimensions of literacy continue to evolve, there is a need for surveys to understand the nature and volume of new literacy demands among different social groups. In this respect, it will be necessary to further develop cooperation at regional and international levels in the assessment, monitoring and evaluation of literacy, and draw on the increasing range of tools and methods of assessment, adapting them to local cultural and linguistic realities.
- The European Commission has put in place a set of tools (Quality Assurance Framework, European Qualification Framework, etc.) which should be used more widely to better assess, monitor and evaluate literacy provision.
- Governments in the region must facilitate access to learning literacy and other key competencies for the groups most excluded from learning opportunities, by removing barriers, financial and otherwise, and literacy providers should tailor their approaches to the particular circumstances of disadvantaged groups in such a way as to enhance their life chances.

Objective B: To reinforce effective literacy programme delivery

- Low demand for the existing offer is also due to the low quality of the supplied courses and strong investment is needed in designing relevant and stimulating programmes.
- Many good experiences, practices and policies exist and should be made available and shared.
- Based on survey data, countries in the region should regularly update learning programmes in order to ensure that the literacy components are relevant to learners' needs and appropriate to specific purposes.
- Literacy providers should adopt teaching and learning approaches that are tailored to adults and to the specific learning outcomes desired by learners. Intercultural learning and multilingual approaches, promoted in particular by the Council of Europe, are particularly relevant in many contexts.
- Literacy providers should use delivery methods (pedagogical approaches, timing, duration, place, materials, etc.) which are suitable for the circumstances of learners, and undertake effective professional development of literacy facilitators and others working in the area of literacy.
- Providers of education need to make a clear distinction between literacy learning and learning a new language, and between literacy and numeracy learning, given that the methods of acquiring these various competencies are quite different.

- Literacy providers should consider the use of peer learning, particularly among youth, as a means of literacy acquisition.
- Employers should recognize the needs of their employees to improve their literacy skills, with clear acknowledgement of the role played by trade unions in facilitating workplace learning. All those working with employees should integrate the learning of necessary literacy competencies into the learning of skills in the workplace.
- Certification of learning outcomes is crucial for the motivation and retention of learners.

Objective C: To harness new resources for literacy

- Greater use should be made of important funding mechanisms (European Social Fund, Lifelong learning programme funding for transnational projects, etc.) that the European Commission provides in order to develop literacy programmes.
- Literacy and skills training programmes have a wide range of funders in the region, such as NGOs, private partners, trade unions, etc. They should combine their efforts for consolidating and expanding existing provision.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Despite a serious commitment of governments and specialized institutions at the national and regional level as well as an increase of literacy rates, the Latin American and Caribbean region is still marked by striking disparities. While the adult literacy rate for Latin America is 91 per cent, it is 74 per cent in the Caribbean. In addition, there is a strong gender disparity disfavours women in countries with significant indigenous populations such as Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru, and disfavours young men in the Caribbean. In fact, nearly 35 million adults in the region do not possess the necessary reading and writing skills to equip them for meeting the demands of daily life and work, and for facilitating their continuous learning in today's knowledge societies. Moreover, it is estimated that some 110 million young people do not complete primary school and consequently do not have sufficient literacy skills to participate fully in their societies. There are only two LIFE countries in the region, which are Brazil and Haiti.

For Latin America, the Ibero-American Plan for Literacy and Basic Education for Youth and Adults (elaborated by the Organization of Ibero-American States) sums up regional objectives for the coming years in six points: 1) national plans to universalize literacy; 2) a renewed and broader concept of literacy for current socio-economic realities; 3)

adequate national budgets; 4) support where necessary from international financial partners; 5) regional cooperation in literacy; 6) linking literacy planning with strategies to prevent school dropout and failure.

For the Caribbean, a particular focus on understanding literacy needs through better and more reliable data with systematic data collection has been noted. In this region, the gender imbalance disadvantages the male population and there is a need to redress this through action focused on men and boys. However, there are also significant needs among unemployed female youth. There is a further need to reinforce literacy skills for secondary school students whose difficulties may go unnoticed.

Among the specific emphases and priorities in both parts of the region are the following:

Objective A: To mobilize stronger commitment to literacy

- Given the high costs of illiteracy, the literacy challenge needs to remain on the political agenda and public spending on literacy efforts should not decrease, even in times of crisis.
- Public discourse concerning literacy should not be limited to illiteracy rates and their political dimension but should emphasize the capacities developed by literacy programmes and promote literacy in the context of lifelong learning.
- The role of civil society in literacy provision needs to be strengthened without relieving public bodies from their indubitable responsibility in this field. Civil society needs to play a stronger role in policy formulation and programme planning, as well as in monitoring implementation of policy, as a public watchdog.
- The cooperation between key stakeholders such as governments and civil society needs to be transparent and well-coordinated.
- Countries in the region seek greater engagement of universities, the education system as a whole and of social movements in articulating relevant policies for the training of teachers of young people and adults.
- In order that learners, particularly youth and adults, should be able to make the maximum use of literacy and other competencies they acquire for productive purposes in the labour market, there is a clear need for systems of evaluation, monitoring and registration that guarantee accreditation and certification of knowledge and skills.

- The region has expressed a desire to promote horizontal cooperation between countries with a view to strengthening sustainable strategies in literacy, and has called on UNESCO to coordinate the pursuit of goals established in international conferences and monitor achievements.
- In order to strengthen cooperation, create synergies and support national efforts, the regional action plan should serve to share effective practices in the region.

Objective B: To reinforce effective literacy programme delivery

- In a context of deep and widespread inequalities, literacy efforts must take full account of diversity across the region: cultural, ethnic, gender, racial and other markers of difference, in the light of deepening marginalization of some groups such as rural and indigenous populations, afro-descendants (in Latin America), migrants, people with special learning needs and prison inmates. Hence, curricula and learning materials need to be adequate, contextualized and relevant to learners.
- All facilitators must be sufficiently trained and qualified to perform their role as effectively as possible, especially in a multilingual and multicultural context.
- In order to correspond more closely to learners' needs and to increase the value of literacy efforts, programmes should be linked to vocational training and other development sectors such as health or environment.

Objective C: To harness new resources for literacy

- Some programmes suffer from under-funding and thus lack sustainability. There is a need for strategies to institutionalize action in literacy, with the long-term, predictable funding that it requires.
- Additional resources can be generated by enhancing cooperation between the various stakeholders in literacy and by reducing competition and duplication at national and local levels in order to reduce current inefficiencies.

Coordination of the Decade

When the UN General Assembly (2002) designated UNESCO as the coordinating agency for the Decade, it defined its role as "stimulating and catalyzing the activities undertaken at the international level within the framework of the Decade..." In the

International Plan of Action (2002) the coordinating role was focused on working "...towards creating meaningful and goal-oriented partnerships in order to encourage inclusive planning and implementation of the Literacy Decade."

In this Strategic Framework, the work of building partnerships and alliances falls under the first priority area of 'Mobilizing stronger commitment to literacy' and will be addressed in the UNESCO Workplan. This section addresses the functions of strategizing, planning, monitoring and reporting on the Decade.

Strategizing and Planning

UNESCO will bring partners and stakeholders together to give input into the ongoing development of the Decade, on the basis that full engagement in upstream planning is the best way to generate ownership of subsequent partnerships and action.

Thus, UNESCO will:

- Bring the UNLD Expert Group together at regular intervals and at least once a year;
- Organize broader technical consultations to examine and validate key processes of the Decade;
- Organize, co-organize or catalyze meetings at regional and national levels for the purpose of developing strategies and plans for implementing the Decade at those levels.
- Further develop, refine or modify the Strategic Framework at international level, as becomes necessary in the light of progress, trends, circumstances or global events.
- Coordinate and facilitate LIFE as UNESCO's programmatic response to the UNLD and the literacy goal of EFA;

Monitoring and reporting on UNLD

Regular monitoring and reporting on the progress of the Decade is structured by the requirements of the UNESCO Executive Board and General Conference and the UN General Assembly (see below). The experience of the mid-Decade review made it clear that it will be most productive and helpful to plan and execute these functions in an integrated manner, leading up to a final evaluation in 2013 (provisional proposal), the year following the official end of the Decade.

This process will include indicator development. In developing indicators, the focus will be on those which enable a final evaluation of the impact of the Decade, in terms of its original proposed outcomes and, following the dissemination of this Strategic Framework, also in terms of the strategic objectives, strategies and actions proposed here. The development process will determine a limited number of relevant indicators, of a nature and scope to give a global picture of the difference that the Decade has made to literacy promotion. The continuous monitoring and evaluation of LIFE at national and international levels as well as the mid-term evaluation of LIFE, which will be conducted in 2011, will also feed into this process. In terms of monitoring progress of the spread of literacy as such, the EFA Global Monitoring Report will continue to collate, analyze and present data on an annual basis as it monitors progress towards the six EFA goals and in particular Goal 4.

The known and expected reporting requirements are as follows:

- 2009 Report on UNLD progress to UNESCO Executive Board;
- 2010 Report on UNLD progress to UNGA;
- 2011 Report on UNLD progress to UNESCO Executive Board;
- 2013 Final report on Decade - to Executive Board and the UN General Assembly.

UNESCO will organize/catalyze the following activities:

- Develop indicators for ongoing monitoring and final evaluation (see note below);
- Determine the methods and processes of interim monitoring and final evaluation;
- Collect evaluation data for the required reports;
- Pilot the methods and processes prior to full-scale application;
- Produce reports in the required formats;
- Organize, together with other partners, a conference to present and debate the final report on the Decade (2013).

Annex I: International and regional frameworks and cooperation

The following are international and regional targets, objectives and initiatives in education and development which, in addition to the major initiatives mentioned in the main text (see p. 6 above), explicitly or by implication, provide a platform for literacy promotion and collective action:

- The **international agreements focusing on sustainable development**, notably the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (2002) and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014), similarly imply literacy competence as both a tool and an outcome of the kind of learning that everyone needs to develop responsibility and behaviour patterns that respect current and future generations as well as the planet. Quality literacy learning fosters literate societies where debate and awareness-raising on sustainability can become part of the educational process.
- The **Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning**, adopted by the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) in 1997 expressed a commitment to realize the universal right to literacy and basic education, in the context of youth and adults who had not had access to literacy acquisition through schooling. The forthcoming CONFINTEA VI in 2009 will address literacy as a special theme in the context of lifelong learning.
- The **UN Girls' Education Initiative** (UNGEI) focuses on improving the quality and availability of girls' education, developing a learning environment appropriate for girls, and fostering gender-sensitive approaches to the content and processes of learning. High levels of literacy among mothers as well as among girls themselves are central in efforts to bring equal opportunities for girls in and through education.
- The **Inter-agency Task Force on Adolescent Girls** provides a potential platform for cooperation among UN agencies to address one of the most vulnerable population groups: adolescent girls.

At the **regional level**, several important declarations provide a framework for stronger action on literacy. These include the outcomes of the six regional or sub-regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy, held during 2007 and 2008 organized as a UNESCO follow-up to the White House Conference on Global Literacy (New York, 2006) and the final outcome documents from the five intergovernmental regional preparatory conferences for CONFINTEA VI.

Other important declarations include:

- In **Africa**, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), at its 2006 Biennale, called on governments and their development partners to take "a leadership role in ensuring that literacy is firmly established as a priority and given unambiguous visibility in international and regional policies such as those of the African Union" and called for funding for education to include both formal and non-formal learning in a holistic manner. Established later the same year, the Second Decade of Education in Africa lists literacy as one of its priority areas of intervention, as part of action in non-formal education with a focus on vulnerable groups. The Conseil Régional pour l'Education et l'Alphabétisation en Afrique (CREAA) organized a meeting of funding partners in 2008 to adopt a plan to reinvigorate literacy efforts in Africa.
- The **Ibero-American** summit in 2005 requested member states to address illiteracy in the region with the aim of eradicating it by 2015. Thus the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI), in cooperation with the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), developed the "Ibero-American Plan for Literacy and Basic Education for Youth and Adults 2007-2015" in which each country has detailed its priorities and strategies in this area, which are also a basis for mutual support and exchange of experience.
- In 2000 the European Council in Lisbon set the strategic goal for **Europe** to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world by 2010. Focusing on those who are disadvantaged because of their low literacy levels, the Action Plan on Adult Learning, adopted by the European Commission (EC) in 2008, aims to raise the skills levels of the workforce and integrate into society groups such as migrants, older people, women or persons with a disability. The EC highlighted the need for "a second chance to those who enter adult age without a qualification, focusing on areas of particular concern, such as basic literacy and numeracy, IT skills and language learning."
- **Asian countries** have made a number of collective commitments which call for or imply greater attention to literacy. At the 2005 summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the region's leaders stressed that 'freeing South Asia from the scourge of illiteracy' should be a major thrust in the next ten years. The South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organization

(SEAMEO) has expressed the commitment of its member states to reach the unreached and attain the EFA goals by 2015, while the Education Ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) pledged to invest in the skills and talents of their people to enhance economic progress. In particular, SEAMEO INNOTECH (Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology) will convene a regional experts' meeting on the adaptation of the current Strategic Framework to the particular context of SEAMEO member states.

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