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FINAL REPORT

REGIONAL EXPERT MEETING FOR THE FOLLOW-UP OF CONFINTEA VI IN AFRICA: INCREASING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH AND ADULTS IN LEARNING AND EDUCATION

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Background

At the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), which was held in Belém, Brazil, in December 2009, 144 UNESCO Member States, including 40 from Africa, adopted the *Belém Framework for Action*, the most recent international policy document seeking to strengthen adult education. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), in cooperation with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UNESCO offices in the different world regions, is coordinating the global monitoring of the follow-up to the *Belém Framework for Action*. This includes the preparation of the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) and the co-organization of regional follow-up activities and meetings.

In Africa, a number of regional and sub-regional initiatives have been undertaken which support the goals of the *Belém Framework for Action*. Among them are the “Triennale” of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) in February 2012, calling for the right of young people and adults to be equipped with core skills, and the “Africa Policy Forum on Literacy and Basic Life Skills for Vulnerable Youth” in September 2011, organized in partnership with the Canadian

International Development Agency (CIDA) and UNESCO Bamako.

To assess how countries are implementing the *Belém Framework for Action*, the *Regional Expert Meeting for the Follow-up of CONFINTEA VI in Africa* was co-organized by the Government of Cape Verde, through its Ministry of Education, and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), in cooperation with the UNESCO Regional Office for Africa in Dakar (BREDA). The meeting took place in Praia from 5 to 8 November 2012 and brought together some 50 experts, including directors of adult education and youth policies, practitioners, representatives of regional associations, agencies, bi-lateral and youth organizations.

The main objectives of the *Regional Expert Meeting* were: (a) to share and learn from achievements and successful examples in adult education policy and practice undertaken in the region, and (b) to develop and agree on effective action points for the region which will help to operationalize the *Belém Framework for Action*, thus increasing the participation of youth and adults in quality learning and education in Africa.

Methodology

To meet the objectives of the meeting, a variety of methods were applied: (1) plenary panel presentations on good practices; (2) parallel group-work to discuss issues raised in the presentations; and (3) plenary discussions to build consensus on action points for the region. Each of the five plenary panels during the meeting focused on a specific theme; namely policies, governance, equity and partici-

pation, quality, and youth. In addition, a youth component also featured in most panel discussions. Two presentations of successful and innovative policies or practices on the theme were shared per panel by a variety of different actors, with one respondent providing brief feedback, mainly from the civil society perspective. The presentations were selected according to an assessment of what works in

terms of efficiency, effectiveness and relevance in youth and adult learning and education in Africa.

In the working groups that followed the panel presentations, participants reflected on the presentations and discussed the needs for capacity-building, focused follow-up activities, and concrete action

points. The results of the working groups were reported in the plenary session, allowing for a collective discussion and agreement on the main points. This process fostered an interactive and group learning environment, leading to the generation of a set of specific action points for the region.

Highlights of the Regional Expert Meeting

The meeting was opened by the Cape Verdean Minister of Education and Sports, *Ms Fernanda Maria de Brito L. Marques*, who welcomed the participants and spoke, among other things, about the government's pursuit of the concept of 'holistic education', which includes youth and adult education. To elaborate more on Cape Verde's good practice, a video was presented.

A keynote presentation which portrayed the holistic vision of education applied by

of ADEA, emphasized that the task for the region was a double one: to accelerate its development and ensure sustainability. His presentation underlined the renewed relevance of education to this challenge. He emphasized that education needs to undergo a cultural change. This means creating an open system (embracing formal and non-formal sectors) that caters to diverse needs, and aims at the development of competences beyond the formal sector. The five thematic plenary panels yielded the following outcomes:



the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and reiterated the outcomes of the ADEA Triennale, set the tone for meeting. The speaker, *Mamadou Ndoye*, former Minister of Education in Senegal and former Executive Secretary

Panel 1: Developing Policies

Research commissioned by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and a background case study from Cape

Verde underlined the need to develop and promote a holistic vision of education from a lifelong learning perspective. Contrary to some existing rigid systems, the holistic vision would be flexible, open and responsive to diverse learning needs regardless of where learning takes place and at what age. The importance of a favourable policy environment with the allocation of adequate financial resources was emphasized.

The successful experience of **Cape Verde** presented in the panel (illustrated visually through the video from the WGNFE ADEA) is mainly attributed to an integrated policy approach that links education, training and employment (“the magic triangle”) with the active involvement of three ministries (Education and Sports; Youth, Employment and Human Resources; and Higher Education and Innovation). As underlined in the presentation, Cape Verde therefore provides the necessary conditions, “such as functioning institutions and governance, transparency, inclusive development, equitable sharing of the rewards of growth to ensure the delivery of results to the people to sustain their confidence and gain their support for new initiatives”. Given its limited natural resources, Cape Verde has conceived and developed its human resources as the country’s primary resource.

The presentation from **South Africa** showcased the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign, which aims at empowering individuals and thus improving the skills base of the country. Through this campaign people are taught how to read and write in their mother tongue, to use spoken English, to develop a basic number concept and apply arithmetic operations to everyday contexts achieving a level of numeracy equivalent to Grade 3 of the schooling system. The campaign specifically targets youth, the elderly, the physically challenged population, and women. Seventy-nine per cent of the learners are women. On-going quality assurance and monitoring foresees the preparation of

so-called Learner Assessment Portfolios (LAPs), and the assessment of the performances of coordinators, supervisors and volunteers.

The urgency of developing policies catering to youth was strongly reconfirmed by the results from the **OSISA study** in South Africa. However, as outlined in the study, the main challenges to be tackled are 1) the need for effective implementation of existing education policies; 2) appropriate coordination mechanisms; and 3) the recognition of adult education as an autonomous sector.

Panel 2: Good Governance

Presentations from the Ministries of Education in **Ethiopia** and **Zambia** showed that good governance remains a key issue and is not easy to resolve. An ideal model of good governance would include effective inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral cooperation, participatory and performance-based programming, accountable and transparent funding management, and responsiveness to the needs of the most vulnerable parts of society, as well as to the present and future needs of society as a whole. Ideally, good governance would also enable broader public participation to ensure that education priorities are based on a social and economic consensus. It would equally facilitate access to information on budget allocation, implementation and evaluation in a transparent manner. This would enhance a sense of ownership, which ultimately would result in better service delivery.

Ethiopia reported that the Adult Education Board brings relevant stakeholders together at federal and regional levels, but the Ministry of Education has no direct authority over the Regional Education Bureaus (REBs). The delegates from **Zambia** explained how their corporate governance system allows communities to participate in governance through de-

centralized organizational arrangements (“Management Boards”). The urgent tasks are to address limited capacities in the smooth implementation of the various mechanisms at decentralized levels and in institutionalizing regular and timely meetings of all relevant stakeholders.

Panel 3: Improving Equity and Increasing Participation

Low literacy rates and educational attainments, coupled with low participation in youth and adult education, constitute some of the major challenges in the region, in particular with regard to marginalized populations, which are also the most vulnerable parts of society. They need to be specifically targeted in order to effectively increase participation and redress inequality. Identifying and mapping different marginalized groups, determining their learning needs, developing appropriate programmes and sustaining participation are among the approaches that need to be further discussed and developed with the active participation of the learners themselves. The availability of data enabling sound monitoring and evaluation is also indispensable. Concern with equity does not imply that there should be the same provision for all, but rather tailor-made learning opportunities that are adapted to the learner’s situation.

The delegates from **Tanzania** described their model of Open and Distance Learning that aims to increase participation, while taking into account the growing use of technology. **Burkina Faso** presented the Tylay approach of the Corade organization as an example carried out in the rural areas. This approach aims at developing the potential of the individual in relation to his/her functions within a community. Among the results were an improved relationship between men and women and increased participation of women in education programmes.

Panel 4: Ensuring Quality

Quality-related criteria in youth and adult education include the relevance of curriculum, the choice of learning materials, continuing training possibilities (for facilitators, supervisors, evaluators etc.), the type of training programme, the teaching method, and the assessment of learning outcomes (recognition, validation and accreditation of learning outcomes). Another major factor not always taken into consideration is the working conditions and profile of educators/facilitators.

To confront this challenge, the **Namibian** delegation explained its set of national standards, defining the necessary competences of adult educators, such as capacities to

- manage, guide and deliver adult learning;
- create and maintain an environment conducive to adult and lifelong learning;
- assess the results of adult learning and use those results for improvement; and
- practice personal and professional development.

The shift from supply-oriented to demand-oriented programming brings the learner into the centre and enables the acquisition of skills and competences that are useful within his/her given context.

The **International Youth Foundation** informed the meeting of having reached out to over 60,000 youth across Africa with this approach, targeting vulnerable youth (in the age range of 12–21) who are in school but at risk of dropping out, as well as those that are out of school, out of work, or working in harmful environments. The impact noted in result of this demand-oriented approach is a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence gained among youth to continue their path of learning or work. A helpful infrastructure supporting this approach would be national or sub-national mechanisms

for monitoring and evaluation and respective data management systems.

Panel 5: Special Focus on Youth

Prioritising vulnerable youth and equipping them with appropriate literacy and other basic life skills as well as professional skills is a complex process that requires the active and sustained participation of all key stakeholders. The Policy Forum¹ held in Bamako, Mali, in September 2011 resulted in the development of national action plans to reach these most vulnerable young men and women in seven West African Countries.

Following up on this Policy Forum, the Directorate of Literacy in **Senegal** reported

¹ The “Africa Policy Forum on Literacy and Basic Life Skills for Vulnerable Youth” was organized by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and the UNESCO office in Bamako with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). It brought together participants from seven West African countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone), as well as representatives from bilateral and multilateral agencies.

having validated their action plan within the Ministry of Education, implemented advocacy activities, and held consultation meetings within the Ministry of Finance to generate funds for the implementation of the action plan.

A youth representative from Mali

described how he had successfully moved out of ‘vulnerability’ by becoming part of a non-governmental youth organization, which is combining literacy and life skills training with professional training on hiking, while also offering work opportunities as a guide. In his presentation, he emphasized that governments need to provide a “space for youth to exchange on relevant issues” and to “give attention to their voiced needs”. His experience confirms that youth should be involved in programme development. Programmes should not stand alone, but should integrate basic education with vocational and skills training. It became evident that the challenge of identifying the most vulnerable and, therefore, those most in need of systematic attention, remains urgent. Factors for ‘vulnerability’ interact with each other so they can either accumulate privilege or intensify marginalization.

Outcomes of the Regional Expert Meeting

The meeting **achieved the following objectives:**

- The progress and deficits in youth and adult education in the African Region were assessed, and the challenges to designing comprehensive, inclusive and strategic lifelong learning policy approaches were discussed;
- Factors conducive to successful youth and adult learning policy and practice were identified;
- Cooperation among national and multi-national, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in Africa was reinforced;
- Momentum was built for youth and adult literacy and education from a lifelong learning perspective; and
- Specific action points were distilled and summarized, to promote the development of youth and adult education, widen participation in and improve the quality of youth and adult learning.

In sum, **three key messages** emerged from the meeting:

1. It is necessary and urgent to distinguish between the mere declaration of political will, and its true manifestation. Genuine political will is translated into action and manifested by allocation of **adequate funds and implementation mechanisms**.
2. Following the analysis of progress and deficits, it is no longer a question of what but of how: what are needed more than anything are **operational strategies and recommendations**.
3. In order to advance, two critical strategic approaches need to be taken on board. One is the **mobilization of financial and material resources** vis-à-vis all stakeholders and partners. The other is **inter-sectorality**, which means looking beyond the education sector and ensuring synergies.

The main capacity-building needs of policy-makers highlighted at the meeting

relate to creating systems of lifelong learning, including the distribution of adequate funds, and to ensuring good governance with a focus on intra-sectorality, inter-sectorality, and the involvement of external stakeholders.

On the basis of these insights and the discussions held in smaller groups following each panel session, the final day of the meeting resulted in a collective agreement on a matrix comprising action points for the region in selected key areas, namely: (1) policy, (2) governance, and (3) participation, equity and quality.

When discussing and agreeing on the action points, it was emphasized that not everything which is desirable is also achievable in the short-term. While keeping in mind everything that is important, there is a need to concentrate on what is feasible and efficient, and what is essential.

Follow-up of the Regional Expert Meeting

As a first step, all participants agreed that the meeting must be followed by **robust and concrete measures to implement the commonly agreed action points** in the countries.

The follow-up process will begin with finalizing the matrix containing the action points so as to arrive at a collective understanding and final agreement. In this process, responsibilities, timelines and actual commitment should be added by participants. Thus consolidated, the matrix may serve as a regional action plan for concrete policy and programme development in youth and adult learning and education.

Following the feedback from participants of the regional meeting, the matrix will be shared with all countries and all other regional and national stakeholders in the region.

UNESCO (UIL and regional offices in Africa) will support the implementation of the action points by providing advice and technical assistance to countries upon request. As further support, UNESCO, in partnership with other agencies, will pro-actively pursue key selected action points (2–3) from the matrix developed during the meeting.