



Winners of the UNESCO  
International Literacy Prizes

2015

**Literacy and  
Sustainable  
Societies**

**Winners** of the UNESCO  
International Literacy Prizes

**2015**

**Associação Progresso (Mozambique)**

***Programme 'Literacy in Local Language, a Springboard for Gender Equality'***

Winner of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize

**National Institute of Education (Sri Lanka)**

***'Open School Programme'***

Winner of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize

**Juan Luis Vives School of Valparaiso (Chile)**

***Programme 'Literacy for People Deprived of Liberty'***

Winner of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy

**Platform of Associations in charge of ASAMA and Post-ASAMA (Madagascar)**

***Programme 'Action for Inclusive Education in Madagascar'***

Winner of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy

**Association Svatobor (Slovakia)**

***Programme 'Romano Barardo'***

Winner of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy



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## Message from Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of International Literacy Day, 8 September 2015

Every year, on September 8<sup>th</sup>, we raise the flag for literacy as a human right, as a force for dignity, and as a foundation for cohesive societies and sustainable development.

This message is especially vital this year, when States will adopt a new agenda for education and development to guide the next 15 years. Promoting literacy must stand at the heart of this new agenda. By empowering individual women and men, literacy helps to advance sustainable development across the board – from better healthcare and food security to eradicating poverty and promoting decent work.

There has been progress across the world since 2000, but steep challenges remain. Today, 757 million adults still lack basic literacy skills – two thirds are women. The number of out-of-school children and adolescents is on the rise, standing at 124 million worldwide – while some 250 million children of primary school age are failing to master basic literacy skills even in schooling.

We cannot allow this to continue. Literacy is essential to reach the proposed sustainable development goal to promote “inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.”

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This is UNESCO's message on International Literacy Day. To allow all women and men to participate fully in their societies, we need greater investment and more effective policies to embed action for literacy within wider development policies, supported by innovative mechanisms that generate positive synergies across all policy areas that are vital to building more just and cohesive societies. This is essential to all efforts to build a better future for all, on the basis of human rights and dignity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Irina Bokova". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Irina Bokova

# UNESCO International Literacy Prizes 2015

Since 1967, UNESCO has awarded International Literacy Prizes to outstanding and innovative programmes that promote literacy. Throughout the years, UNESCO's prestigious literacy prizes have rewarded over 470 initiatives undertaken by governments and NGOs from across the world.

Every year, the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes focus on a specific theme. This year, the focus is on "Literacy and Sustainable Societies".

The two prizes awarded are the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize and the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy.

**The UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize** was established in 1989, with the support of the Government of the Republic of Korea. It honours the outstanding



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contribution made to literacy more than 500 years ago by King Sejong (1397-1450 A.C.), through the creation of the 'Hangul' alphabet. The UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize gives special consideration to the development and use of mother-tongue literacy education and training. Two prizes are awarded every year, and each winner receives US\$20,000, a medal and a diploma.

# UNESCO International Literacy Prizes 2015

**The UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy** was established in 2005, with the support of the Government of the People's Republic of China, in honour of the great Chinese scholar Confucius. The Confucius Prize for Literacy gives special consideration to literacy for people in rural areas and out-of-school youth, particularly girls and women. Three prizes are awarded every year, and each winner receives US\$20,000, a medal and a diploma.

## The Jury

An International Jury appointed by UNESCO's Director-General meets in Paris once a year to recommend potential prizewinning programmes for the Director-General's decision. The Jury is made up of high profile practitioners and academics in the field of education, who are appointed for a period of two years. Candidatures for the prizes are submitted by Member States or by international non-governmental organizations in official partnership with UNESCO. The Jury is presently composed of six experts representing UNESCO's geographical distribution.



© DR Confucius Cultural Week for Confucius



## MOZAMBIQUE

Associação Progresso in Mozambique has been awarded the 2015 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize for its programme ‘Literacy in Local Language, a Springboard for Gender Equality’



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“**W**e’re both attending literacy classes. To give time to my wife and respect her rights, we divide household activities. This week it’s my turn to fetch water and bathe our children. I don’t mind if my neighbours talk; my wife is not my machine, but she is a human and deserves rest, just like me. Even some of my neighbours now sweep their yards; they are just ashamed to fetch water at the village pump where they would be seen by many people”.  
– Programme participant Imede Abasse

Associação Progresso was established in 1991 to support rural communities and improve their living conditions. Its work, which pays special attention to women and children, focuses on basic education for children and adults, preventive health and the promotion of citizenship.

Associação Progresso’s activities are mainly carried out in the country’s northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa, where the organization has extensive experience implementing integral community development programmes and projects. Gender equality is a recurrent theme, and women and men participate equally in the programmes and have equal access to their outcomes.

In 2011, the association received a grant from the European Union (EU) to finance the project ‘Teaching to Read to Learn’. Building on the experience





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gained with previous projects, this four-year adult literacy initiative is being implemented in nine districts (four in Cabo Delgado and five in Niassa). It pays special attention to teaching adults to read and write in a local language, and to addressing the needs of women and young people.

The ‘Literacy in Local Language, a Springboard for Gender Equality’ project began in December 2012, with the support of the Provincial Fund for Civil Society of the Irish Embassy in Maputo. Implemented over 18 months, it builds on the ‘Teaching to Read to Learn’ project, including integrating literacy in local languages, awareness-raising and advocacy on domestic violence and women’s human rights.

Its main objective is to promote gender equality and women’s participation in 25 communities in four districts of the Niassa province. Literacy classes introduce basic concepts of gender equality, disseminate laws on women’s rights and organise community monitoring of gender-based violence. Thus, the project promotes changes in traditional practices that are harmful to women and girls, such as initiation rites for children under 16, early marriage, early pregnancy or violence. In total, 3,200 of the programme’s participants (1,625 in Year 1) took part in the courses, which addressed the laws that govern gender equality and women’s rights, and developed their ability to relate the content of such laws to traditional and cultural practices that limit development opportunities for women.

Moreover, the project aims to empower 250 local, traditional and administrative leaders at community level, providing them with the knowledge and skills to follow due process when addressing women’s rights. Equally, it contributes to increasing the participation of women in local governing bodies, consultative councils and community based formal and informal institutions in the four districts covered by the project (Lago, Sanga, Muembe and Chimbunila).

Since 2012, a total of 4,629 students have graduated from the classes of the ‘Teaching to Read to Learn’ project in four districts in Niassa, while the ‘Literacy in Local Language, a Springboard for Gender Equality’ project has trained 12 trainers (three per district), who in turn have trained 64 literacy teachers and 250 community leaders (113 of them are women) in 25 rural communities.

“My advisory board in Malémia consisted of three women against 17 men; during the sessions, the women never contributed on a particular subject. When they were asked to speak, they would answer: ‘We agree, it’s just like the men said.’ In 2014, the advisory board was revitalized. Currently, nine of the 20 members of the new advisory board are very active on the board and in the community. Thanks to the women, we now have a water tap with clean water in Malémia.” – Chiefe Malémia, community of Canjamba, Administrative Post Lussimbese – Sanga District, Niassa province





## SRI LANKA

The National Institute of Education of Sri Lanka has been awarded the 2015 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize for its 'Open School Programme'



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**S**hanthi, a student from Viharagala, says: "Before, I didn't have very much confidence in my life. Now, I am very satisfied, because I can stand alone like others in society".

Since 2007, the National Institute of Education (NIE) of Sri Lanka has been responsible for supporting education in the country, placing an emphasis on quality, equity and relevance. In 2010, 1.2 million people over the age of 15 were illiterate, and of those 59% were women. Through the 'Open School Programme', an alternative educational programme for those deprived of a formal education, the institute designs and develops curricula for general and teacher education, and builds the professional competencies of the education community through research and innovation. The development of literacy and numeracy skills is at the heart of this endeavour.

Moreover, the NIE provides wider and equal access to quality education for all children completing their formal education, through a sustainable approach based on learners' needs. The Open School Programme also offers an education to those who dropped out of school or were unable to complete their schooling for socio-economic reasons, as well as to isolated communities and groups such as indigenous populations, prisoners and street children.

This work begins with teaching students to read and write, or reinforcing what are often very basic skills. The 'Open School Programme' has reached



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around 8,500 participants in 36 Regional Study Centres since its creation in 2007. The focus of its work is to develop the capacity of education managers, teacher trainers and teachers to empower learners and help them attain their potential. It provides an alternative path for out-of-school children, youths and adults as well as offering vocational courses to boost their prospects in the labour market. Equally, literacy is used as a vehicle to achieve sustainable development goals related to gender equality, health and well-being and, more generally, peaceful, inclusive and just societies.

The 'Open School Programme' is based on an innovative and flexible approach that combines open and distance learning modules, and is adapted to learners' capabilities. The methodology used is based on a study that collected information about learners' needs through a survey. Prospective learners were identified in each district of the country and filled in a questionnaire which was later analysed in terms of age, gender, family background, health, education, the desire to receive an education, resources and language skills. The data collected made it possible to understand the constraints that target populations face and to find ways around them.

Courses are based on printed self-learning materials supplemented with audio cassettes, face-to-face sessions held at study support centres and personal contact programmes flexibly arranged to bring education to the doorsteps of disadvantaged and isolated learners.

The programme is open to all and was recently extended to cover children and young people from the Psychiatry Institute, the National Cancer Institute, children with disabilities and children and young people from plantation areas.



CHILE

## Sustainable social integration for prisoners through literacy

The Juan Luis Vives School of Valparaiso in Chile has been awarded the 2015 UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for its programme 'Literacy for People Deprived of Liberty'



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The Juan Luis Vives School of Valparaiso was created in 1996 to provide a service for adults unable to complete their studies. In 1999, the school extended its work to prisons where it offers basic formal education, technical and life skills to male and female inmates over 18. In all, since it was set up 16 years ago, over 2,000 people have benefited from its work.

The 'Literacy for People Deprived of Liberty' programme is provided in Valparaiso Prison, Rancagua Prison and the Remand Centre Town of Casablanca, and reaches around 150 inmates every year. It allows them to complete their studies and contributes to their integration into society and the labour market. The methodology used by the school is adapted to each student, based on small groups, and respects cultural diversity.

The school, which is run under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and authorised by the National Gendarmerie Service, focuses on functional literacy and communication, both oral and written, basic mathematical skills and life skills. In 2010, 355,000 people in Chile over the age of 15 were illiterate and, of those, over 37,000 were young people (aged 15 to 24).



© Juan Luis Vives School

The initiative also fosters discussions on topics such as values, norms and principles, which provide opportunities for students to express their opinions and outlook on life. As well as literacy, the school provides technical and vocational education that allows participants to generate a small income while serving their sentence.

Taking an integral and holistic approach to literacy, the school views inmates as a marginalised population to be integrated into the world of work in order to increase society's development, inclusion and sustainability.

The pedagogical work undertaken by the school takes into account the learners' confinement and looks to stimulate thinking, raise awareness of intellectual capacity, and develop the ability to reflect on behaviour and the ways in which they relate to the world.

As well as focusing on reading and writing, the programme promotes spaces for reflection and introspection that allow prisoners to move towards full social rehabilitation. In the words of one of the learners: "The surest way towards freedom is education". Literacy is seen here as a path towards social inclusion and respect for rules and standards. It is also a tool to develop the self-esteem of the participants and the belief that they can succeed in the world.





## MADAGASCAR

The Madagascar Platform of Associations in charge of ASAMA and Post-ASAMA receives the 2015 UNESCO-Confucius Prize for Literacy for its programme 'Action for Inclusive Education in Madagascar'



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“Study to be able to fight poverty” is the slogan chosen by the Platform of Associations in charge of ASAMA (*Asa Sekoly Avotra Malagasy* or ‘Action for Inclusive Education in Madagascar’) and Post-ASAMA, a free learning programme that helps out-of-school young people from poor, vulnerable families to resume their studies. Providing access to a comprehensive curriculum, ASAMA classes enable young people from ages 11 to 25 to obtain a diploma so that they can apply for different jobs or continue their studies. By giving young people the opportunity to build on what they have learnt in informal education, the ASAMA programme allows them to acquire in one year the basic knowledge required to achieve professional and social integration, the Post-ASAMA phase. It is the only comprehensive educational programme to include literacy, intensive primary education, guidance, technical and vocational training, professional integration, citizenship education and education for sustainable development (ESD).

With a multidimensional outlook, the ASAMA project considers that economic and social factors are interdependent. Providing basic, high-quality education for all Malagasy children and young people is considered the best way for citizens to become the actors of their country’s development, without being ever dependent on outside help. Education and training programmes help young people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to make the best use of Malagasy resources and local opportunities, with a view to reducing



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inequalities and promoting sustainable development. Local development starts with literacy and education for the population, more than 40% of which is currently illiterate.

Although the ASAMA programme is not intended to replace formal primary education, since 2009 it has attracted 13,491 participants throughout the country. It is intended for young people who are out of school, young people with physical disabilities, young girls whose access to schooling can be hindered by Malagasy traditions, and young people considered too old for State primary schools. To achieve Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the programme pays special attention to providing the same quality education to girls and boys living in the country's remote areas, teaching them the same knowledge. Finally, the programme aims to reach 10,000 young people by 2017, so they can lead an active life supported by a stable economic activity in a securely sustainable environment.

“In my ASAMA class, I was taught every aspect of the water cycle and I learned about water conservation. If I hadn't been admitted to an ASAMA class, I wouldn't know that water, which seems very clean, can contain thousands of germs and parasites, which cause diarrhea and other illnesses,” said Herbera, a young ASAMA student.





## SLOVAKIA

## Literacy developing eco-gardening skills for economic self-efficiency

The Association Svatobor (Slovakia) has been awarded the 2015 UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for its 'Romano Barardo' Programme



© Svatobor

“ Many persons think Roma people don't care about the soil. That is not true. Yes, we used to be nomads, but during communism we had to settle down. Then we started to build our houses. As I and other members of my family are unemployed and often suffer from the lack of money and don't have anything to eat, I gladly accepted when the Association Svatobor offered me the opportunity to obtain gardening skills. And now, even if it is still not easy, I am happy that I can produce my own compost in my garden and plant fruit and vegetables. I can even plant some flowers that decorate the surrounding of my house. I like being a gardener”, said Janka Bužová, from the village of Rudlov in the east of Slovakia.

In Slovakia, 40,5% of the marginalized Roma population did not achieve elementary school education (Regional research on the marginalized Roma people in the Slovak Republic, 2011, UNDP/World bank). Since 2006, the Association Svatobor has worked with marginalised groups such as Roma communities and people with health and mental disabilities. It focuses on the development of their educational and eco-gardening skills, contributing to their inclusion in society and providing them with a stable source of food. Basing its work on a strong social and educational approach, Svatobor has carried out a number of farming and environmentally focused projects including 'I want to be an eco-farmer' and 'Support of the food and energy self-sufficiency in poor



© Svatobor

communities', where two different marginalised groups cooperate, acquire new skills and help each other.

Since its creation, the association, with the help of different partners, supported skills development in farming among the Roma community with the strengthening of 18 literacy centres leading to the creation of job opportunities for 238 people from socially excluded communities (123 of Roma people and 115 of non-Roma people). Activities of the programme 'Romano Barardo' are part of a three-year course which adapts educational methods and topics to learners' needs and lifestyle. As well as workshops, conferences and debates, the course involves practical gardening work and encourages sustainable agriculture. Classes are provided in both the country's official language and the communities' mother tongue. The programme has been implemented in 18 locations in the district of Prešov, in eastern Slovakia, and annually reaches around 120 adults and out-of-school youth.

The association works as a mediator in a society where prejudices against Roma communities have a detrimental effect on their social and economic development. Over the last nine years, the organisation has been securing land for the Roma people and their organic farming activities. By providing education and developing skills in eco-farming, Svatobor helps to combat poverty and the cultural and physical exclusion of rural Roma communities. It promotes inclusive societies, sustainable development and alternate paths to self-sufficiency. As well as fostering a sense of purpose and permanence, its work contributes

to breaking the cycle of exclusion, negative stereotyping and discrimination by shifting public perceptions about the Roma population.

Furthermore, the programme contributes to the rehabilitation of land damaged by erosion, fosters inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation, and improves health conditions.

With the support of various partners (i.e. 18 village and town municipalities and community centers, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic), the programme also works on the integration of low-skilled and long-term unemployed people by providing job opportunities such as working in bio-waste composting, in the community centres where workshops are held and, for graduate gardeners, taking care of local public parks and gardens.

'They were nomads and became gardeners', the organisation's slogan, is based on the idea that previously ostracised people can develop a sense of attachment to a place by learning how to cultivate their food ecologically, gaining access to land and meaningful employment, and making the gardens, and a region, their own.



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## Literacy and Sustainable Societies

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