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Webinar: 'Language, multilingualism and literacy'

Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning (GAL)

Wednesday, 12 July 2023, from 13:00 to 14:30 (CEST)

Language: English and French (simultaneous interpretation)

Background

On Wednesday, 12 July 2023, the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL), in its role as the secretariat of the [Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning \(GAL\)](#), will co-host a webinar, 'Language, multilingualism and literacy', in collaboration with two UNESCO Education Sections, of Youth, Literacy and Skills Development (YLS) and of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality, and SIL International. The webinar is the second of three taking place this year in the framework of GAL, and will be an opportunity for literacy stakeholders from GAL countries to exchange knowledge on promising policies and programmes implemented in diverse linguistic contexts.

UNESCO is committed to safeguarding cultural and linguistic rights, as recognized in the [Education 2030 Framework for Action](#), which highlights the impact of language, ethnicity, gender and poverty on education and learning. In particular, the framework emphasizes the importance of creating learning opportunities that are in local or Indigenous languages as a way to mitigate the cumulative effects of multiple disadvantages. The UNESCO Education Sector's efforts to safeguard languages are closely aligned with the objectives set out in the UN General Assembly resolution establishing the [Indigenous Languages Decade \(2022-2032\)](#).

To promote quality and equity in education, particularly in multilingual and multicultural contexts, UNESCO advocates mother-tongue-based approaches to learning and literacy. Such methods prioritize learners' linguistic and cultural diversity during the initial stages of literacy instruction before gradually introducing other languages. Mother tongue-based, multilingual approaches to literacy development and learning that begin in early childhood and continue throughout one's life foster not only language proficiency but also intercultural understanding, cognitive flexibility and enhanced communication skills, enabling learners to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background. Promoting learning in multilingual contexts also acknowledges the many languages learners are exposed to throughout their lives, including within their home environment, at school, in the workplace and in the community. Nevertheless, despite evidence of the positive impact of mother-tongue learning on poverty reduction, female empowerment and human development, creating opportunities for adults to engage in multilingual approaches to literacy development and learning is a challenge due to a lack of policy attention and funding. The webinar aims to further support multilingualism through addressing opportunities and challenges.

Representatives and partners from GAL member countries, national stakeholders and other partners involved in literacy programme development and implementation, and researchers and experts in multilingualism and education are expected to attend the webinar, the objectives of which are to:

- share promising cases of literacy and language policies and innovative programmes implemented in diverse linguistic contexts;
- present research on literacy development in multilingual contexts.

GAL was established in 2016 to advance global literacy efforts and address challenges in promoting literacy around the world. Today, the alliance comprises 30 countries¹ strongly committed to improving youth and adult literacy, with a particular focus on disadvantaged and marginalized communities in GAL countries. GAL's work is guided by the [GAL Strategy 2020–2025](#), which focuses on five areas to advance literacy and numeracy: (1) policy and planning, (2) equity, (3) innovation, (4) data and (5) partnerships. The strategic goal concerning equity recognizes the importance of multilingualism for promoting inclusion, education and social cohesion.

¹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, People's Republic of China, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Kingdom of Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone and South Sudan.

Agenda

12 July 2023, 13:00 – 14:30 (CEST)	
13:00 – 13:05	<p>Opening session</p> <p>Welcome remarks: Mr Borhene Chakroun, UIL Director a.i. (tbc)</p>
13:05 – 13:30	<p>Session 1: Approaches to language and multilingualism at the policy level in GAL countries</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, Team Leader, Quality Learning Ecosystems, UIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Momodou Jeng, Director of Curriculum Research Evaluation and Development Directorate, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Gambia • Mr Kirassai Zio, Director General of Non-formal Education, Ministry of National Education and Literacy, Burkina Faso • Mr E. Aminudin Aziz, Head National Agency for Language Development and Cultivation, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Indonesia <p>Q&A</p>
13:30 – 13:50	<p>Session 2: Promising cases of literacy programmes in multilingual contexts</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Mari Yasunaga, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Section of Youth, Literacy and Skills Development (YLS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Aagahi Adult Literacy Programme': Ms Amna Khalid, Executive Advisor, Grants and Community Development Unit, The Citizens Foundation, Pakistan • 'Functional literacy and follow-up vocational training in national languages for farmers in southern Senegal' Mr Abdoulaye Mbaye, Head of Training and Innovation, Senegalese Textile Fibres and Development Company (SODEFITEX), Senegal <p>Q&A</p>
13:50 – 14:25	<p>Session 3: Research perspectives on language, multilingualism and literacy</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Noro Andriamiseza Ingarao, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Pia Rämä-Ory, Research Scientist, French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), University of Paris, Integrative Neuroscience and Cognition Centre (INCC), France • Ms Kathleen Heugh, Professor, Language Education and Multilingualism, University of South Australia, Australia • Ms Barbara Trudell, Senior Literacy and Education Consultant, SIL International <p>Q&A</p>
14:25 – 14:30	<p>Summary and closing remarks</p> <p>Ms Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, Team Leader, Quality Learning Ecosystems, UIL</p>

Background information

- [Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning \(GAL\): Strategy 2020–2025](#)
- [International Literacy Day 2019: Revisiting literacy and multilingualism; background paper](#)
- [Literacy in multilingual and multicultural contexts: Effective approaches to adult learning and education](#)
- [Multilingual education – A necessity to transform education. Report of the event on International Mother Language Day 2023](#)

UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners and responding to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.



United Nations
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The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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