



Global Alliance for Literacy within the framework of lifelong learning (GAL) Information note

1. Overview:

The United Nations General Assembly(UNGA) and UNESCO have called for the creation of a multi-stakeholder partnership to advance literacy in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The new Global Alliance for Literacy is the response to this call to action. This fifteen-year initiative will be based at UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning(UIL) at Hamburg, and comprise UN specialized agencies and institutes, donors, private sector, civil society and others. Participation in the Alliance will be based on the commitments of those willing to contribute to a coherent action plan designed to foster literacy and sustainable development.

2. Background to the Global Alliance for Literacy

Literacy has been one of UNESCO's core mandates ever since the organization's inception. At its 68th session (2013), the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) expressed deep concern that the world's literacy agenda is still unfinished. The UNGA recognized the importance of national programmes and measures to promote literacy worldwide and asked UNESCO to strengthen its coordinating and catalyzing role. The UNGA also encouraged UNESCO to continue consulting with Member States and development partners in order to elaborate a literacy vision and agenda for the years following the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003–2012). In its 37th Session (2013), UNESCO's General Conference resolved 'to continue consultations with Member States and development partners in order to put in place a multi-stakeholder partnership for literacy that would ensure long-term global literacy efforts.' It is against this background that more than 100 UN and government representatives, donors, national and international non-governmental organizations, representatives of the private sector and experts from 34 countries welcomed and strongly supported the proposal to create a Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL) within the framework of lifelong learning.¹

3. Purpose of the Global Alliance for Literacy

GAL is intended to be a thematic partnership that would help Member States make accelerated progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development where literacy plays a direct or indirect role in many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Composed of a group of willing and committed partners (countries, regional entities, donors, private sector, civil society

¹ See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002344/234483E.pdf>

organizations, foundations, associations, experts and others), the Alliance will work toward improving literacy for sustainable development through concrete action and tangible outcomes.

4. GAL and its integrated, innovative, inclusive approach

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that the “interlinkages and integrated nature of the SDGs are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized.”² Literacy is recognized as the foundation for lifelong learning and development. Thus, GAL will encourage policy coherence, and take action to promote: the mobilisation of resources, the availability of high quality and timely data through improved assessment and monitoring, the effective utilization of information and communications technologies (ICTs), and the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships in support of the SDGs. Further, the Alliance will be transversal in three ways: across age (from early childhood through adulthood); across languages and cultures (with special attention paid to gender, diversity, inclusion and empowerment); and across sectors (for example, education, health and sanitation, agriculture, environment and climate, employment and industry, and urbanization and migration). In short, GAL will stimulate and promote collaborative programmes that connect literacy with the sustainable development agenda within a lifelong and life-wide approach.

5. How will the Alliance be managed?

GAL will be facilitated and advised by a core group, led by UNESCO and consisting of Member States, intergovernmental and donor organizations, civil society and private sector representatives, and experts. The secretariat will be hosted by the UIL at Hamburg. To begin by mid-2016, it is anticipated that the first phase of the Alliance will be a five-year effort.

6. Progress to date:

The first meeting of the GAL Core Group was held on 23 May 2016 in Paris. Thirty- five members from Member states, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector recommended a number of activities focused on achieving GAL’s key objectives. These included fostering innovation through the use of ICTs, expanding literacy learning opportunities to all age groups, making literacy learning more relevant by adopting an intersectoral approach and establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships at national and regional levels. The Core Group recommended that UIL should take preparatory steps required to formally launch the Alliance on 8-9 September 2016 as a part of the International Literacy Day events both in Paris and around the world.

² http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&Lang=E