ADULT EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Results and Presentations
Preparatory Process

CONFINTEA VI

CONFINTEA-Follow-up: Comments and Plans
is a half-yearly journal for adult education in Africa, Asia and Latin America. At first, in 1973, the journal was intended by the German Adult Education Association (DVV) to help keep in touch with past participants in DVV further training seminars and to support the work of projects abroad. Today, the journal is a forum for dialogue and the exchange of information between adult educators and authors in Africa, Asia and Latin America, both among themselves and with colleagues in the industrialized nations. It is intended to disseminate and discuss new experiences and developments in the theory and practice of adult education. The main target group consists of adult educators working at so-called middle levels in teaching, organization or administration. Increasingly, staff in related fields such as health education, agriculture, vocational training, cooperative organizations etc. have been included, as their tasks are clearly adult education tasks. We also aim to adult educators at higher and top levels, academics, library staff and research institutions both in Africa, Asia and Latin America and in the industrialized nations.

We herewith invite adult educators from all parts of the world to contribute to this journal. Articles should bear a considerable reference to practice. All fields of adult education and development can be treated, i.e. adult education should be regarded in its widest sense. We kindly ask you to send us articles of about 1500 words; footnotes should be used as sparingly as possible.

Responsible for contents are authors. Signed articles do not always represent the opinion of the German Adult Education Association. You are invited to reproduce and reprint the articles provided acknowledgement is given and a copy is sent to us.

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Once in every twelve years, UNESCO is calling for a world conference on Adult Education, widely known as CONFINTEA, following the French version of Conférences Internationales sur l’Éducation des Adultes. In December 2009, Belém in Brazil was the host for CONFINTEA VI. UNESCO had started the series of conferences with Helsingør in Denmark in 1949, followed by CONFINTEA II in Montreal, Canada in 1960, after this in Tokyo in Japan in 1972, then in Paris, France, in 1985, and CONFINTEA V in Hamburg, Germany. All of them had specific priorities according to the development of Adult Education as a profession, influenced and inspired by their historical contexts.

Belém, with its cultural and environmental dimensions of a city in the Amazon area of the Northeastern State of Para, had undoubtedly a strong impact on the preparation and implementation of CONFINTEA VI. The high commitment of the Government of Brazil was already felt in the preparatory period led by the CONFINTEA VI Consultative Group which had been formed by UIL, the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning, comprising of representatives from governments, the UN organisations, NGOs, and professional institutions years ahead of the event. This preparatory process was rich in its outcomes, but two should be explicitly mentioned here: Never before have so many governments, often in consultation and cooperation with civil society and the wider Adult Education sector, prepared their national reports on the state of the art, and could be placed on the UIL website for study. And they then could be used for the first time in a world report on our field, called GRALE, the Global Report on Adult Education and Learning.

This volume of “Adult Education and Development” provides access to the major outcome document: The Belém Framework for Action. As a member of the Drafting Committee, I must confess that it has been a tough job to arrive where we finally reached, given the diversity of the members, interests and voices that looked into a draft that needed improvements, especially trying to look for a set of priorities and commitments that could win the majority of the participants. Additionally, we present here some of the major speeches from colleagues who were of special importance for us from dvv international, the specialized Institute of the German Adult Education Association: the Address by Professor Rita Süssmuth, President of DVV and Chairperson of CONFINTEA V, the longstanding partners Kunying Kasama Varavarn from Thailand and Professor Paul Bélanger as President of ICAE, an important statement by the Global Campaign for Education, plus two presentations from workshops where we had involved ourselves deeply. We are quite sure
that readers will want to get more from CONFINTEA VI: The full report has just been published in different languages by UIL.

The second section of our journal goes deeply into the preparatory process of civil society and professional institutions in the field of youth and Adult Education, led by ICAE, the International Council for Adult Education, founded in 1973, shortly after CONFINTEA III, and now based in Montevideo, Uruguay. Early, the ICAE Executive Committee debated the importance of CONFINTEA and decided on three forms of inputs, centered around thematic concerns of policy, legislation and financing; literacy, poverty, work and vocational training, and migration. In line with these decisions, ICAE published a special issue of its journal Convergence, organized a virtual seminar followed by a face-to-face-exchange in Leicester, England, supported by NIACE, the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education, and culminated in FISC, the International Forum of Civil Society that took place back-to-back with CONFINTEA in Belém. We are thankful to ICAE and its Secretariat for all the help in providing the documents from this process and its events. This will undoubtedly enrich the follow-up process that has already started via the UIL Advisory Group, which already had its first meeting, and via the Shanghai International Forum on Lifelong Learning in May. ICAE continues its strong involvement as well, and in its most recent Strategic Seminar and Executive in June 2010, has decided that CONFINTEA VI, the EFA Goals 3 and 4, and the MDGs are one of the three key areas of concern for task forces that work towards the ICAE World Assembly in Sweden 2011, and beyond. For deeper information, the ICAE website is very helpful.

The first issue of “Adult Education and Development” that I edited was number 10 in March 1978, more than three decades ago. I enjoyed being the editor a lot, it has been a very stimulating experience, and I learned much from the discussions with readers and authors. It is now time to say goodbye, since I handed over the Directorship of the Institute in Bonn to Dr. Roland Schwartz in autumn of last year, and since then have taken up the exciting and challenging position as Regional Director for South- and Southeast Asia to start the new dvv international office in Vientiane, Lao PDR. I thank DVV for all its support in the past, and I wish the journal and all those involved in its editorial work all the very best for the future.

Heribert Hinzen
RESULTS AND PRESENTATIONS OF CONFINTEA VI
CONFINTA VI closed with a call to move from rhetoric to action. The Belém Framework for Action is the final document of the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education and was adopted on 4 December 2009. The document transmitted the message that Adult Learning and Education represent a significant component of the Lifelong Learning process on the way to a better future for all in a globalised world.

Belém Framework for Action

Harnessing the Power and Potential of Adult Learning and Education for a Viable Future

Preamble

1. We, the 156 Member States of UNESCO, representatives of civil society organizations, social partners, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental agencies and the private sector, have gathered in Belém do Pará in Brazil in December 2009 as participants in the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTA VI) to take stock of the progress made in adult learning and education since CONFINTA V. Adult Education is recognised as an essential element of the right to education, and we need to chart a new and urgent course of action to enable all young people and adults to exercise this right.

2. We reiterate the fundamental role of adult learning and education as laid down during the five International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTA I-V) since 1949 and unanimously undertake to take forward, with a sense of urgency and at an accelerated pace, the agenda of adult learning and education.
3. We endorse the definition of Adult Education, first laid down in the Nairobi Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education of 1976 and further developed in the Hamburg Declaration of 1997, namely, Adult Education denotes “the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society”.

4. We affirm that literacy is the most significant foundation upon which to build comprehensive, inclusive and integrated lifelong and life-wide learning for all young people and adults. Given the magnitude of the global literacy challenge, we deem it vital that we redouble our efforts to ensure that existing adult literacy goals and priorities, as enshrined in Education for All (EFA), the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), are achieved by all means possible.

5. The education of young people and adults enables individuals, especially women, to cope with multiple social, economic and political crises, and climate change. Therefore, we recognise the key role of adult learning and education in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education for All (EFA) and the UN agenda for sustainable human, social, economic, cultural and environmental development, including gender equality (CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action).

6. We therefore adopt this Belém Framework for Action to guide us in harnessing the power and potential of adult learning and education for a viable future for all.

Towards Lifelong Learning

7. The role of Lifelong Learning is critical in addressing global educational issues and challenges. Lifelong Learning “from cradle to grave” is a philosophy, a conceptual framework and an organising principle of all forms of education, based on inclusive, emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values; it is all-encompassing and integral to the vision of a knowledge-based society. We reaffirm the four pillars of learning as recommended by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, namely learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together.

8. We recognise that adult learning and education represent a significant component of the Lifelong Learning process, which embraces a learning continuum ranging from formal to non-formal to informal learning.
Adult learning and education cater to the learning needs of young people, adults and older people. Adult learning and education cover a broad range of content – general issues, vocational matters, family literacy and family education, citizenship and many other areas besides – with priorities depending on the specific needs of individual countries.

9. We are convinced and inspired by the critical role of Lifelong Learning in addressing global and educational issues and challenges. It is furthermore our conviction that adult learning and education equip people with the necessary knowledge, capabilities, skills, competences and values to exercise and advance their rights and take control of their destinies. Adult learning and education are also an imperative for the achievement of equity and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies.

**Recommendations**

10. While we acknowledge our achievements and progress since CONFINTEA V, we are cognisant of the challenges with which we are still confronted. Recognising that the fulfilment of the right to education for adults and young people is conditioned by considerations of policy, governance, financing, participation, inclusion, equity and quality as outlined in the annexed Statement of Evidence, we are determined to pursue the following recommendations. The particular challenges faced by literacy lead us to place recommendations on adult literacy to the fore.

**Adult Literacy**

11. Literacy is an indispensable foundation that enables young people and adults to engage in learning opportunities at all stages of the learning continuum. The right to literacy is an inherent part of the right to education. It is a prerequisite for the development of personal, social, economic and political empowerment. Literacy is an essential means of building people’s capabilities to cope with the evolving challenges and complexities of life, culture, economy and society.

Given the persistence and scale of the literacy challenge, and the concomitant waste of human resources and potential, it is imperative that we redouble efforts to reduce illiteracy by 50 per cent from 2000 levels by 2015 (EFA Goal 4 and other international commitments), with the ultimate goal of preventing and breaking the cycle of low literacy and creating a fully literate world.
To these ends, we commit ourselves to:

a) ensuring that all surveys and data collection recognise literacy as a continuum;

b) developing a road map with clear goals and deadlines to meet this challenge based on the critical assessments of progress made, obstacles encountered and weaknesses identified;

c) mobilising and increasing internal and external resources and expertise to carry out literacy programmes with greater scale, range, coverage and quality to foster integral and medium-term processes, to ensure that individuals achieve sustainable literacy;

d) developing literacy provision that is relevant and adapted to learners’ needs and leads to functional and sustainable knowledge, skills and competence of participants empowering them to continue as lifelong learners whose achievement is recognised through appropriate assessment methods and instruments;

e) focusing literacy actions on women and highly disadvantaged populations including indigenous peoples and prisoners, with an overall focus on rural populations;

f) establishing international indicators and targets for literacy;

g) systematically reviewing and reporting progress, amongst others on investment and the adequacy of resources in literacy in each country and at the global level by including a special section in the EFA Global Monitoring Report;

h) planning and implementing continuing education, training and skills development beyond the basic literacy skills supported by an enriched literate environment.

Policy

12. Policies and legislative measures for Adult Education need to be comprehensive, inclusive and integrated within a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective, based on sector-wide and inter-sectoral approaches, covering and linking all components of learning and education.

To these ends, we commit ourselves to:

a) developing and implementing fully-costed policies, well-targeted plans and legislation for addressing adult literacy, education for young people and adults, and Lifelong Learning;

b) designing specific and concrete action plans for adult learning and education which are integrated into MDG, EFA and UNLD, as well as other
national and regional development plans, and with LIFE activities where those exist;
c) ensuring that adult learning and education are included in the “ONE United Nations” initiative;
d) establishing appropriate coordination mechanisms, such as monitoring committees involving all stakeholders active in adult learning and education;
e) developing or improving structures and mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of all forms of learning by establishing equivalency frameworks.

Governance

13. Good governance facilitates the implementation of adult learning and education policy in ways which are effective, transparent, accountable and equitable. Representation by and participation of all stakeholders are indispensable in order to guarantee responsiveness to the needs of all learners, in particular the most disadvantaged.

To these ends, we commit ourselves to:

a) creating and maintaining mechanisms for the involvement of public authorities at all administrative levels, civil society organisations, social partners, the private sector, community and adult learners’ and educators’ organisations in the development, implementation and evaluation of adult learning and education policies and programmes;
b) undertaking capacity-building measures to support the constructive and informed involvement of civil society organisations, community and adult learners’ organisations, as appropriate, in policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation;
c) promoting and supporting inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation;
d) fostering transnational cooperation through projects and networks for sharing know-how and innovative practice.

Financing

14. Adult learning and education represent a valuable investment which brings social benefits by creating more democratic, peaceful, inclusive, productive, healthy and sustainable societies. Significant financial investment is essential to ensure the quality provision of adult learning and education.
To these ends, we commit ourselves to:

a) accelerating progress towards achieving the CONFINTEA V recommendation to seek investment of at least 6% of GNP in education, and working towards increased investment in adult learning and education;

b) expanding existing educational resources and budgets across all government departments to meet the objectives of an integrated adult learning and education strategy;

c) considering new, and opening up existing, transnational funding programmes for literacy and Adult Education, along the lines of the actions taken under the EU Lifelong Learning Programme;

d) creating incentives to promote new sources of funding, e.g. from the private sector, NGOs, communities and individuals, without prejudicing the principles of equity and inclusion;

e) prioritising investment in Lifelong Learning for women, rural populations and people with disabilities.

In support of these strategies, we call upon international development partners to:

f) meet their commitment to filling the financial gaps that prevent the achievement of all EFA Goals, in particular Goals 3 and 4 (youth and adult learning, adult literacy);

g) increase funds and technical support for adult literacy, learning and education, and explore the feasibility of using alternative financing mechanisms, such as debt swap or cancellation;

h) require education sector plans submitted to the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) to include credible action on, and investment in, adult literacy.

Participation, Inclusion and Equity

15. Inclusive education is fundamental to the achievement of human, social and economic development. Equipping all individuals to develop their potential contributes significantly to encouraging them to live together in harmony and with dignity. There can be no exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment. Combating the cumulative effects of multiple disadvantage is of particular importance. Measures should be taken to enhance motivation and access for all.

To these ends, we commit ourselves to:
a) promoting and facilitating more equitable access to, and participation in, adult learning and education by enhancing a culture of learning and by eliminating barriers to participation;
b) promoting and supporting more equitable access to, and participation in, adult learning and education through well-designed and targeted guidance and information, as well as activities and programmes such as Adult Learners’ Weeks and learning festivals;
c) anticipating and responding to identifiable groups entering trajectories of multiple disadvantage, in particular in early adulthood;
d) creating multi-purpose community learning spaces and centres and improving access to, and participation in, the full range of adult learning and education programmes for women, taking account of the particular demands of the genderspecific life-course;
e) supporting the development of writing and literacy in the various indigenous languages by developing relevant programmes, methods and materials that recognise and value the indigenous cultures, knowledge and methodologies, while adequately developing the teaching of the second language of wider communication;
f) supporting financially a systematic focus on disadvantaged groups (for example indigenous peoples, migrants, people with special needs and those living in rural areas) in all educational policies and approaches, which may include programmes that are provided free of charge or subsidised by our governments, with incentives for learning such as bursaries, fee remission and paid study leave;
g) providing Adult Education in prison at all appropriate levels;
h) adopting a holistic, integrated approach, including a mechanism to identify stakeholders and the responsibilities of the state in partnership with civil society organisations, labour market stakeholders, learners and educators;
i) developing effective educational responses for migrants and refugees as a key focus for development work.

Quality

16. Quality in learning and education is a holistic, multidimensional concept and practice that demands constant attention and continuous development. Fostering a culture of quality in adult learning requires relevant content and modes of delivery, learnercentred needs assessment, the acquisition of multiple competences and knowledge, the professionalisation of educators, the
enrichment of learning environments and the empowerment of individuals and communities.

To these ends, we commit ourselves to:

a) developing quality criteria for curricula, learning materials and teaching methodologies in Adult Education programmes, taking account of outcomes and impact measures;

b) recognising the diversity and plurality of providers;

c) improving training, capacity-building, employment conditions and the professionalisation of adult educators, e.g. through the establishment of partnerships with higher education institutions, teacher associations and civil society organisations;

d) elaborating criteria to assess the learning outcomes of adults at various levels;

e) putting in place precise quality indicators;

f) lending greater support to systematic interdisciplinary research in adult learning and education, complemented by knowledge management systems for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data and good practice.

Monitoring the Implementation of the Belém Framework for Action

17. Drawing strength from our collective will to reinvigorate adult learning and education in our countries and internationally, we commit ourselves to the following accountability and monitoring measures. We acknowledge the need for valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative data to inform our policy-making in adult learning and education. Working with our partners to design and implement regular recording and tracking mechanisms at national and international levels is paramount in realising the Belém Framework for Action.

To these ends, we commit ourselves to:

a) investing in a process to develop a set of comparable data indicators for literacy as a continuum and for Adult Education;

b) regularly collecting and analysing data and information on participation and progression in Adult Education programmes, disaggregated by gender and other factors, to evaluate change over time and to share good practice;

c) establishing a regular monitoring mechanism to assess the implementation of the commitments to CONFINTEA VI;
d) recommending the preparation of a triennial progress report to be submitted to UNESCO;
e) initiating regional monitoring mechanisms with clear benchmarks and indicators;
f) producing a national progress report for a CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review, coinciding with the EFA and MDG timeline of 2015;
g) supporting South-South cooperation for the follow-up of MDG and EFA in the areas of adult literacy, Adult Education and Lifelong Learning;
h) monitoring collaboration in Adult Education across disciplines and across sectors such as agriculture, health and employment.

To support the follow-up and monitoring at the international level, we call upon UNESCO and its structures:
i) to provide support to Member States by designing and developing an open access knowledge management system to compile data and case studies of good practice, to which Member States themselves will contribute;
j) to develop guidelines on all learning outcomes, including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning, so that these may be recognised and validated;
k) to coordinate, through the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, a monitoring process at the global level to take stock and report periodically on progress in adult learning and education;
l) to produce, on this basis, the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) at regular intervals;
m) to review and update, by 2012, the Nairobi Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education (1976).

Annex

Statement of Evidence

Addressing global and educational issues and challenges

1. Adult learning and education play a critical role in responding to contemporary cultural, economic, political and social challenges. Our globalised world has paved the way for many opportunities, among them the possibility of learning from rich and diverse cultures that transcend geographical boundaries. However, widening inequalities have become dominant fea-
tures of our era. Much of the world’s population lives in poverty, with 43.5% subsisting on less than US $2 a day. The majority of the world’s poor lives in rural areas. Demographic imbalances, with burgeoning young populations in the South and ageing populations in the North, are exacerbated by large-scale migration from poor to rich areas – within and between countries – and influxes of significant numbers of displaced people. We are confronted with unequal access to food, water and energy, and ecological degradation threatens our very existence in the long term. Alongside material privation is the all-too-frequently observed poverty of capabilities that prevents effective functioning in society. An unacceptably high number of today’s children face the prospect of youth unemployment, while a growing number of socially, economically and politically “detached” young people feel that they have no stake in society.

2. We face structural shifts in production and labour markets, growing insecurities and anxieties in everyday life, difficulties in achieving mutual understanding, and now a deepening world economic and financial crisis. At the same time, globalisation and the knowledge economy force us to update and adapt our skills and competences to new work environments, forms of social organisation and channels of communication. These issues, and our urgent collective and individual learning demands, question our tenets and assumptions in this area and some aspects of the foundations of our established educational systems and philosophies.

3. In many countries, adult literacy remains a major challenge: 774 million adults (two-thirds of whom are women) lack basic literacy skills, and there is insufficient provision of effective literacy and life-skills programmes. In Europe, almost a third of the workforce has only the equivalent of lower secondary education, whereas two-thirds of new jobs require qualifications at upper secondary level or above. In many countries of the South, the majority of the population does not even attain primary school level. In 2006, some 75 million children (the majority of whom were girls) had either left school early or had never attended school. Nearly half of these children were from sub-Saharan Africa and more than 80% were rural children. The lack of social relevance of educational curricula, the inadequate numbers and, in some cases, the insufficient training of educators, the paucity of innovative materials and methods, and barriers of all kinds undermine the ability of existing educational systems to provide quality learning that can address the disparities in our societies.

4. There have been concerted international efforts to address these challenges. Progress has been made towards achieving the six Education for All (EFA)
goals (2000) through government-led cooperation with United Nations agencies, civil society organisations, private providers and donors. Increasing resources for Universal Primary Education were made available through the EFA Fast Track Initiative. The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) (2003-2012) provides support to achieve EFA’s literacy goal through worldwide advocacy and awareness-raising. The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) furnishes a global framework within UNLD to support countries with the greatest literacy needs. Two of the Millennium Development Goals (2000) explicitly address education: achieving universal primary education and gender parity. However, in none of these efforts has there been a designated role for adult learning and education beyond basic literacy and life skills. Encouragingly, the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005 – 2014) sets out a broad mandate in which adult learning and education can play a highly visible role.

5. Adult learning and education are a critical and necessary response to the challenges that confront us. They are a key component of a holistic and comprehensive system of Lifelong Learning and education which integrates formal, non-formal and informal learning and which addresses, explicitly or implicitly, both youth and adult learners. Ultimately, adult learning and education are about providing learning contexts and processes that are attractive and responsive to the needs of adults as active citizens. They are about developing self-reliant, autonomous individuals, building and rebuilding their lives in complex and rapidly-changing cultures, societies and economies – at work, in the family and in community and social life. The need to move to different kinds of work in the course of a lifetime, the adaptation to new contexts in situations of displacement or migration, the importance of entrepreneurial initiatives and the capacity to sustain improvements in quality of life – these and other socio-economic circumstance all call for continued learning throughout adult life. Adult learning and education not only offer specific competences, but are also a key factor in boosting self-confidence, self-esteem, a settled sense of identity and mutual support.

6. It is estimated today that for every single year that the average level of education of the adult population is raised, there is a corresponding increase of 3.7% in long-term economic growth and a 6% increase in per capita income. Nevertheless, adult learning and education are much more than an item of social spending or financial expenditure. They are an investment in hope for the future.
Progress in adult learning and education since CONFINTEA V

7. National reports submitted by 154 Member States in readiness for CONFINTEA VI and discussion on effective practice during the regional preparatory conferences have shown some progress and innovation in adult learning and education within a perspective of Lifelong Learning. Apart from the example of the European Union’s ongoing Lifelong Learning Strategy, introduced in the year 2000, and related national policies in Member States, a few Member States in the South have introduced comprehensive adult learning and education policies and legislation, and some have even enshrined adult learning and education in their constitutions. Systematic approaches to adult learning and education, guided by policy frameworks, are being developed, and there have been instances of landmark policy reforms.

8. Literacy plans, programmes and campaigns have been reactivated and accelerated in some Member States. The period 2000 – 2006 saw an increase in global adult literacy rates from 76% to 84%. Progress was especially marked in the developing countries. Some governments have actively sought to work with civil society to provide non-formal learning opportunities in approaches such as faire-faire, with a wide range of content, objectives and target groups. The provision of non-formal education has diversified, covering topics such as human rights, citizenship, democracy, women’s empowerment, HIV prevention, health, environmental protection and sustainable development. Advocacy events such as Adult Learners’ Weeks and learning festivals, as well as comprehensive movements such as Learning Cities and Learning Regions, are contributing substantially to adult learning and education.

9. There have been some convincing signs and increased recognition among Member States of the benefits of gender-sensitive provision in adult learning and education, particularly with respect to women. Information and communications technologies and open and distance learning are being embraced and are slowly responding to the specific needs of learners who, until very recently, have been excluded. Mother-tongue learning is increasingly being addressed in national policies in multilingual and multicultural contexts, although only a few have implemented comprehensive policies.

10. Systems of information, documentation, monitoring and evaluation for adult learning and education programmes have been introduced. Effective instruments and systems of recognition, validation and accreditation of learning are gradually being put in place, including quality assurance bodies and procedures. Creating synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning and education has proven to yield better results for both individual learners and education systems as existing resources and competencies are more effectively used.
11. Adult learning flourishes when states implement decisive initiatives in alliance with key civil society institutions, the corporate sector and workers’ associations. Public-private partnerships are gaining currency, and South-South and triangular cooperation are yielding tangible results in forging a new form of adult learning for sustainable development, peace and democracy. Regional and supranational bodies and agencies play crucial and transformative roles, influencing and complementing states.

Challenges for adult learning and education

12. Despite this progress, the national reports and the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE) produced for CONFINTEA VI show new social and educational challenges that have emerged alongside existing problems, some of which have worsened in the interim, nationally, regionally and globally. Crucially, the expectation that we would rebuild and reinforce adult learning and education in the wake of CONFINTEA V has not been met.

13. The role and place of adult learning and education in Lifelong Learning continue to be underplayed. At the same time, policy domains outside of education have failed to recognise and integrate the distinctive contributions that adult learning and education can offer for broader economic, social and human development. The field of adult learning and education remains fragmented. Advocacy efforts are dissipated across a number of fronts, and political credibility is diluted precisely because the very disparate nature of adult learning and education prevents their close identification with any one social policy arena. The frequent absence of Adult Education from the agendas of government agencies is matched by scant inter-ministerial cooperation, weak organisational structures and poor links between education (formal and non-formal) and other sectors. With regard to the recognition and accreditation of learning, both in-country mechanisms and international efforts place undue emphasis on formally accredited skills and competences, seldom including non-formal, informal and experiential learning. The gap between policy and implementation widens when policy development is undertaken in isolation, without external participation or input (from the field and institutes of higher education) and other organisations of youth and adult educators.

14. Not enough far-sighted and adequate financial planning has been established to enable adult learning and education to make telling contributions to our future. Furthermore, the current and growing trend of decentralisation in decision-making is not always matched by adequate financial allocations at all levels, or by an appropriate delegation of budgetary authority. Adult
learning and education have not figured strongly in the aid strategies of international donors and have not been subject to ongoing efforts in donor coordination and harmonisation. Debt relief has not, so far, markedly benefited adult learning and education.

15. Although we are witnessing an increasing variety of adult learning and education programmes, the primary focus of such provision is now on vocational and professional education and training. More integrated approaches to adult learning and education to address development in all its aspects (economic, sustainable, community and personal) are missing. Gender mainstreaming initiatives have not always led to more relevant programmes for greater participation by women. Similarly, adult learning and education programmes are rarely responsive to indigenous people, rural populations and migrants. The diversity of learners, in terms of age, gender, cultural background, economic status, unique needs – including disabilities – and language, is not reflected in programme content and practices. Few countries have consistent multilingual policies promoting mother tongues, yet this is often crucial for creating a literate environment, especially for indigenous and/or minority languages.

16. At best referred to only in the broadest terms, adult learning and education feature sparingly in many international education agendas and recommendations, and are often viewed as a synonym for basic literacy acquisition. Yet literacy is indisputably of immense consequence, and the persistently vast scale of the literacy challenge presents an indictment of the inadequate adoption of the measures and initiatives launched in recent years. Consistently high illiteracy rates question whether enough has been done politically and financially by governments and international agencies.

17. The lack of professionalisation and training opportunities for educators has had a detrimental impact on the quality of adult learning and education provision, as has the impoverished fabric of the learning environment, in terms of equipment, materials and curricula. Only rarely are needs assessment and research conducted on a systematic basis in the planning process to determine appropriate content, pedagogy, mode of delivery and supporting infrastructure. Nor are monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanisms a consistent feature of the quality landscape in adult learning and education. Where they do exist, their levels of sophistication are subject to the tension of balancing quality against quantity of provision.

18. This Statement of Evidence provides the underpinning rationale for the recommendations and strategies as outlined above in the Belém Framework for Action.
Walter Hirche, President of the German Commission for UNESCO, former Parliamentary State Secretary of the Environment, Germany, opened the Conference on behalf of Ms. Rita Süssmuth, Chairperson of CONFINTEA V (1997) and the president of DVV, who was unfortunately prevented from attending the conference.

Walter Hirche

Opening Address

Mr President of the Senate of Brazil,
Your Royal Highness Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands,
Ms Director-General of UNESCO,
Distinguished Ministers and Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honored to address this distinguished audience on behalf of Ms Rita Süssmuth. She was the Chairperson of CONFINTEA V and a Former President of the German Parliament. Ms Süssmuth deeply regrets that she could not come to Belém to formally open this conference today. She asked me to convey to you her greetings and best wishes for the success of CONFINTEA VI – the 6th International Conference on Adult Education.

Twelve years ago, in July 1997, the international community came together for the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, which was hosted by Germany in the beautiful city of Hamburg. At this landmark conference, the representatives of governments, civil society and other partners adopted the “Hamburg Declaration” and the “Agenda for the Future”.

Both documents recognize adult learning and education as integral parts of lifelong and life-wide learning processes. They are indispensable tools to address global challenges in relation to democracy, conflict resolution, peace and human rights, respect for diversity, economic and environmental sustainability and workforce development. The role of adult learning in empowering women and men to participate in their individual, their communities’ and their societies’ development was clearly underscored.

Since 1997, however, the world has changed. Many of the phenomena shaping people’s lives twelve years ago have developed further. Globalization has expanded, offering a vast array of opportunities to some, but also creating new challenges, demands and barriers for others. We are all struggling to pursue our
ways in new work environments and amidst new forms of social organization and communication. We are living in an era of enormous social and cultural change, of uncertainties and fears, of conflict and threats to our established political and educational order. On top of this, a global economic and financial crisis is putting some of our values as well as our economic systems into question.

More than ever, investment in learning and education is crucial in order to overcome the present crisis and to build a better, more peaceful, tolerant and sustainable future for everyone.

UNESCO is fully committed to adult learning and education – and hence to Lifelong Learning and sustainable human development – through its work in education and in its other areas of competence – culture, communication and information, natural and social sciences – and through the CONFINTA series.

Governments and civil society worldwide have actively engaged in the process towards this Sixth CONFINTA Conference, by preparing national reports and participating in regional preparatory conferences. Now, governments and civil society have come together in Belém in order to share practice and policy and to develop a common framework and strategies and tools for the future.

Distinguished Ministers and Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Fellow Adult Educators and Learners,

The Former Chairperson asked me to tell you that she wholeheartedly supports the objectives of this CONFINTA VI, namely to recognize the role of adult learning and education within Lifelong Learning and for sustainable development and, more than anything else, to come up with a framework for implementation in order to “move from rhetoric to action”.

In this spirit I would like to open this conference and to hand over the CONFINTA baton to the participants of the Belém Conference, to elect the CONFINTA VI chairperson and the other members of the conference bureau.

While looking forward to the discussions and deliberations of this conference, please allow me to wish us all success, sufficient inspiration and plenty of courage when formulating and adopting the framework which will help us to harness the power of adult learning for a viable future!
On 3 December 2009, the fourth Round Table of CONFINTEA VI addressed the topic “Assuring the Quality of Adult Education and Assessing Learning Outcomes”. Khunyin Kasam Varavarn, former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education in Thailand gave the keynote address. What are the lessons learned in the process and concept of Lifelong Learning, the vision which Thailand has been pursuing for over 40 years? Using concrete examples and experiences, the author works out the vision and shows the challenges as well as taking more into account the new media’s effect for the future.

Khunying Kasama Varavarn

Towards Lifelong Learning

The value of Lifelong Learning has long been embedded in most cultures, but the strong emphasis on attaining formal credentials has often overridden its importance. When UNESCO reignited the concept of Lifelong Learning in the late 1960s, the idea challenged educators across the globe to think beyond literacy and primary education. It also set in motion the often heated debate on whether such a concept was feasible or desirable.

While the paths to Lifelong Learning may differ from one country to another, case studies from these experiences help illustrate how the concept of Lifelong Learning gradually gains support to become the cornerstone of most education systems, some further strengthened by legislation. Furthermore, country experiences help us to understand how the seemingly elusive concept can be translated into reality.

Thailand is one of the countries that has pursued the vision of Lifelong Learning for the past forty years. While the journey continues to evolve, the lessons learned along the way can help to identify key facilitating factors as well as pitfalls to be avoided in formulating future Lifelong Learning strategies.

Literacy and Adult Education as Primary Advocate and Supporter of Lifelong Learning

When the concept of Lifelong Learning was introduced in Thailand around 1970, educators were quite at loss as how to translate it into concrete actions when the
country was still struggling to reach the remaining illiterate population and to provide universal primary education. While the idea was dismissed by many as unattainable and ridiculed by others, it caught the attention of adult educators who had to cope with the problems of the lack of motivation among target literacy learners. “What for?” and “what next?” were the most frequently asked questions when persuaded to join classes, as many of the learners knew from prior experiences that they could easily revert back to illiteracy due to the lack of usage.

One of the early attempts to realize the concept of Lifelong Learning in Thailand, therefore, was to propose to the government to invest in the establishment of a network of newspaper reading centers into rural, remote areas to provide continuous flows of up-to-date and interesting reading materials to the learners in the same package as the literacy program. When questioned by the Cabinet as to the necessity of such a strange and seemingly non-educational undertaking, Dr. Kowit Vorapipatna, the renowned adult educator of Thailand, convinced the non-believers by explaining that the learners would need the opportunity to use the newly acquired skills just as “cars need to have refueling stations”.

More than forty years have elapsed since the first newspaper reading center was set up. At present, the Ministry of Education no longer finances such a center since the demands from the rural subscribers have reached the point that it is now financially viable for the publishers to operate the delivery system even to the remote areas.

Over the years, however, millions of literacy and Adult Education graduates from diverse backgrounds ranging from prominent political, business and community leaders to workers in informal sectors have generated new demands for further and continuing education. Such challenges have pressured the adult and non-formal education providers to diversify the services and bring about a series of innovations which would, in later years, influence formal schooling and the education system to review and bring about large-scale reforms.

Adult Education programs were among the first to depart from the centralized curriculum to become more learner-centered and tailor made to cater to different groups of learners. After years of continuing negotiations with the formal school system, graduates from these curricula eventually receive equivalency credentials up to higher secondary education.

In subsequent years, Adult Education programs also provide opportunities for learners to transfer life and work experiences to be accumulated and counted towards formal education equivalency credits. The involvement of non-traditional teachers, facilitators and resource persons have transformed the learning processes to take into account learners’ prior experiences and preferences with the introduc-
tion of dialogue and other interactive learning processes, bilingual approaches combining mother tongue and standard Thai language, distance education, specially designed computer and learning aids, more hands-on and project-based learning activities.

Some Concrete Examples

Children and youth who become ordained as Buddhist novices and study the Pali Canon can take additional classes in order to obtain basic education certificates.

Muslim youths in religious schools are acquiring basic equivalency education through learning units integrating life skills with religious teaching.

Learners with disabilities who have missed their childhood education are now catching up through specially designed computer programs and learning aids.

Learners who do not speak Thai as their first language are now enjoying bilingual teaching with learning materials designed to strengthen mother tongue languages and facilitate acquisition of standard Thai.

In factories, workers are able to upgrade their basic education and skill qualifications through workplace education that allows for transfer of work experiences towards educational certificates.

In Kanchanapisek Home for Youth, youngsters with serious criminal records engage in daily analysis of real-life moral dilemmas selected from daily newspapers, practicing critical thinking, dialogues, and personal reflections in diary writing. The process has boosted their self-esteem, sharpened their critical thinking abilities, fostered moral development and reduced violent incidents.
In prisons, educational provisions are no longer limited to basic education and skill training courses. The inmates have access to a wider range of challenging learning opportunities from well-equipped libraries, advanced courses in computer technology, fashion design, choral singing and university education.

Across the country, over 4,000 private adult education providers have registered and continue to grow in number and diversity to respond to the increasing demands from adult learners to upgrade their skills and pursue personal interests through short-term courses, correspondence schools and various forms of distance and on-line education.

During the past 70 years, Thai literacy and Adult Education has gradually expanded to involve providers in all fields and touch upon the lives of the large majority of the population. It has also exerted tremendous influence on the formal school system, other development agencies, the communities and the individual learners.

Formal Education Working in Synergy with non-formal Education to Promote Lifelong Learning

The increasing number of Adult Education graduates has created not only demand for new types of education services but also new aspirations for the education of their children and their communities. Over the past decades, we have seen these demands translated into heightened participation in education and pressures for reforms from the civil society. The concept of Lifelong Learning gradually penetrates formal schooling, the way of thinking of the educators and the country as a whole.

While Lifelong Learning first made its impact in the areas of literacy and Adult Education, around 1974, *the report of the education reform committee entitled Education for Life* clearly advocated that the entire education system be developed to insure Lifelong Learning through synergy among formal, non-formal, and informal education.

By 1999, when *the Thai parliament passed the influential Education Act*, lifelong education was mandated as the basic guiding principle and the goal of the education system. The architects of the Education Act were so concerned that the entire educational provisions be based on Lifelong Learning that they decided to merge the offices of adult and non-formal education and formal education together under the management of the newly created Office of Basic Education.

This decision led to nationwide protests among Adult Education providers and supporters who feared that the distinct nature of adult and non-formal education would be under the shadow of the powerful school system. As a result, the govern-
ment decided to reinstate the Office of Non-Formal Education as an independent organization, not under the wing of the Office of Basic Education. Nine years later, the parliament promulgated the Non-Formal and Informal Education Act with the aim to mobilize all government agencies and all sectors of the society towards realization of the vision of Lifelong Learning.

It is important to note that the close cooperation among formal and non-formal education that flourished before the Education Act, subsided during the merging policy and resumed soon after both offices regained their independent and equivalent status. Some of the concrete examples resulting from close linkages between formal and non-formal education are as follows:

**Revision of the national basic education curriculum** from centralized curriculum for all learners to standard based curriculum with provisions for locally relevant contents to serve the diverse groups of learners.

**Development of self-directed learners** with critical thinking and problem solving abilities, fundamental learning skills and metacognitive abilities became the primary aims of basic education. The once all-important contents now became recognized as means through which self-learning skills could be enhanced.

**Action and experiential learning** initiated in non-formal education are now common practices in formal schools through community service programs, internships and apprenticeship with local workplace, part-time employment, small scale student-run enterprises, cross registration among formal and non-formal programs, all of which can be transferred for credits.

Schools are encouraged to offer **alternative pathways** for learners with special needs, combining the better equipped facilities and personnel of the schools with the more flexible non-formal education curricula, inclusive admission policies and regulations, and specially designed support facilities for groups with special needs. As a result, a vast number of drop-outs, out-of-school youth and adults are returning to the schools and universities, altering the student profiles and enriching the learning environment.

Teachers have also benefitted from innovations first piloted in non-formal education. **On-line training programs and distance education** once catered primarily to adult learners are adopted to train teachers on a nationwide basis. One noteworthy effort was initiated by HRH Princess Sirindhorn to assist teachers from ethnic backgrounds who work with preschool children in mountainous regions to obtain university degrees and teaching certificates through distance education. Teachers also form **professional learning groups** to upgrade their competencies through sharing of knowledge and experiences, coaching, mentoring and various forms of knowledge management techniques.
Towards Lifelong Learning

The universities have also been influenced by adult and non-formal education, initially, by the new demands for higher education from the massive number of Adult Education graduates. While the two major open universities, Sukhothai Thammasatiraj and Ramkamhang Universities, were among the first to accommodate such demands, soon after, many other universities adopted open admission policies which embrace adult learners and learners with special needs. The inclusive admission policies, in turn, bring about more inclusive teaching and learning practices, more flexible transfer of prior learning towards credits, more responsive regulations and codes of conducts for students and deeper understanding of the principles of andragogy among formal school teachers and university faculty members.

To respond to the diverse, participatory and learner centered educational strategy, the structure of the education system has been decentralized to school level and operational units with members of the communities, parents and alumni serving on the increasingly powerful school boards and school district committees. Adult Education and non-formal education have been called upon to assist parents and school boards to develop greater understanding about child rearing practices, new issues confronting today’s youth and their contribution to the education of their children. Within the schools, student clubs and student councils are now widespread, empowered by the participatory techniques of adult and non-formal education.

Close linkages between formal and non-formal education have yielded mutual benefits. Capital intensive infrastructure invested for the school system such as the nation-wide Internet connection, educational radio and television broadcasting facilities, water systems, school libraries, laboratories and sports facilities, have been fully utilized for adult and non-formal education programs, community based learning activities as well as the universities reaching out to learners in rural areas. Adult learners have also benefitted from policies originally formulated for school students, such as the supports for free tuition and free text books for those engaged in all forms of basic education. Universities with extension services have contributed to the wealth of knowledge on Adult Education, served as strong advocates of Lifelong Learning policies and developed new generations of lifelong learners.

Working in complement with each other, formal and non-formal education have greatly inculcated the culture of Lifelong Learning, enriched the learning opportunities and contributed towards the strengthening of Lifelong Learning.

Lifelong Learning beyond the Ministry of Education

The impact of Lifelong Learning reaches far beyond the realm of the Ministry of Education. Other development agencies have long worked with communities and adult groups to upgrade their skills and competencies. Although they may not
identify their work as adult non-formal education nor Lifelong Learning, knowledge and skills acquired through these activities can be transferred for credits. Coordination among the various agencies is achieved through the Ministerial Level National Coordinating Committee for Promotion and Support of Non-Formal and Informal Education.

The military, one the biggest providers, constantly upgrades training programs for new draftees to insure that they leave the service with literacy skills, basic education and fundamental vocational skills.

The Ministry of Public Health recruits close to one million health volunteers to serve every village of the country with continuous training programs which can be counted towards basic education certificates. These volunteers, in turn, work with the schools and organize health-related activities in the communities. Some of their most spectacular achievements include campaigns to improve public toilets of the country and to organize community-based aerobic exercise. Such activities have greatly influenced not only the health habits but also the learning behaviors of the population as a whole.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives operates a network of extension workers in various fields related to agriculture across the country as well as farmers cooperatives, imparting exemplary practices and enriching the indigenous learning systems within the community.
The Border Police initially trained village scouts for security and development purposes. Over the years, the membership grew to several million and became recognized as a powerful social movement, supported by various government agencies to enhance their knowledge, skills, and participation.

There are now several thousands non-governmental agencies and community-based organizations working in educational and development projects. Chai Pattana Foundation and Thai Rice Foundation under Royal Patronage, for example, established the first Farmer School in the province of Ayudhaya to provide opportunities for the farmers and extension workers to meet, share experiences and conduct experimentation in order to compare the benefits of traditional and new ways of rice farming. The school succeeds in disseminating more effective farming practices and in generating learning groups within the community. A few years later, the Foundation set up another school to revive the use of buffaloes for tilling the land.

Unlike other member states, support from local government, which now receives over 30 percent of budget allocations, however, is still limited, since their priority is placed on preschool and formal education. Inspired by the business sector and examples from other countries, the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority has declared the goal to become a Learning City and many local governments are investing in libraries and learning resource centers.

**New Perspectives Emerging from the Private Sector**

The concept of Lifelong Learning has also influenced the business sector. In an attempt to meet the challenges of globalization, business corporations have placed priority on human resource development and on creating learning organizations.

The active participation of the business community brings new perspectives to adult and non-formal education that hitherto, have been predominantly community and basic education based. The new adult learners are now university graduates with international exposure and standards. The organizers are business executives and industrialists. The money invested per trainee far exceeds most provision provided by previous literacy and Adult Education programs. Sophisticated training techniques are adopted from more developed economies or created by universities funded to conduct research and development.

Once the human resource development system is in place, many companies move on to Corporate Social Responsibility projects to utilize their resources and personnel to contribute to the development of schools and the communities, resulting in fascinating synergy between business and community-based wisdom.
The Siam Cement Group is an example of a conglomerate that places priority on the value of the people and was the first to establish a human resource management unit. Mr. Paron Issarasena, the former CEO who served for eight years as the company’s Human Resource Manager believed that

“our personnel is our most valuable asset. The more competent, knowledgeable and ethical people we have in our company, the more effective we can move towards our goal. Our company can only survive on two critical factors: our human resource and technology. Not to invest in people is to go against the fundamental business principle.”

Mr. Paron later founded the Suksapattana Foundation which supported satellite transmitted educational programs and worked with Massachusetts Institute of Technology to introduce the concept of Constructionism to Thai schools and the communities.

The Thai government has carried out many proactive measures to mobilize the support of the business sector to invest in human resource development. Expenses incurred in training of personnel or in supporting schools receive double tax deductions. Campaigns are launched to invite companies to “adopt” schools or libraries and to provide scholarships for students and teachers. Krung Thai Bank adopts 97 schools and assigns executives and board members to supervise the assistance rendered to each school.

The mass media have been most instrumental in facilitating Lifelong Learning. A survey has found that on the average, Thai people spend more than four hours watching television and listening to the radio. Close to 60 percent of the Thai population aged 15-59 read a newspaper every day. In order to counteract the commercial influences dominating the media, several measures have been undertaken. These include, inter alia, provision in the education act to provide a free educational broadcasting frequency, trust funds set up from earnings from telecommunication monopoly fees to develop “edutainment programs”, establishment of a public broadcasting television station, and time allocated to children and educational programs during prime time.

The use of communication technology is also transforming the learning styles of the Thai population. In 2008, mobile phone, computer and Internet users accounted for 52 percent, 28 percent and 18 percent of the population respectively. The Internet users alone increased from 220,000 in 1997 to 13,146,000 in 2007. The 2008 survey also indicates serious digital divisions among people of different regions, age groups and educational backgrounds. Bangkok residents have the highest usage at 36 percent, while only 13-18 percent of those living in other re-
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Many regions are Internet users. Close to 70 percent of university graduates use the Internet while 29 percent and 6 percent of secondary school and primary school graduates do so. Similarly, around 78 percent of professionals use the Internet compared to 2 percent among farmers. Among women who have attained educational parity with men, a lower percentage have experience using e-commerce.

Since 2005, the Thai government has tried to improve accessibility by connecting all schools with the Internet. While the project has greatly transformed learning and teaching processes in schools as well as facilitated the use of the Internet in the communities, much more needs to be done to bridge the widening gaps.

Among the Internet users, entertainment and games account for 50 percent of usage compared with only 8 percent for news and education. To insure that the wider access to the Internet will be utilized for meaningful learning experiences, the Ministry of Culture along with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Technology and many non-governmental agencies have carried out several innovative measures. These include the promotion of “Good Internet Cafés” which agree to use creative and educational software and adhere to strict regulation on the usage by children and youth, training of youth in computer programming including those who have become game addicts, support for Thai language educational websites, training in media and computer literacy to foster responsible and ethical usage of computers, programs to educate parents to keep track of computer usage of their children and development of screening devices and mechanisms.

**Strengthening Lifelong Learning at Community and Individual Levels**

The ultimate support for Lifelong Learning comes from the communities, learning groups and the individual learners themselves who generate new demands for learning opportunities, offer their own services as resource persons or organizers and contribute towards the development of Lifelong Learning culture.

Some notable case studies help to illustrate how communities, groups and individual learners have been transformed by Lifelong Learning, and they in turn serve as catalysts for enriching Lifelong Learning opportunities.

With over 30,000 temples and 400,000 monks across Thailand, the Buddhist institution is potentially the most powerful educational delivery system of the country. Over the years, however, the school systems and the mass media have taken over the prominent roles in educating the Thai public.

Within the past few years, new and exciting innovations have emerged in the teaching of Buddhism and proved to be highly successful in renewing public interest. These approaches include, inter alia, production of attractive publications.
with colorful illustration, down to earth writing style, dealing with topics close to the concern of youth and the general public, the use of animation, text message and music to convey Buddhist concepts, training of monks to teach in schools and to conduct their sermons more effectively and campaign to ordain youngsters as novices or to form voluntary groups for community services.

With the shift in the age structure of the society, the aging population is now receiving a great deal of attention with concrete plans to provide a variety of services as well as to utilize their expertise. The Brain Bank organization, for example, has been set up to mobilize retired academicians and scholars to provide advice and voluntary consulting services.

**OPPY: Old People Playing Young Group** was founded eight years ago by a prominent business woman at the age of 70 with the aims to encourage and assist people over the age of 45 to learn to use the Internet. The project has grown into a club with over 3,000 active members who join to pursue other learning activities such as photography and water colour painting. The project was among the first to recognize and try to bridge the gap between the older generation and the skills required to function effectively in society.

Among the communities that have turned around as a result of Lifelong Learning, **Limtong Village** is perhaps most well known. The village is situated in Buriram Province in rich and fertile land with a huge swamp providing the village with fresh water and an abundant supply of fish. Over the years, the swamp gradually dried up, making rice farming increasingly difficult. At the same time, new roads brought in luxury goods and opportunities to migrate from the communities. With fewer helping hands and lower communal spirit, the villagers stopped helping each other and had to hire outsiders during farming season. Soon, most families were in heavy debt.

Several agencies started to assist the community to transform on the principles of self-sufficiency bestowed by His Majesty King Bhumipol. Suksapattana Foundation was the first to help with agriculture activities, Auntie Noy, a lower primary school graduate, learned to keep a family account. She soon discovered that the large majority of their expenses went into alcohol and gambling. Auntie Noy vowed to stop buying lottery tickets and helped her husband to get rid of his drinking habits. Soon the family saved enough money to invest in improving their soil for vegetable farming. Auntie Noy went on to learn computer skills through which she became aware of the fluctuating prices of vegetables in the different markets and learned of new varieties of cash crops, new production, marketing, and management techniques.
Meanwhile, the entire village was inspired by Auntie Noy’s determination and followed her example in keeping account of their spending. Eventually, the entire village succeeded in cutting down their gambling and drinking and saved enough money to open a community grocery store. The success of the grocery store motivated the community to move on to other development activities such as community computer center, the use of GPS to survey the landscape and identify appropriate sites for water canals serving the entire village and preparation of village production and marketing plan. While the village received assistance from many agencies, the key to the success lies in the transformation of each individual learner and the community to become self-directed learners, continually seeking, sharing, experimenting and disseminating new knowledge.

At the individual level, Sunan Sangsuwan, founder of an Export Pottery Factory, represents another self-directed learner who became a millionaire from her determination to learn. Upon her graduation from the university with a social science degree, Ms Sunan ran a family owned catering service with little success. Noticing the interest of foreign visitors of the local pottery, she began a small souvenir shop selling local products. When the business proved to be more successful than the catering service, Ms. Sunan took an intensive English class, learning just enough to communicate for the export of pottery. The first three years of her business were devoted to learning and experimentation on every dimension of the business, from management, export business, financial management, personnel management, production techniques, and the lifestyles of potential customers in foreign lands. Ms. Sunan now runs a factory employing 300 workers, all of whom receive on-the-job training, exporting over 5 million US dollars worth of pottery to 26 countries each year. She attributes her success to “the unceasing desire to learn and to teach”.

These success stories are growing in number, portraying that Lifelong Learning is no longer confined to policy statement or government initiated activities but has affected the lives of people at all levels of the society. The value of Lifelong Learning, once embedded in most cultures, is now regaining its strengths. It is important to recognize, however, that promising as these case studies may seem, they are only isolated examples. If Lifelong Learning is to serve as a powerful vehicle for development, lessons from past experiences must be examined and new challenges emerging must be foreseen.

Lessons Learned from the Thai Experience

Thailand’s forty years of experience in pursuing Lifelong Learning illustrate its dynamism. From continuing education for literacy and Adult Education graduates, Lifelong Learning now encompasses a rich diversity of learning opportunities ex-
tending far beyond the education sector into the communities, business sector and overall social and economic development arena. The key strategies and facilitating factors have included the following:

1. **Sustained commitment to Lifelong Learning.** While the initial commitment began in small scale with narrow focus, there have been unceasing efforts to expand the vision, to reach new groups of beneficiaries, to respond to new learning needs, to introduce innovations and technology as well as to mobilize new alliances. By institutionalizing Lifelong Learning as the guiding principle of the education plan and later on, in legislation, it has been possible to insure continuity, mobilization of support and to a certain extent, appropriate budget allocations.

2. **Effective adult and non-formal education.** Without the active support from adult and non-formal education, the provision of Lifelong Learning would not have progressed this far. The adult and non-formal movement has been most instrumental in advocating the vision of Lifelong Learning and translating it into reality. With a history of uninterrupted development for over seventy years, the Thai adult and non-formal education is unique in many ways. It has become widely respected as the champion of the disadvantaged. It has established a close alliance with other Adult Education providers, with the independent Office of Non-formal Education, shifting its role from provider to coordinator. It has nurtured and enjoyed the support of the powerful network of Adult Education alumni covering all segments of the society.

Most importantly, it has been able to exert influence on formal schooling and has been recognized as an equal and complementary component of the education system.

3. **Inclusive formal education.** Mandated to insure universal education for school-age children and youth, the formal school system had taken a longer time to respond to the challenge of Lifelong Learning. The vision of Lifelong Learning, however, cannot be realized without the support of formal education. While adult and non-formal education has the advantage of being responsive and innovative, the formal school system’s network extends across the country with far more resources
to be utilized for Lifelong Learning. The formal school system, however, must be transformed to serve the goal of Lifelong Learning, striving to guarantee not only access but meaningful, relevant quality learning experiences for all. In particular, self-directed learning competencies and the culture of Lifelong Learning must be given priority in the curriculum. The teachers and all educational personnel must serve as role models of Lifelong Learning behavior and help to facilitate conducive learning environments within the school, the home and the communities.

4. Enriched informal learning opportunities. The Thai experience has demonstrated that the learning environment and indigenous learning mechanisms can be further enhanced. Some of the promising strategies have included allocation of broadcasting time to educational and development programs, support for libraries and learning centers, cooperation with religious leaders, parent education, training of folk artists and radio talk show hosts and incentives provided to the business sector to organize educational activities.

5. Facilitating role of government in promoting Lifelong Learning. In the Thai situation, the role of the government has changed over the years. When opportunities for basic education were limited and the value of Lifelong Learning not fully recognized, the government had to take a more proactive role as primary organizer. In subsequent years, when universal basic education became more widely accessible, with diverse providers of adult and non-formal educational services, the government shifted the role to promoters, coordinators and supporters with a more decentralized and participatory structure. Too strong and prescriptive government control has been found to stifle initiatives and participation. At the same time, attempts to dismiss the functions of the government in adult non-formal education had seriously weakened its positions in providing alternative perspectives and options.

In assessing the present condition of Lifelong Learning in Thailand and looking towards the future, there are 5 major areas of concern.

1. The need to reaffirm our commitment to serve the educationally disadvantaged

With increased enrolment rates and progress towards achieving education for all targets, pressure towards searching for and reaching the educationally disadvantaged has been vastly reduced. The new marginalized groups are often overlooked, especially those left out by advancement in technology, those endangered by armed conflicts and those affected by the continuing education for adult graduates to encompass all segments of the society has greatly shifted the program’s priorities. It is quite likely that once again the needs of the educationally disadvantaged will be secondary to the needs of the better endowed and high profile learners. It
is important to insure that Lifelong Learning continues to serve as the tool to help bridging and not widening the opportunity gaps within society.

2. The threats and the benefits of technology in insuring equitable Lifelong Learning

While Thailand has allocated a significant proportion of the budget to equip schools and education facilities with Internet and new technology, it has not been able to tackle the problem of the digital divide. Furthermore, the new technology has not been fully harnessed to benefit the educationally disadvantaged. Inadequate preparation has also led to wasteful and harmful utilization among the learners. Unless more effective strategy can be formulated to handle this critical challenge, technology will undoubtedly become the key deciding factor on the issue of equity and quality in the future.

3. The search for a more appropriate concept of quality

The education system based on the principles of Lifelong Learning has brought about more diversified learning goals and approaches with transfer of credits across programs organized by different providers, alternative pathways to serve the diverse groups of learners, and more tailor-made curricula. There is a need to review and reformulate the working definition of quality to attain a balance
between standards required and flexibility in response to the diverse needs and conditions of the learners.

4. Preparing for the new players of Lifelong Learning

Over the years, facilitators of Lifelong Learning have extended beyond those involved in literacy and Adult Education. Active participation has arisen from the schools, universities, communities, business corporations, mass media, religious institutions, social, cultural or even political movements. These new players brought with them new resources and approaches which have further enriched and expanded the vision of Lifelong Learning. In most cases, however, the new players do not consider their work as adult or non-formal education. Coming from vastly different backgrounds, they do not share the same ideology and often lack the abilities to work effectively with disadvantaged adults. Adult educators, at the same time, are often concerned about the newcomers and feel the need to control directions and goals. There is an urgent need, therefore, to establish a mechanism to mobilize participation, develop sense of ownership, and provide opportunities for learning and sharing so that synergy between the diverse groups of Lifelong Learning facilitators can be achieved.

5. Fostering moral and ethical development through Lifelong Learning

While Lifelong Learning has proved to be effective in enhancing literacy and communication skills, for upgrading educational qualifications or preparing for the world of work, its success in transforming the ethical values and the behavior of the learners is much more limited. The commercial sector, on the other hand, has fully exploited the power of the mass media and informal education in creating new and often unnecessary demands among the consumers. Greater attention must be given to foster moral and ethical development, responsible global awareness and empower our learners for social causes through Lifelong Learning.

Thailand is proud to have made some significant progress in realizing the vision of Lifelong Learning. We feel indebted to UNESCO and international organizations for inspiration and support, to UIL for expanding the concept and the network of Lifelong Learning, to member states for exemplary practices. Even though we have much to celebrate, we are acutely aware that the road ahead is even more challenging. CONFINTÉA VI is organized at the crucial moment when we need to harness all our wisdom to cope with the increasingly detrimental global issues. It is our hope that CONFINTÉA VI will serve as a venue through which we can assess the present situation, review our ongoing practices and pave the way for future Lifelong Learning strategy to unleash the human potentials for sustainable development.
The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) organises Global Action Weeks every April. It is a moment in which children, teachers, parents and people around the world unite in their demands for education. Last year the campaign was The Big Read, in which 14 million people took part. Matarr Baldeh coordinator of EFANET in Gambia and GCE Board member, and Maria Kahn, Director of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education and also GCE Board member present an important statement.

Matarr Baldeh / Maria Khan

Global Action Week Presentation

Honourable Ministers, Director General, and esteemed guests, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this opening ceremony of CONFINTEA VI.

It is an honour to be here today to share with you the wishes and concerns of the 14 million people who participated in Global Action Week 2009, titled The Big Read, Literacy and Learning for All.

From 23rd to 29th April this year, campaigners, adult learners, authors, moral leaders and the Adult Education community joined together to demand action on youth and Adult Education and literacy. We enjoyed the support of Nelson Mandela, Queen Rania of Jordan, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Alice Walker, and Paulo Coelho.

The Big Read was celebrated in over 120 countries with campaigners reading and writing stories, which were presented to policy-makers to draw attention to the global deficit in literacy and learning.

Our mobilisation demanded that the neglect of this sector must be reversed. It is a scandal that almost 800 million adults, the majority of them women, will wake up tomorrow unable to read and write. These people are unable to earn a living, cannot access health services, and are excluded from participation in society and democracy.

In support of their struggle to learn, we present you with this folder, which contains a representation of
the names of 14m campaigners who signed the Big Read, together with a copy of the Big Read and the Big Book, our record of the campaign in 2009.

We are now preparing Global Action Week 2010 – 1GOAL, Education For All. Through this unique partnership with FIFA for the World Cup 2010, we will mobilise unprecedented public concern and political will about EFA. We have already signed up world-famous footballers such as Zinedine Zedane and Rio Ferdinand. With their backing, we will sign up 30 million supporters to demand action on financing of EFA in 2010.

Now, over to Maria….

Maria Khan

Thank you. I want to share civil society’s recommendations to CONFINTEA. I have just come from FISC, a unique gathering of education practitioners and activists from all over the world. FISC recommended that:

Adult Education should be inclusive and diverse, spanning all areas of human activity. It requires inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial action and leadership from Ministries of Education or their equivalent. There should be no more collection of data or statistics based on a false line between illiteracy and literacy.

Adult Education should be a justiciable human right. All governments should develop costed policies, targeted plans and legislation for addressing adult literacy and Lifelong Learning by 2012.

CONFINTEA VI should agree a binding minimum target of at least 6% of national education budgets on Adult Education. All employers should invest at least 1% of the payroll in work-related education and training.

The donor community should give 6% of aid to education, to adult literacy and education.

The EFA Fast Track Initiative should be transformed into a Global Initiative on Education For All, which prompts action and investment in adult literacy and education.

There should be a comprehensive approach to benchmarking and monitoring of CONFINTEA commitments with a global monitoring report every three years.

Governments should recognise that civil society and learners have a crucial role to play in policy dialogue on adult learning policy and practice and in monitoring.

We are ready to play our part, but we expect governments to lead the way in ensuring an end to illiteracy and ignorance, not in the distant future, but for this generation. In the name of FISC, and 14m campaigners in every part of the globe, this is our call.
Below we print the input presentation of the EFA-FTI Secretariat for the workshop “Financing Adult Education for Development” as organised by dvv international and ICAE. The workshop focuses on generating strategies for increasing public and international investment in adult learning, and education through development cooperation within the EFA and CONFINTEA frameworks.

Education for All – Fast Track Initiative

FTI and Adult Literacy

**WHAT IS FTI?**

“One Country, One Strategy, One Process”

- global partnership for EFA
- poorest countries (60-70 eligible)
- whole education sector & primary focus
- currently 40 countries with endorsed education sector plans, 32 getting direct financial support through the Catalytic Fund
- governing board w/ civil society, partner country representatives
FTI and Adult Literacy

Few governments include primary-level Adult Education in their plans & requests

Why? Funding priorities of governments? Limited donor dialogue? Competition across ministries?

How to influence?

- GCE has two voting seats on FTI board
- Local Education Groups should include NGOs, which can be NGOs working for adult literacy

FTI & adult literacy

- FTI funding sources: domestic budget, bilateral & Catalytic Fund, Education Program Development Fund
- Local Education Groups appraise & endorse plans & funding requests by partner countries
- FTI funds: may finance adult literacy programs, if...
  ...included by governments in education sector plans & aid/grant requests
When migrants are able to employ their skills, their work clearly benefits both themselves and receiving societies. But when skilled migrants are compelled to work at jobs that are not commensurate with their qualifications, their capacity to contribute is compromised. Such waste arises from barriers in the recognition of degrees, certificates and qualifications obtained abroad. International cooperation is necessary to improve the portability of qualifications and the mutual recognition of degrees and certification.

(United Nations, 2006:15)
Presentation Overview

1. The South African Context
2. Recognising Foreign Qualifications
3. Challenges Facing Migrants
4. Proposals for Way Forward

The South African Context

- Historical legacy
- Sustained economic growth over last decade
- Recession last year – not too severe
- Serious shortage of critical skills identified major drawback on economic growth
- Two pronged strategy:
  - Importation of high level skills
  - Development of critical and scarce skills
- Political instability in Zimbabwe

Role of South African Qualifications Authority.

- SAQA’s mandate is to be the custodian of the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) with 3 Quality Councils
- Key strategic areas:
  - Registration of qualifications and part qualifications
  - Registration of Professional Bodies and Registration of Professional Designations
  - As the National Information Centre to Evaluate Foreign Qualifications
  - National Learners’ Records Database
Recognition of Foreign Qualifications.

- Increase evaluation of high level applications:
  - 2005 – 895
  - 2009 – 29 347
- Top Countries Recruited From:
  - Zimbabwe – 57%
  - India – 7.2%
  - United Kingdom – 4.80%
- Qualifications in higher education
  - 85%
- School level and trade qualifications
  - 15%

Recognition of Foreign Qualifications.

- Migrants who don’t apply for evaluation
- Large numbers of people crossing border between SA and other African countries
  - Zimbabwe
  - DRC
  - Somalia
  - Mozambique
- Large numbers of people displaced due to Xenophobic attacks
- With 2010, approach work has been focussed on human trafficking.
- Mass literacy campaign also focuses on foreign learners.
- 365,000 literacy learners have been captured on our NLRD

Challenges Faced by Migrants.

- Access to resources / means to comply with processes
  - Information on how to
  - Money to apply
- Lack of Documentation
- Prejudice and Xenophobia
- Language and other Cultural difference
- Mismatch between expectations and reality
- Political Opposition
- Differences between education and training systems and credible ways of comparison
Proposals for Dealing with Migrants.

- Systematic way of getting the information
  - Develop national and regional databases to enable credible comparisons
  - Research qualifications and education and training system
  - Develop credible instruments of measurement
  - Focus on areas other than higher education, e.g. vocational education, occupational and training, literacy and post literacy

- Set up national and regional mechanisms to evaluate and recognize qualifications and skills
- Promote national and regional qualifications frameworks and Authorities
- Streamline legal institutions to make it simpler and easier to understand
- Make recognition and processes more accessible to migrants
- Undertake research projects and make funding available for comparability of qualifications and part qualifications
The keynote address on the final day was by Paul Bélanger, President of the ICEA and former Chair of CONFINTEA V. His speech is a forceful plea for the importance of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. Only through education can Civil Society solve problems such as poverty, disease, and conflicts in a globalised world. Quick action is necessary. But how can these objectives be achieved? Paul Bélanger lists important cornerstones.

Paul Bélanger

From Words To Deeds

First of all, I would like to thank UNESCO for inviting me, as President of the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), to give this address. With other representatives of civil society organizations, we have come here to work with you to advance the right to learn throughout life. Because we are convinced that the continuing development of knowledge and skills within the adult population is one of the most strategic investments that societies today are called upon to do.

And this is urgent, otherwise mankind will not have the means in itself to face the challenges ahead. The deadly conflicts that arise, as was the case last night in two African countries and as we see too regularly on all continents, show us that without a society which is informed and strong inside, such disasters are inevitable.

Yes, without widespread freedom to learn, without strengthening the foundations of diplomatic skills daily, the opportunity, regardless of the country, to resolve conflicts other than with the shedding of blood becomes practically impossible. Adult Education is an essential tool for peace.

But how can we really invest in Lifelong Learning for all people in civil society?

During the deliberations leading to CONFINTEA VI, the international, national or non-governmental partners all agreed that at this sixth international conference on Adult Education, words will have to lead to deeds. The watchword in each and every one of the partners quickly became and remained in this final session of CONFINTEA VI “from words to deeds.”

But to really move from words to deeds, two questions arise. First: Why is it important and urgent that adults and youths outside school develop their potential? And second: How to proceed to action, how to make it possible now?
1. Why has it Become Necessary to Extend Education throughout Life?

The why or rather the whys are important because they are at the root of the political will which this conference demanded from all of us.

Then why invest in developing the capacity for initiative in adults, increasing their capacity for action?

First, because the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals, the MDGs, are not achievable without the active and informed participation of ALL people. You cannot fight HIV/AIDS without prevention. We cannot stem the meteoric rise of this pandemic, as we did malaria, without an informed public aware of preventive measures, without active education and health promotion. This is called Adult Education.

We cannot achieve universal primary education for all children in the world without the active participation of parents and without giving them the means to be equipped for this purpose, without educating the parents. This is also called Adult Education.

We will not be able to reduce hunger in the world, to overcome the food crisis, without allowing farmers, tillers of the soil, to increase the yield of their land without investing strongly in the expansion or popularization of agriculture. And that is called Adult Education.

In the statement of objectives of the Millennium Development Goals, education of adults and youth outside school is not mentioned anywhere, but in fact it is everywhere an underlying condition for their realization. We will not be able to address the eight key challenges that humanity has been faced with at the beginning of this millennium, if 20%, 30, 40 or worse, 60% of the adult population does not have the opportunity to equip themselves to compete. None of the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved without the active involvement and therefore without the education of the youth and adults.

Why, in the midst of an economic crisis, have some countries decided to invest in adult learning? Because they have recognized that this is an essential strategic component for emerging from the crisis. The continuous training of the workforce is not a luxury or a social expenditure, it is an indispensable response to revive industry in the context of a global market in upheaval. We must stop the macro-economic policies that want to prevent countries from investing in the improvement of their workforce in order to better prepare themselves to get out of the crisis. These macro-policies do not seem to recognize that the required changes in the methods and techniques of production and in the organization of work cannot be achieved
without an accelerated improvement of the basic skills of the population. Businesses require it to reposition themselves, the workers want it in order to protect their right to work, and migrant populations need it to be qualified in the host country and, at first, to learn the language. It is the same in the informal economy, where the women and men who work there, in order to survive, must also increase their competence. Now, it is necessary to name all this work for qualification Adult Education.

Basically, why recognize this right of women and men to education throughout their lives if not because we all have the right to live in dignity. Today the ability to continue to learn, for people no matter where they are on the planet, is not a superfluous hobby reserved for a privileged minority. To learn, to increase their autonomy, it is necessary to enjoy this freedom to question, and to learn its advantages; it is to rediscover self-esteem and consequently that of others; it is to enable every citizen to strengthen their sense of personal efficacy; it is to experience the joy of learning. The right to learn is not a luxury but an intimate energy source which has become socially necessary in order to continue in our contemporary societies, to build and construct our communities. We are all entitled to live at the height of human intelligence. We all have the right to learn to be, to learn to become, to learn to live together. To possess the power to direct our lives through all the transitions
that lie ahead is quite a legitimate aspiration. Lifelong Learning cannot be lifelong and life-wide, if it isn’t life-deep as well. That is profoundly Adult Education, and that is why education throughout life has become a fundamental right.

If the need for education throughout life is increasingly convergent, it is also because it has become an essential tool for development of our societies, a society which cannot remain without a reflective state of continuous awakening of civil society, a society where the welfare of the state cannot be maintained without becoming participatory. And it is about participation, about increased information and a greater capacity to act. Yes, Adult Education has become a fundamental prerogative because it has become necessary in order to exercise all other rights: the right to health, to work, the right to a healthy environment, to protection against discrimination by gender, sexual orientation, age, etc.. Therefore, recognized as a legal right and thus justiciable, the basic training of adults will be accessible across the planet; and this generalized increase in skills will become a powerful tool for socio-economic development and an improvement in the quality of life.

We cannot wait 35 years for the adult population to increase its basic education, which is the amount of time required to do so through only the education of the young. It is now, inside the adult generation, that we must act. Already today, 80% of the adult population of 2021 has already left school and completed their initial training. Societies in the South as well as in the North, cannot wait until CONFINTREA IX – in the year 2043 – in order to raise the level of basic skills of their adult population. It is now, during the next five or ten years that today’s adults need to acquire new skills and capacities. Certainly, the initial training is essential, it is the foundation for further learning throughout life. However, this training at the beginning of life is no longer enough. The biographical journey is too uncertain, the transitions too numerous, the contexts too changeable. If the educational journey of today’s population stops when the youth get out of school, it will be catastrophic. And yet, yes, and yet the annual reports of UNESCO about Education For All show that adult basic education remains, and I quote, “tragically underfunded.”

Our concern in this sixth international conference on Adult Education is also the continuous increase in social, cultural and economic productivity of our societies. Civil society organizations do not refuse to talk about productivity. This requirement has been and continues to be a driving force behind the ascent of human beings from the beginning of Homo sapiens to today. The capacity for action and initiative of men and women has been and is still more than ever the strategic resource, not only the most beneficial, but also the most renewable. But we must not forget what is unfortunately often done today, that there can be no sustainable increase in productivity without equitable distribution of its fruits. One cannot have sustained
participation of collective intelligence without an equitable distribution of benefits and products, unconditionally, so all can equip themselves to contribute.

And that is why it is important to rectify this situation and invest in education throughout life, especially since the return on such investment is exponential, because of the tendencies observed in the reproduction of expanded curiosity and knowledge in living and working communities. Humanity will not survive its food, economic and ecological crises, and the inevitable clash of its cultural multiplicity, if all the citizens of the world do not have space and the resources to learn new ways to produce and live together. And this steady increase in productivity through a continuous renewal of knowledge and skills also goes by the name Adult Education.

You see, the “why invest” in education throughout life is becoming increasingly evident. But how can it be done?

2. How to Do it?

Today, the question of how has become equally if not more important than why. More important of course because the solutions are not simple, but also because failing to respond effectively, it will not be possible to carry out the major changes that the future requires us to do now.

The first step is to give ourselves a broad view of the current scope of Adult Education. A vision that immediately includes the whole set of activities of education and Adult Education from literacy to the continuing professional development of doctors and engineers, through to work-related training, language learning, health and environmental education, agricultural extension, not to mention the vast field of popular education, and this in a perspective of active education all through the course of a lifetime – a broader vision of continuing education that can be translated into all fields of human activities along with the need for people to have a greater capacity for initiatives, which also takes into account, in all these areas, of the development of favorable educational environments, of contexts of activity which stimulate curiosity, call for and encourage individual and collective initiative, which confer the love of learning, and which arouse the need to improve still more.

The second practical step is the adoption of policies and laws which explicitly recognize that the reality of education in our country is constantly changing, where the number of adult learners who demand specific learning exceeds the number of young people in school, high school or college and universities. It is necessary, therefore that the Ministry of Education adopt policies that put Adult Education as the first responsibility for basic training, for continuing professional education,
including remote access and training for adults to postsecondary education and university. But also with the adoption of policies which also identify the training activities of adults in other departments: expanded agriculture, farming, promotion of health, educating inmates about justice, promotion of a reading culture, the activities of the ministries concerned with the conditions of women, the environment and social welfare, without forgetting the ministries of employment and immigration. In order to achieve this inevitably inter-ministerial mission for the education of adults, a new function of communication, synergy and voluntary coordination is needed for which the Ministry of Education is asked to perform a key role. Investments in Adult Education will only bear fruit to the extent that this effort will establish arrangements to facilitate through information, the reception, the reference, and the recognition of achievements and the Adult Learners’ Weeks, the difficult expression of this large demand for training, and to ensure the transformation of learning into action, that is to say, there where we can really measure the impact the collective effort required.

Internationally, the decision of this conference to review by 2012 the UNESCO normative instrument, the 1976 recommendation on the development of Adult Education creates an important space for renewing the vision of Adult Education and recommending legislative and economic measures to facilitate the exercise of adults’ right to learn. In this respect the great expectations of UNESCO and its Institute of Lifelong Education are to combine the various UN agencies following this conference.

The third course of action is the mobilization of all actors, government, economic and civil society. Without this mobilization, adoption of legislation and government programs cannot give the expected results. Our observations show, it is to the extent that the need to raise the competence of the workforce is mutually recognized by employers, unions and the organizations of social services, that continuous training policies become effective. The active role of civil society organizations also makes a difference, not only in the “make them do” and “doing with,” but also in development of policies and programs and oversight activities. It is also up to associations of adult learners, a growing movement in all regions of the world to recognize the specific conditions of adults, to reconcile the difficulties between family, work and training. Several global networks have been created around and outside of the International Council of Adult Education in recent decades to awaken public opinion, educate decision makers and help to organize people in the field: I think of the Global Campaign for Education, the Women’s Action Group, the Gender Education Office, the Adult Education Hall of Fame, the Global Forum on Lifelong Education and of course the Forum of Civil Society on Adult Education
and Popular Education, which held its first global session in the days preceding this conference.

A fourth way of action, although the most difficult, is essential, and that is the mobilization of financial resources and personnel. We cannot achieve anything without first developing and adopting action plans specifying the objectives to be achieved, the budgets to be allocated for this purpose and then putting that together into national legislation. How is it possible to talk about funding without mentioning concrete figures? It is necessary that the principle financial mechanisms for Education for All, like the Education Fast Track Initiative explicitly supports goals 3 and 4 of EFA, namely adult literacy. The well-known demand to spend 6% of the national education budget on Adult Education is realistic from a budgetary point of view and necessary for socio-economic development. Similarly, the consensus now is that the target agreed in the Millennium Development Goals to allocate 0.7% of GDP to international aid and the proposal to invest 6% of the part devoted to education in developing the skills of the general population is the minimum necessary to implement the shift needed. Budgets are an expression of political will.

Can someone explain to me how a country which is the third largest gold producer in the world cannot find money to fund, as is required, literacy for adults in its own country? Can you understand how a country which is the world’s leading producer of bauxite says it could not fund the basic training demanded by its women and men? Nor can I understand how a country can agree to drain its oil reserves in less than two decades, that is to divest itself of non-renewable resources without investing the funds this temporarily released to invest long-term in the most
renewable resource in its possession, the people, their capacity for initiative, their intelligence? Please, revise the budgets allocated to increasing armaments in favor of the most promising investment, investment in the creativity of the people.

Investing in Adult Education also requires investment in training and working conditions of those who work in the field. The issue is the quality of training and thus the efficacy of the domestic investment.

The fifth and final course of action is to monitor, and check the results. First, as we have said, clear targets must be set that can guide the action and make the necessary adjustments. Precisely because the solutions are not simple, it is important that transparent mechanisms are introduced to the monitoring of our actions and reports are made regularly to all public and private stakeholders in society. Yes, what counts, and we all agree, are the results and their value, not the rhetoric.

**Conclusion**

In 1997, we held CONFINTEA V following the major peaks of the Rio declaration on the environment in 1992, the Cairo Conference on Population in 1994, Beijing on the status of women in 1995, Copenhagen on social development in 1996. Over a third of these global summit recommendations were calls to increase the initiative capacity of the adult population. CONFINTEA V was carried by this movement and was to respond. This fifth conference produced a consensus on a broad and dynamic vision for Adult Education, but actions that followed, though real, have really not been up to the expectations formulated in the Agenda for the Future. Twelve years later, CONFINTEA VI takes place in a completely different context. It takes place at the very eve of the Copenhagen conference on the future of the climate on our planet, a context that makes it a more expectant title that the one UNESCO Hamburg gave this conference: Adult learning for a viable future. If the Copenhagen summit succeeds, education for adults will become obligatory in order to turn around how to live, produce and consume. If the summit fails, Adult Education will be even more necessary to enable the human community of the 21st century to recover, to learn and exercise their civic participation to ensure the future of the planet for our children and our grandchildren, for Jules, Marius, Luca and all the others.

The planet will only survive if it becomes a learning world.

Yes, we must take action, it is feasible and has become necessary.

We must move forward. And as Einstein said, “Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving.”
PREPARATORY PROCESS OF ICAE AND FISC
Youth and Adult Education must be strongly enforced by all States as a fundamental human right. The application of this right must follow the principle of equal treatment and nondiscrimination.

Youth and Adult Education is crucial for overcoming poverty and for addressing the global food, fuel, environmental and financial crises. The silent violence of economic, social and cultural inequality is intolerable; equal opportunity should be a central concern in the reorientation of adult learning and education (ALE), including youth education.

Youth and Adult Education, as well as literacy, must be clearly prioritised within international frameworks and national state policies. Goals 3 and 4 of Education For All (EFA) on youth and adult literacy can no longer be ignored.

Literacy policies must be clearly articulated within a Lifelong Learning framework and linked to other intersectoral actions and policies. Literacy and Lifelong Learning are essential elements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). States and international agencies must commit to developing qualified Youth and Adult Education practitioners and professional, secure and appropriate work conditions.

The right to education and Lifelong Learning for migrant women and men has to be recognized together with the right of refugees. Migrants and refugees have the right not only to survive, but to rebuild their lives.

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Youth and Adult Education might have different meanings depending on specific realities. In the context of Europe it is better to use “education for adults and young people/adults.”
6. **What is needed now is ACTION:** appropriate legal and policy frameworks as well as governance structures and mechanisms are necessary to ensure the right of all to Youth and Adult Education. International monitoring and follow-up mechanisms of commitments to be made at CONFINTÉA VI are essential.

7. **States must demonstrate clear political will and allocate necessary resources for the full exercise of the right to Youth and Adult Education.** States and aid agencies must increase their resource allocation to Youth and Adult Education; privatization must be challenged upfront as well as internationally imposed macro economic conditions that undermine investments in education.

1. **Youth and Adult Education is an enforceable fundamental human right**

   “It should be emphasized that enjoyment of the right to fundamental education is not limited by age or gender; it extends to children, youth and adults, including young adults out of school and older persons. Fundamental education, therefore, is an integral component of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. Because fundamental education is a right of all age groups, curricula and delivery systems must be devised which are suitable for students of all ages.”

   (…)

   “education must be accessible to all, especially the most vulnerable groups, in law and fact, without discrimination…The prohibition against discrimination…is subject to neither progressive realization nor the availability of resources; it applies fully and immediately to all aspects of education and encompasses all internationally prohibited grounds of discrimination.”

   General comment nº 13 on the implementation of the international covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

   We emphasize the need to end practices of discrimination towards indigenous peoples, as well as toward people with disabilities and imprisoned men and women. The application of the right to Youth and Adult Education must follow the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination. We therefore call on States to take affirmative and positive action (through nationally binding legislation and action plans) that seeks to overcome all forms of inequality and discrimination, including multiple discrimination, based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, disabilities or other grounds in Youth and Adult Education. Without outreach measures, the right to learn throughout life cannot be guaranteed.
2. Youth and Adult Education is crucial for overcoming poverty and for addressing the global food, fuel, environmental and financing crises

The present food, environmental and economic crisis exacerbates existing inequalities. Poverty and social exclusion cannot be dissociated from the structured inequalities reflected in and reinforced by the increasingly uneven distribution of learning provision. Within a Lifelong Learning framework, social exclusion not only means exclusion from learning opportunities but also the hegemonic insistence of a knowledge hierarchy denying legitimacy to certain types of knowledge. The learning demand of people active in the agricultural or craft economy and in the informal economy, of women in great numbers in care work, voluntary or civil society activity and subsistence production is not recognized because these activities remain hidden. The Belém deliberations must take into account the impact of this informal and invisible economy on the right of women to engage in learning activities.

Adult learning responses, including vocational Adult Education and training, to economic inequalities must be supported by, and linked to cross-governmental action. The Belém Framework should make clear that the rights of youth and adults to education and Lifelong Learning cannot be dissociated from economic, social and cultural policies, or from the model of societies and development that nations adopt. Presently, the global food crisis, worsened by the financial and economic crisis, must be tackled with absolute priority; it threatens the most basic need that impacts on the survival of millions of people. Adult learning is not in competition with such priority: it is part of the solution. Successful strategies on all continents include: strong, participatory agricultural extension programs, community organization and mobilization, as well as adult literacy provision in rural areas.

Another planet is possible, but not without profound transformation in the ways we produce and in which we live. A new way of life and a new ecological solidarity is in the making and it must be nurtured to reach the critical levels required to sustain action. However, it will only rise to the critical level required when billions of women and men will have the space and possibilities to meet, discuss issues and develop know-how, so as to sustain their will to act. Adult learning relative to the environment, to learn how to transform humanity’s relationship with physical environment and how to build greener economies, is no longer an option and the current initiatives in study circles, literacy groups, village councils, urban citizens committees and adult learning networks are already showing the way. The Belém Framework For Action should underline the urgency of environmental Adult Education. The impact of non-action is global and for that reason it must be debated not only by the G8 and the G20 but by the entire G192 and by civil society. Humanity will not survive without the emergence of an active, creative eco-citizenship sustained by global solidarity and based on informed action at local, regional and planetary level.
3. Youth and Adult Education, as well as literacy must be clearly prioritized within international frameworks (including EFA) and national state policies

The neglect of Goals 3 and 4 of the Dakar Framework for Action on Youth and Adult Education as well as adult literacy must be repudiated. This neglect persists in spite of powerful evidence on the contribution of youth and Adult Education and literacy to improving people’s quality of life, to the educational achievement of children, to the increase of agricultural productivity and food production, to community-led conflict resolution, to basic skills improvement in the work place, and to the efficient delivery of universal health care, among other direct and indirect benefits.

A substantial policy shift is required. Concrete benchmarks should be clearly stipulated in the Belém Framework for Action to measure progress and reverse the current trend. States, as well as multilateral and international aid agencies, must urgently place due emphasis on Goals 3 and 4 of the Dakar Framework for Action. They must recognize Youth and Adult Education and literacy as a necessary, crosscutting component of the Millennium Development Goals, since none of them can be achieved without the creative and informed participation of people. They must also guarantee that the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) ensures the integration of Youth and Adult Education in National Education Plans.

Similarly, the past and current conditionalities imposed by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) which require national governments to freeze investment in education and to marginalize Youth and Adult Education must be challenged by CONFINTA VI.

4. Literacy policies must be clearly articulated within a Lifelong Learning framework and linked to other intersectoral actions.

Literacy must be conceived of as on a continuum and the polarized dichotomy of literacy and illiteracy must be abolished. This shift would better guarantee all citizens the opportunity to acquire and develop literacy skills and participate in a literate society. New data must therefore be produced that reflects this understanding. Present literacy statistics significantly underestimate the scale of the problem. National youth and adult literacy surveys are needed to build comprehensive new evidence on the number and profile of people facing literacy challenges. Within this understanding, we call on States to overcome initiatives based on short term literacy and post literacy campaigns, towards more comprehensive, long-term and intersectoral policies and programmes, which foster sustained formal and non-formal learning and literate environments. Under no circumstances (for example in the drive to overcome poor ranking in literacy statistics) must States compromise the quality and relevance of learning.
Policy and programmes must be put in place to guarantee Lifelong Learning, which encompasses literacy and basic education, and to foster reading and written culture. The specificities of both youth and adults must be recognised and addressed, as the older population is often more excluded. It is also important that Youth and Adult Education policies be oriented towards the recognition of cultural diversity and of linguistic, ethnic, racial and gender rights, including concern for decent work, active citizenship and peace. This, in turn, implies the need for an intersectoral approach and cooperation between agencies and ministries.

States and international agencies must commit to developing qualified and professional Adult Education facilitators, teachers, administrators and researchers, literacy included, and secure enabling conditions for effective programme delivery. Professional and properly paid facilitators and teachers are needed who are knowledgeable bearers of critical thinking and sensitive to the contexts of adult learners. Conditions and structures must be set in place to ensure that youth and Adult Education practitioners and professionals have viable and meaningful career options.

5. The right to education and Lifelong Learning for migrant women and men has to be recognized together with the right of refugees.

Migration is a global phenomenon between continents and countries as well as within national borders. The Belém Framework For Action should recognize the fundamental human rights of tens of millions of migrants and refugees struggling to survive and support their communities, further the Belém Framework should ensure their rights to language education, to vocational training, to citizenship education, and to recognition and validation of past experience and qualification.

Youth and Adult Education that does not discriminate against migrants entails learning responsibilities of the receiving communities, of their local leaders, service providers, employers, trades unions, and the general public. Migration offers unique opportunities, for learning to live together, for multicultural and intercultural education. Financial re-
Responsibility for draining other nations of skills and expertise should be addressed. Such brain drain deserves international compensation. The Belém Framework could not ignore this bias in bilateral cooperation.

6. What is needed now is action: Appropriate legal and policy frameworks as well as governance structures and mechanisms are necessary to ensure the right of all to Youth and Adult Education.

The development of Youth and Adult Education is taking place in an environment much different from the one in the seventies. UNESCO therefore needs to appraise the continued relevance of various forms of youth and Adult Education with respect to 21st century global and local realities. To that end, UNESCO, through UIL, should update its Recommendation on the development of Adult Education adopted in Nairobi in 1976.

The need for Youth and Adult Education is to be seen across sectors of activities. It concerns multiple ministries: Justice, Agriculture, Employment, Health, Social Affairs, Culture. Such adult learning activities outside the formal education domain should be identified and monitored in each ministry and across them in order to build a synergy. In such interministerial cooperation, the role of the Ministry of Education is central as convener and the lead department.

The economic and social contribution expected from Youth and Adult Education will only be achieved through appropriate legal frameworks, explicit and enforceable State public policies, higher allocation of resources, more space for civil society participation in decisionmaking and transparent monitoring of process and outcomes.

a) Appropriate legal and policy frameworks

States should commit themselves to adopting legislation confirming the legal right to Lifelong Learning, including basic education. Such legislation should state that everyone, youth and adult, are entitled to literacy and basic education without distinction.

b) Civil society participation

Civil society must be actively involved in the policy debate on Youth and Adult Education, guaranteeing a more sustainable approach and relevant policies. Civil society must actively engage in monitoring programmes and policies and in holding governments accountable to secure education throughout life. National Action Plans on EFA, FTI programmes in-country and national Youth and Adult Education policies should provide for explicit, formal mechanisms of representation by civic society as co-equal stakeholder in joint bodies where government agencies and international actors or external donors discuss education and Lifelong Learning financing.
Adult learners telling their successful stories are the strongest advocates for the right to learn and living proof of the positive impact of investing in adult learning. They should be actively and meaningfully involved in all these policy processes.

c) Monitoring and benchmarking

A culture and system of accountability and transparency are needed along with monitoring and benchmarking mechanisms. The Belém Framework For Action should mandate the generation of new Adult Education and literacy benchmarks to be adopted and monitored both within the EFA framework and the MDGs policy framework. Such benchmarks should include the addition of EFA Goal 4 on adult literacy as one of the indicators of Goal 1, the production of relevant adult learning indicators specific to each of the respective MDGs goals as well as for the next phase of the Fast Track Initiative and for the UN literacy Decade. Such indicators should be built using, among other sources, the Global Campaign on Education (GCE) benchmarks. Clear, international, quantitative and qualitative benchmarks are required to keep an eye on the state of adult learning participation, to expose instances of discrimination, to appraise the conditions of work of adult educators as well as of their education and training, to assess the development and availability of appropriate learning materials, to look at the improvement of learning environments, and to monitor public, national and international investments, mindful of their sustainability and appropriateness. We call on all UNESCO offices and institutes to monitor and assess, in a coordinated effort, the progress made toward this Framework for Action, every two years.

7. States must demonstrate clear political will, allocating necessary resources for the full implementation of the right to Youth and Adult Education

States should commit themselves in the Belém Framework for Action to allocate a minimum 6% of their GNP to education and, within the education budget, to assign a minimum of 6% for Youth and Adult Education with a priority given to literacy. In so-called developing countries, 6% of aid to education from all donors should go to Youth and Adult Education in order to fill the financing gap in this area, which is at least two billion dollars a year.

The FTI, as well as other future global financing mechanisms for education, should include specific benchmarks on literacy and on Youth and Adult Education and should actively require education sector plans to include credible strategies to address the issue. Privatization of basic Youth and Adult Education initiatives must be
challenged upfront. The International Monetary Fund macro-economic conditions that undermine investment in education should, especially in the present context, be challenged so that States can adequately invest in the full EFA agenda and for the emergence of active learning societies.

**Conclusion: CONFINTEA VI, Time for action**

CONFINTEA VI is about the dignity of all human beings, their right to learn, to improve their life conditions, to dream about their future and to be able, with others, to construct and reconstruct their lives and their environments. The exercise of this fundamental enabling right is more urgent than ever.

Youth and Adult Education, including literacy, is the cornerstone of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and a critical instrument for all peoples to combat the current food, financial and environmental crises. There will be no solution to the food or water crisis without the increased capacity of women and men to act individually and collectively. We will never achieve the goal of Health For All, without significantly increasing and universally disseminating health literacy. The planet’s future is linked to the will and capacity of citizens to share environmental concerns and responsibility. Real peace, without fear of war or violence, will not be reached without grassroots diplomacy and enlarged possibilities to learn to live together. When achieved, peace will not be sustainable without cross cultural and continental exchange at the community level.

Concrete action is required NOW to ensure the fundamental right of women and men to learn and develop their full human potential throughout their life and, in so doing, to give themselves the capacity to construct another world. We know what kind of policies and actions are needed. So many success stories have emerged and so many more could be told. We have discussed these at CONFINTEA V and explored them since. What is required now is action and, for this, political and collective commitment to be formally codified in the Belém Framework For Action, backed up by clear benchmarks and a defined, transparent and efficient monitoring mechanism.

Lifelong Learning for all in all countries is the key to the future. Time is pressing. The cost of not acting is too high.

As it was agreed upon in Belém do Pará (Set, 2009), this document remains as a draft but we are not going to introduce changes directly into the text from now on. People are encouraged to send contributions and suggestions that will be compiled before CONFINTEA. For the purpose of receiving these contributions and comments, a special address has been created. advocacy@fisc2009.org
On the fringe of CONFINTEA, representatives of various civil society organisations met to develop recommendations for the final declaration of the conference.

International Civil Society Forum (FISC)

From Rhetoric to Coherent Action

Civil Society Caucus Proposals to Strengthen the Belém Declaration

Civil society has a crucial role to play in rigorous monitoring and in being a critical partner of government in developing adult learning policy and practice.

1. There needs to be a recognition of the enormous scale of the violation of the fundamental human and social right to education of adults and young people. As such CONFINTEA V1 should declare a state of crisis, requiring urgent action. Basic Adult Education is already a justiciable human right and we urge all governments to pass legislation to make all Adult Education a legally enforceable right.

2. The education of adults and young people is key to helping people, especially women, (who are worst affected) to cope with all types of crises (food, fuel, finance, conflict or climate), enabling them to shape a sustainable future and to work towards gender equality and justice. Popular education
is key to the renewal of adult learning as a means to social and political transformation.

3. A legal structure for the governance of the education of adults and young people should be present in all countries, specifying the involvement in decision-making of civil society, learner representatives and educators alongside government. The education of adults and young people should be inclusive and diverse, spanning all areas of human activity and fostering well-being rather than just economic development. As such it should be based on inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial action but with strong leadership from (and ultimate responsibility lying with) Ministries of Education.

4. There should be no more collection of simplistic data or statistics based on the artificial division between illiteracy and literacy. All surveys, research and data collection or reporting should focus on a continuum of literacy levels appropriate to people’s life, work, cultural and linguistic contexts. All data should be disaggregated by gender and other bases of potential discrimination (e.g. race, ethnicity, class, caste, sexual orientation, gender identity, generation, disability, geographical location, citizenship status, imprisonment, etc.).

5. The education of adults and young people should be recognised as the glue behind achieving all the MDGs and should therefore be prioritised in national plans and in the review of progress towards the MDGs. All governments should develop fully-costed policies, well-targeted plans and legislation for addressing adult literacy and Lifelong Learning by 2012. These plans should be based on credible evidence (e.g. new national surveys) on literacy levels and present participation rates in adult learning – and they should be seen as an integral part of any education sector or poverty reduction plan.
plans should recognize the role of education in transforming values and attitudes and in challenging all kinds of discriminatory practices, for example those based on gender. The plans must also address the new challenges of digital literacy, the urgent need for improving the capacity for research and evaluation as well as the need for quality training and better remuneration of adult educators.

6. Governments should calculate the full cost of achieving quality education for adults and young people, and should agree to **binding minimum targets** for spending on Adult Education including **at least 6%** of national education budgets being spent on youth and Adult Education (in countries with significant literacy challenges – where a minimum of half of this should be spent on literacy). An equally binding target should be agreed of **at least 6%** of aid to education being spent on the education of adults and young people (premised on at least 0.7% of GNI being spent on aid and 15% of overall aid being earmarked for education). The international community and financing agencies should recognise Goals 3 and 4 from Dakar as equally important.
as other goals in all their education aid and should develop accurate projections on financing gaps for achieving these. At least $10 billion in new aid is needed by 2015 to make an impact on adult literacy.

7. The Fast Track Initiative needs to be radically transformed into a Global Initiative on Education For All which explicitly requires sector plans to include credible action on, and investment in, youth and adult, especially women’s, literacy. This transformed initiative should be fully independent from the World Bank and much more ambitious than the present FTI in the scale of resources that it mobilises.

8. The G20, which recently re-empowered the IMF, needs to challenge the restrictive macro-economic conditions imposed (and policies promoted) by the IMF that have undermined investment in education for all. There should be a clear requirement on the IMF to show sustained flexibility in inflation and deficit targets through to 2015 that will allow for significant increases in long term investment in education as a key part of the solution to the financial crisis.

9. All governments have a responsibility to maximise the learning opportunities available for all people on their territory and so should ensure that sustainable investment is maximised from individuals, employers and the State to ensure no-one is left behind. All employers should invest at least 1% of the payroll in work-related education and training. All resources should be well targeted to ensure they reach those who are most disadvantaged or excluded, especially women who often suffer from multiple marginalisation. It is important to recognise that no country has fully overcome the challenge of including all people and of transforming the profile of participation in adult learning. In all contexts adult learners themselves should have a voice in the development of policies and practices that affect them.

10. There need to be comprehensive and multi-agency monitoring mechanisms for ensuring that these commitments are delivered. At a national level this should include public institutions, universities and civil society. At an international level this should include, for example, OECD DAC requiring reporting on aid to Adult Education, UIS and GMR tracking government spending, WHO monitoring 5% recommendation on health promotion, FAO tracking agricultural extension and so on. There need to be clear benchmarks established by 2012 in all areas so as to facilitate assessment of progress. There should be a global monitoring report with rigorous data on adult learning every three years, which will inform analysis of progress towards CONFINTEA commitments and feed into other UN processes (e.g. on climate change, financing for development, women’s rights, MDGs, population, migration, etc).
The following article is by David Archer, Head of Education at ActionAid, from the workshop “Financing Adult Education for development”. His demand: “We need to make 2010 a year of action on the financing of Adult Education”.

David Archer

CONFINTEA in the Context of the Financial Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities

Over the past 12 years, since CONFINTEA in Hamburg, the lack of financing for Adult Education has hampered progress in most countries. Few governments have prioritised funding for adult learning and almost no donors. The financial crisis over the past year is likely to make this situation even worse in the coming year: affecting even those few countries that have defended or increased spending on Adult Education. Politically, Adult Education is a relatively soft target, a budget that can be cut without the likelihood of mass protest.

That all sounds very depressing but actually I believe that there are immense opportunities in the coming year and that CONFINTEA could make a real difference if we use it as a starting point, not an end-point. We need to make 2010 a year of action on the financing of Adult Education.

We need to see progress on the financing of Adult Education both in terms of domestic government budgets and aid budgets. In respect of aid, over the past 6 years the most influential initiative has been the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) – which convenes 30 bilateral and multilateral donors and has mobilised over $1.5 billion to support education in 35 countries. Until now FTI has been a big part of the problem because it occupies the space of EFA (therefore supposedly including adults) but it is only set up to support investments in primary schooling. There are a couple of exceptions (Burkina Faso, Benin) but the FTI framework is obsessively reductive with indicators that only relate to primary schools.

FTI, however, is changing. The Board has already agreed in principle to extend the scope of FTI and the active discussion now is whether to extend it to cover full education sector plans or EFA. This may sound like the same thing but it is not. If they opt for the first then the Ministry of Education in each country will be encouraged
to present their plans for the full formal education sector from primary to secondary to higher education, but Adult Education and even early childhood education will probably not be included (as these are often governed by other Ministries and not considered part of the formal system). Clearly we need to be pushing for the focus to be explicitly on EFA!

Support for this is likely to come from the comprehensive evaluation of FTI that is presently underway, which is likely to show that the reductive focus on primary schooling has undermined investments in Adult Education. This evaluation will be made public in January 2010 and could catalyse a rapid process of change which sees FTI become a much more ambitious and more inclusive effort, probably renamed the Global Education Initiative. This may make a big difference to the aid funding available for Adult Education.

However, domestic funding is perhaps even more important and this is where the financial crisis may bite deepest, especially in low and middle-income countries. Many of the rich G8 countries have responded to the global financial crisis by investing in fiscal stimulus policies keeping up spending in areas such as education. The argument has been that at a time of crisis the worst thing you can do is to cut spending because that deepens the recession and makes it into a full blown depression. Investing in education may be seen as having particular value as it is a sound investment in longer term economic growth.

This of course contrasts dramatically with what the IMF have been telling low and middle-income countries over the past thirty years. They have been told that in times of financial difficulty you need to be austere and cut your spending. They have been told to follow so-called pro-cyclical spending rather than the counter-cyclical spending now being used by richer countries. Within this, education budgets have been particularly affected.

Over the past five years ActionAid and the Global Campaign for Education have published a series of research reports showing the impact of traditional IMF policies on education spending including low deficit and inflation targets. Our research on the IMFs public sector wage bill caps and how they block recruitment of teachers contributed to the IMF reversing its policies in 2007. The IMF are very scared of any research that really proves the damage they are doing!

In response to the financial crisis, the IMF has said that it has changed. It claims that it has removed most of the conditions that it used to impose and that they have allowed much greater flexibility. Their website trumpets that they have allowed countries to expand their deficits by 2%. This was part of a remarkable PR effort by the IMF to convince the G8 and G20 that they should be given the chance to help low and middle income countries weather the financial crisis. And it worked.
In April 2009, the G20 effectively gave the IMF $1 trillion, giving the IMF the biggest boost for many years.

In April 2009 we decided to test the IMFs claims by looking at every single country agreement reached by the IMF with a low income country since the onset of the financial crisis in September 2008. In Education on the Brink, (GCE 2009) we found that, contrary to their claims, there were almost no changes at all. Macroeconomic targets were still there and so the re-birth of the IMF with G20 money was thus very bad news for education (and what is bad news for funding education in general, is particularly bad for Adult Education which is often the easiest part to cut!). We challenged the IMF and they promised that they were changing and this would become clear over time. So we re-visited this work in September 2009 and found that there was just one small sign of change. The IMF had allowed deficit targets to rise by up to 2%, but that this change was for 2009 only and by 2010 or 2011 all countries are expected to go back down to the traditional tight, austerity targets. So this IMF flexibility is in fact profoundly inflexible. No government will expand spending on education if there is just a small window of funding available for just one year. The fundamental worldview of the IMF has not changed and, despite lots of re-packaging, the discredited macro-economic policies they have pursued for years remain intact.

We need to keep the pressure up on the IMF to live up to its rhetoric and allow low and middle-income countries the fiscal space to invest more in education. One of the best ways to keep up this pressure is now through the G20 which is taking over from the G8 as the key global forum. During 2010 we believe that the G20
could play a major role in two areas. It could help to make the case for a bigger and better Global Education Initiative (so we have more aid for education) and it could place conditions on its support to the IMF (demanding more genuine reform from them, so that countries can expand domestic spending).

But why the optimism for 2010? One reason is that education for all is likely to become the sexiest development issue during this coming year. How? Through the 1 Goal: Education For All campaign. This is a strategic link up between the Global Campaign for Education and FIFA, the world football body, around the 2010 world cup finals in South Africa. This is the biggest sporting event ever in Africa and will probably have one of the largest television audiences ever reaching 3 billion people. GCE has been given access to all the worlds’ leading footballers, who are recording short films calling for One Goal: Education For All – which will be broadcast around the world next year (see www.join1goal.org). Making progress on education for all will be seen as the big social legacy from the first world cup in Africa.

Of course this could just be lots of media hype and no substance if we are not careful. But the aim is to link this mass mobilisation to securing real changes – with the focus being on the financing of education. Over 30 million people are likely to sign up to this campaign and they will be urged to write to their Heads of State to call on them to take action whether on domestic financing or on increasing aid. There will be a particular attempt to get leaders to go to the UN meeting in September 2010 in New York to make pledges on education financing. Meanwhile, focus will also be placed on the G8 meeting in Canada in June and the G20 meeting in Korea in November with the hope that education could be the first big development issue on which the G20 take action (spurred on by the mass public awareness created by 1 Goal). Some of the new countries in the G20, notably Brazil, South Africa, India, Korea and China, will be approached to champion this issue and demand action from the full G20 both to help countries increase domestic financing on education (by urging more IMF reforms) and to increase aid to education (through a larger, independent Global Education For All Initiative which learns from the evaluation of FTI).

It is early days but there is a real possibility of making the financing of education for all the big issue of 2010. As such, CONFINTEA must be seen as a springboard for action. Adult Education campaigners must join other education campaigners to ensure that the mass mobilisation generated by the 1 Goal campaign translates into meaningful action. We need to make sure that the ALL in Education for All really keeps adults on the agenda. One way, which works at least in English (though not in other languages) is for the ALL to be interpreted as standing for Adults and Lifelong Learning.
Vernor Muñoz from Costa Rica is Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education of the United Nations. According to him, education “is not limited to a period of time in men and women’s lives but it encompasses the full course of their existence”. We reprint the article he sent to the Virtual Seminar “Is education also in crisis? Proposals and challenges for another possible world”.

Vernor Muñoz

The Right to Education

Education is an individual right but it is also a social right whose maximum expression is the full exercise of this right by a person; it is not limited to a period of time in men and women’s lives but it encompasses the full course of their existence.

Jean-Claude Forquin affirms that continuing education encompasses all the personal and social dimensions and all the modalities of the pedagogical processes.

Formal schooling is therefore a mechanism that is part of education processes but it is never a phenomenon that exhausts the learning processes since, in many cases, it reduces the options for adults in those cases where the State limits the education proposal without taking into account the needs and interests of that population.

Said exclusion draws on the wrong premise that “education services” should be aimed only to minors, thus strengthening the stereotype that presents the subjects of education as mere receptors of the socializing power of the State.

This etiological distortion is put into relief when education is disconnected from its true purposes, condensing the contradictions and tensions of economic systems and patriarchal cultures.

Young people and adults face multiple obstacles to realize their right to education. There are, however, two capital dangers we should mention:

The first one is the lack of educational opportunities and exclusion.

The lack of opportunities for young people and adults is expressed not only in the concrete absence of availability and access but also in the disarticulation of the existing offer.
It is a common occurrence to find multiple and different structures in the education subsystem of young people and adults, which hinders students’ mobility in the different jurisdictions and their re-insertion in the regular education systems.

The very notion of “subsystem”, when speaking of youth and Adult Education, reflects a treatment of undervaluation of the needs of this population.

This kind of problem has been detected in many countries and it refers to the dispersion and overlapping of the offer, the lack of attention to social inequalities and the systematic absence of pedagogical responses that allow to rescue, strengthen and develop the cultures, languages and cosmovisions of Latin American indigenous communities.

In many cases, literacy campaigns are undertaken without taking into consideration the cultural situation of the native peoples and they rarely advocate for the rights and needs of people with disabilities, migrant people or persons deprived of freedom.

Exclusion from educational opportunities is particularly alarming in Latin America which, not without reason, is the most unequal and inequitable region in the world.

As our Brazilian colleagues have rightly mentioned:

“the panorama resulting from the economic and social indicators shows a perverse contradiction. On the one hand, the option pro growth did not manage to socially include the poorest population sectors. On the other hand, the scarcity of jobs in the formal market increasingly demands more schooling and technical specialization”.

This demand is not fulfilled by the education policies aimed at this segment. Despite the lack of data that confirm the real education demand of young people and adults, and that 15 years old is the maximum age considered by basic education, when drawing on the number of illiterate young people and adults – potential demand – it is verified that only 2.89% attended literacy courses in 2000 in Brazil.¹

Precisely, the second danger is the curricular tendency that considers schooled adults or adults who have been incorporated to the formal and non-formal systems, only as “labor resources” and not as full subjects of the right to education and to the full enjoyment of knowledge.

In the first case, it is about a complex network of discriminations and exclusions based on gender, age, poverty, socio-cultural origin, ethnicity and beliefs.

¹ Executive Summary of the Report on the State of the Art of Youth and Adult Education in Latin American countries. Information obtained from: La Carta, N°290 – 315, CEAAL.
The uniformizing role that globalization imposes on the education sphere generally proposes itself as a selective mechanism that relegates adult people to a reproductive role that has been moved further away from pedagogical opportunities since these persons are considered displaced individuals who have lost their chance to get educated.

In the practice, this kind of exclusion manifests itself in the absence of education centers for adults and alternative systems and modalities, in the lack of public policies oriented to meet their needs, and in the limited financial resources (anyway always scarce regarding education) to guarantee this fundamental human right to them.

If globalization seeks the maximization of commercial and technological opportunities at the lowest possible cost, it is to be expected that this logic will translate to the social and cultural spheres, thus promoting the false idea that education is a factor for the market and, as a means for socialization, one of its priorities is to form individuals who respond to that aim from the earliest age.

Adult people’s lack of opportunities and social exclusion stems from the structural response of a system that regards them as “useless” as education subjects, as they already perform their assigned role in the dynamics of the globalized world.

Over the last years, for instance, the analysis of the labor market in Chile has allowed to verify the fragility of the income, permanence and access to stable and adequately remunerated jobs on the part of youth and adults with low or incomplete schooling.

It is estimated that over 5 million people in that country (approximately 30% of the total population) are able to apply for some modality of leveling studies for adults and that the coverage of such offers reached only 165 thousand students.²

² Ibídem.
As proved by studies conducted in Nicaragua, people with more than 12 years of schooling have more chances to reverse poverty and, consequently, for those people with low schooling, poverty leads to a vicious circle that is very difficult to break and that transcends even to the next generations.

In the second case, when the access of adults to education systems or modalities is achieved, these, however, do not manage to overcome, in many cases, the utilitarian tendency imposed by neoliberal models. Hence the curricula are shaped mainly as training for work, many times for sub-employment.

We are not against linking education processes with the improvement of people’s economic conditions. But neither can we accept that education’s main purpose is to address the labor demand, separating it from the need to develop people’s integral capabilities (which will enable them, anyway, to link successfully with the productive processes).

The excessive emphasis on market mechanisms and the scant curricular pertinence constitute the most noticeable risks and failings in youth and Adult Education, as usually these people participate precariously in education processes, in other words, they go through pedagogical practices that do not meet their needs, do not satisfy their interests and do not fulfill their rights. Precarious inclusion means that, even with schooling, people lose the right to enjoy the benefits of education.

As a result of the above, people are denied their human right to education. Furthermore, it is detrimental to its specific content since the knowledge that is not built upon the development of a personality respectful of human rights results in low quality knowledge.

The need to develop intercultural responsibility, solidarity and respect compels education to form persons who discern their reality, and to allow all persons, with no exceptions, to develop our talents and capabilities in the construction of a conscious, discerning and just society in solidarity.

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3 The expression “precarious inclusion” is José de Souza Martins’, quoted by María Malta Campos in “Reflexionando sobre la calidad educativa”, Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education, Mexico 2004, p. 162.
4 In the same sense, Mesa de Educación de Personas Adultas, ALFALIT-CEES, San Salvador, 2004. “In the political sphere, education is a requirement in the construction of a democracy sustained by the Social State based on the rule of law. Education for democracy, human rights, peace, tolerance. In one word, political education. Likewise, democracy implies the production and real access to education, and scientific, artistic, and political knowledge for all. The construction of democracy implies the education of the citizens. Education is the privileged vehicle of that necessary socialization”. Sánchez Angel. El sentido de la época: sobre globalización y educación en derechos humanos. In: De miradas y mensajes a la educación en derechos humanos. Fundación Ideas, Santiago de Chile, 2004, p.23.
GLEACE, the Latin American Group of Specialists in Literacy and Written Culture, was founded in November 2006 in Mexico. They are a member of CREFAL (Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de los Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe). Here is the GLEACE declaration as released at CONFINTEA VI.

Latin American Group of Specialists in Literacy and Written Culture (GLEACE)

On Illiteracy and Literacy

Declaration

We, the undersigned members of the Latin American Group of Specialists in Literacy and Written Culture (GLEACE), wish to express that:

- We valorise the renewed efforts which have been made in Latin America and the Caribbean in the field of Adult Education.
- We consider specially propitious the setting and the moment created by the 6th International Conference on Adult Education (CONF inTEA VI, Belém, Brazil, 1st – 4th December 2009) to be held for the first time in the southern hemisphere and specifically in this region.
- We feel ourselves moved by the call to advance “from literacy to lifelong learning” set out during CONF inTEA V (Hamburg, 1997) and repeated in the case of this region in the preparatory regional conference, held in Mexico in September 2008.

At the same time, and in this framework, we observe with preoccupation:

a) The predominant emphasis which has been given to literacy, to the point of once again reducing Adult Education to literacy. In addition, the traditional dichotomies between illiterate and literate and between pure illiterates and functional illiterates, widely questioned by abundant research as well as by the very development and complexity of the written culture in the world, persist.

b) Literacy activities which are implemented in a vacuum, both at national and regional levels, ignoring the rich and lengthy history of adult literacy for which Latin America and the Caribbean are well known internationally.

c) The persistence of a simplistic and facile conception of literacy seen as a process which can be executed in a short period of time, in precarious conditions,
by educators with little or no training, using just one method, with scarce reading and writing materials, a feeble use of modern technologies and without taking into account the linguistic and cultural diversity of the students. Precisely because they are illiterate people or with low levels of schooling these poor sectors which have for years been denied the right to education, deserve contemporary educational provision of the highest quality.

d) The absence of learner assessment, often considering as literate those people enrolled in programmes or who declare themselves as literate, without verifying what they have really learned and without creating conditions in which they can use what they have learned and continue learning. This way of proceeding not only ignores the centrality which should be attributed to learning in the whole educational process but also the very experience of rigorous evaluations of mass literacy campaigns and programmes carried out in the same region in the past and in the present, by which as a result instead of advancing, in many cases we witness regression.

e) The political use of numbers and literacy rates, including the declaration of “territories free of illiteracy” or “literate countries” on the basis of a purely statistical estimate. Instead of facing up to the problematic with the integrity which this deserves, the illusion is created of having solved illiteracy in a record time. This contributes, on the other hand, to the contrary effect which is the greater marginalization of those people and groups who are declared as literate when they are not.

f) The continued separation of illiteracy from its structural conditions of reproduction, principally poverty and the denial of the right to a public free quality education for the whole population, without which it is unthinkable to solve the question of literacy in a sustainable fashion.

In this context, we make a renewed call to the international organisms to coordinate inter-agency actions and to carry out their technical role, assuming their responsibility in the face of the indispensable seriousness, transparency and credibility of those government actions which they support. It is not an exaggeration to record that organisms like UNESCO and others dedicated to the tasks of international cooperation, were created to offer support to governments for the benefit of their peoples.

Finally, we request that CONFINTEA VI deals in a critical and reflexive manner with the question of illiteracy and the literacy of young people and adults in this region and in the whole world, encouraging government initiatives but within the framework of a sincere and not demagogic dialogue, open to the participation of social organisations and to the diverse national and international actors who intervene in this field.
Sofia Validvielso is a member of the Gender and Education Office (GEO) of the ICAE. It was formed in 1997 within the context of CONFINTREA V by women’s organisations and networks in order to promote the educational dimension for youth and adults as a strategic element for achieving justice and equality in gender relations. She also demands: “let’s turn to action”.

Sofía Valdivielso

The Right to Lifelong Education – Is Education also in Crisis?

Proposals and Challenges for another Possible World

Since its beginning, the United Nations have expressed their conviction that education is one of the basic pillars on which modern societies should lean.

Over the last six decades, UNESCO has organized five international conferences expressly devoted to Adult Education. Great progress towards the comprehension of the universal right to lifelong education were performed in each one of them.

If we read carefully each one of the texts elaborated in these conferences, we will conclude that we are the heirs to the discourses and debates created during these six last decades, that central ideas regarding the right to Young and Adult Education are already said and that, as the slogan for the next conference in Belém states, it’s time for action.

Let’s remember: in Elsinor (1949) we debated on the role that AE should play regarding the comprehensive development of the people and the strengthening of positive relations among them. In Montreal (1960) we focused the debate on the necessity that all countries in the world should learn to coexist in peace. Learning becomes the key word in this event. In Tokyo (1972) we discussed, for the first time, the problems of the deterioration of the environment, a consequence of the uncontrolled development of the previous decade. Besides, the presence of new States makes it easier to become aware of the need to introduce into the agenda the subject of diversity and respect of other cultures. In Paris (1985) we approved
a statement on the right to learn. We insisted on the fact that this right to learn does not have to be understood only from its functional dimension as a tool of economic development but mainly as a universal human right; in asserting this right human beings become the main characters responsible of their own history.

Finally, in Hamburg (1997) a new discourse arises, for some people a new paradigm, focused on the search for new ways of integration of those perspectives expressed as opposed in Paris. We face the beginning of a more inclusive vision of Adult Education, understanding it as a part of a process that embraces the whole life, which goals aim to promote persons and communities’ learning, the dialogue among the different cultures, respecting diversity and cultural differences. In Hamburg we reaffirmed that development is at the service of the human being and not the other way round, and we considered that educational systems must be created from a Lifelong Learning perspective and must also ensure that Adult Education contributes to the development of democracy, justice and equity, to sustainable development, to people and societies’ empowerment, to face transformations and changes affecting economy, culture and society as a whole, and to the establishment of an intercultural dialogue addressed to the development of a culture of peace.

Today, with a perspective of more than half a century of history, we can affirm that even if we have travelled a long way, we still have much ahead before we can say that this is a universal right. We have turned from a view in which the world appears as rational machinery that works properly, that follows natural laws that can be learned, controlled and manipulated to its own profit, into a view of the world focused on plurality, on the community, on the relation among human beings, on the networks and on ecological sensitivity.

In Belém we should go ahead and lay the foundations for the emergence of a new view of the world that, without denying the previous ones, should go beyond them and help us understand that life, besides being plural and diverse, is one; that differences and pluralities can be naturally integrated into interdependent trends. The present crisis is accelerating the processes of understanding that it is better to cooperate than to compete and that, as Einstein said, this will be one world or none. Let’s turn to action!
Mercela Ballara, also from the Gender and Education Office of ICAE, goes after the question of what effect the international financial crisis has on access to food, health and education, especially for women. Poverty and child mortality rates rise, climate change is increasing. During this time, Adult Education is confronted with an enormously important mission.

Marcela Ballara

An Inconvenient Truth: Cross-linked Crises and their Impact on Education, Health and the Access to Food

In 2006, an international financial crisis started to brew, leaving long-lasting after-effects on the countries’ economies. In 2007, this crisis moved on to Europe, Japan and other developed countries, resulting in global economic crisis, recession in the world economy, commerce and financial flows reduction and finally in the increase of unemployment.

The financial and economic crises impacted, to a larger extent, on the poor countries of the world’s regions. They were affected by the increase of inflation, unemployment and the reduction of income in the poorest population sectors.

These combined crises brought about a global food crisis as well as difficulty in the access to food, health and education, especially for women, children and indigenous people. The latter were the most affected, particularly those who live in rural areas or in marginal urban areas.

This is the backdrop for CONFINTEA and the FISC. Hence we should ask how will the agreements emerging from these events influence on this two-fold crisis that has become systemic.

What the Numbers Say

At global level, estimates show that approximately 160 to 200 million people fell into extreme poverty between 2005 and 2008 by the effect of the combined crises.
An Inconvenient Truth

This affected the access to food in particular, enhancing famine in the world. Data by FAO (2009) and the World Bank (2008) show that:

- At global level, estimates show that 160 to 200 million people fell into extreme poverty on account of the rise in food prices.
- The number of undernourished persons at global level has been increasing. Between 2004 and 2006 this number went up to 870 million people; these figures rose to 915 million people as a result of the food crisis. Between 1990 and 2006, Latin America and the Caribbean was the only region that achieved hunger reduction, going from 53 million people to 45 million people; however, estimates show that on account of the food crisis these levels will revert to those of the ‘90s.
- Due to the economic crisis, 100 million more people will suffer from hunger by the end of 2009.
- For geographic, cultural reasons and on account of the difficulty in the access to basic services and food, indigenous people will be the most affected by hunger and malnutrition in relation to non-indigenous groups.
- The financial and economic crisis will result in 200 thousand to 400 thousand additional average child deaths per year for the period 2009-2015; most of them will be girls.

The economic and financial crises appear as the main threats to household income because of increasing unemployment, loss of quality labor sources, reduction of remittances and food prices increase. The low growth of the economy implies the loss of jobs, the increase of informal employment with neither social security coverage nor labor rights. Women and indigenous people will the ones who will lose the most.

Decent Labor at a Crossroads

The increase of unemployment, added to the rise in the cost of living due to inflation, has meant a double burden for households, causing a reduction of real income and consequently a crisis in the access to food, education, health, among other basic goods. People living below the poverty line are even more vulnerable given their scarcity of goods and assets and due to the restrictions they face to adapt themselves rapidly to this new situation.

As a consequence, employment and labor market policies cannot be absent from the strategies aimed at overcoming poverty, including the so-called active policies to generate employment and provide support in terms of training and labor insertion so that employment becomes an alternative to improve the income and living conditions of ample social sectors presently living in poverty and extreme poverty.
It is worth mentioning that the structural adjustments of the ‘80s dismantled the system of public agencies devoted to support the poorest sectors of the population. The role of the State was reduced and the functions that had been dismantled were taken over by private actors. Neoliberal positions argued that by following those guidelines, costs would be reduced and the quality and efficacy of services – among them, education – would be improved. In general this did not happen and it resulted in the escalating prices of the services provided, which lacked quality control and which diminished the welfare of the population in general, and of women, indigenous people, children and older people in particular. Education and health were some of the areas most affected by privatization.

Climate Change and its Impact on the Population

Climate change, which is affecting every country in the world, adds to the above situation, differentiated by regions, age groups and gender. Climate change will exacerbate inequalities and women will be affected disproportionately in their goods and assets. Notwithstanding, the debates of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) do not require the incorporation of gender in the National Programmes for Action. As a result, in some cases the discussions barely refer to the increasing vulnerability levels women have to face, and they do not incorporate the gender issue to the mitigation and adaptation strategies. These are indispensable matters that must be addressed as women are direct agents in these strategies aimed at facing climate change.

Several experts affirm we are facing a systemic crisis and that it is urgent to start shifting the paradigm. They advocate for developing a new development model that recognizes the true weight carried by agriculture, education and health in the economies. It is, among other things, about undertaking reforms in the State with new policies, a new and better approach to the alliances with the civil society, ecology, investment and infrastructure, education and new technologies, among other sectors. Development cannot be achieved if there is no investment in these sectors.

What Happens to Adult Education?

In the present situation of crises at a crossroads, Adult Education throughout life is part of the solution. Delivering capacities for the development of people and, among other things, to get better jobs, is crucial to overcome poverty and address the global food, energy, environmental and economic/financial crises.
The financial and economic crisis is only one crisis that endangers the entire work that has been done for the past years: for example, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals regarding education by 2015 is at risk. The lack of funding hinders the offer of quality education services and insufficient follow-up prevents us from seeing clearly the magnitude of the learning deficits of the adult population.

The achievement of long-term solutions is essential. Commitment to a public quality education that includes education throughout life must be renewed.

Responses to the Crises

In order to face these crises, countries resort to a series of economic measures; for the poorest, they have established and strengthened the programmes of conditioned transfer of income delivered to a population segment that usually does not have sufficient resources; however, there is no mention of specific support to health, education or Adult Education.

Some Reflections on the Identification of Alternatives

According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report published by UNESCO (2009), 11,000 million dollars are needed per year to achieve the main education goals in the poorest countries of the world.

Due to the above, it will be necessary to strengthen legislation and institutionalism in order to guarantee the practice of education as a human right, beyond the sporadic implementation of low quality education programmes, which many times are guided by emergency.

What will be the magnitude of the impact of these cross-linked crises on the above-mentioned households and particularly on those headed by women? And which conditions will have to exist for them to benefit from Adult Education throughout life?

As a way of contributing to FISC objectives we should reflect upon the challenges ahead

1. To devise public policies that support Adult Education throughout life and benefit the poorest populations
2. To identify sustainable low-cost alternatives that support environmental aspects
3. To contribute to the discussion of the economic, cultural, social and environmental factors that can support the multiplication of Adult Education throughout life.
Prof. C. Lima is a professor at the Faculty of Education at the University of Minho in Portugal. In addition, he has held several visiting professorships in Europe (France, Germany, Spain, The Netherlands). He is the author of many publications in the field of Adult Education. In his article he discusses the changes in concepts from Adult Education to Lifelong Learning and their importance to civil society.

Licínio C. Lima

Between Hamburg (1997) and Belém (2009)

The Hegemony of Learning to Acquire Economically valuable skills

I refer to the political and strategic guidelines of the European Union regarding Adult Education and learning over the last decade, noting that the use of the education concept (Adult Education, popular education, education throughout life...) seems to be decreasing. Like in other international spaces, preference is given to the concept of Lifelong Learning, more oriented towards the achievement of qualifications, competences or skills for growth, productivity and competitiveness in economic terms. The modernization and the functional adaptation respond to the imperatives of the so-called “learning society” and “knowledge economy” rather than to the promotion of critical thinking and economic and socio-cultural transformation. Currently they constitute the main objectives of learning policies, based on narrower and more instrumental concepts of training and learning. The economist, technocratic and managerial tendencies of lifelong learning represent something that the author calls “the right hand of lifelong learning”.

Indeed, the erosion of the education concept in favor of the learning concept, induced somehow by the Hamburg Declaration of 1997, had the perverse and unwanted effect, in certain political contexts, of a distinct insular prominence of the learning concept. The apparent advantage was the strengthening of the concern about the learning subjects and their effective learning since, as it is well-known, public education provision has often proved to be unable to ensure democratic policies for equal opportunities or to make effective Youth and Adult Education as a fundamental human right. Therefore, the shift in the political discourses – from education throughout life towards Lifelong Learning – was sometimes used to justify
the passing of State’s duties into the market, for each individual, understanding education as the provision of a marketable service rather than as a public good. In several cases, individuals were radically deemed responsible for their own “learning biography” or “competences/skills portfolio”, according to certain trendy language, and ultimately reinforcing the tendencies that can be observed in other social areas regarding individualization processes and the withdrawal of State’s duties.

In relation to that point, it is worth noting the recent interest of public and private policies in formal and informal learning, suddenly discovered and highly praised, particularly oriented towards competitive performance; also the prominence of qualification concepts and ideas for economic growth, competing skills, adaptability to economy’s needs, entrepreneurship and employability. Thus, a type of new pedagogy emerges, which I call “pedagogy against the other”: as in the market, “competing for growing” seems to be the proposed pedagogical slogan, reproducing the liberal principle that affirms there is no progress without rivalry.

I notice the recent rediscovery of the ideal of continuing education or education throughout life, albeit suddenly reconverted into economist terms and focused on an instrumental and pragmatic notion of training and learning, without taking care of the political-educational project or pedagogical thinking, as if the praise to learning resulted from the fact that learning is something good and useful in itself, regardless of its objectives, values, processes, etc. (see my text titled “Learning? What learning?”, published in ICAE website).

I think that nowadays it would be irresponsible to conceive Adult Education while turning our backs to economy and labor and unemployment issues. Nevertheless, this does not imply we can accept for education, training and learning to deny their ethical-political responsibilities of critically reading the social reality, deepening citizenship and democratizing democracy. They cannot, therefore, adopt a standpoint of functional adaptation to the imperatives of the new capitalism, thus reducing Lifelong Learning and education to vocational or professional training, regardless of its relevance. This means that if Adult Education and learning cannot ignore the economy, they cannot adopt a passive and subordinate standpoint, subject to the power of economic interests neither of them chosen and subject to a market that, by definition, does not seek to produce social justice.

In a democratic education project that aims at developing free, aware and critical subjects of history, there is a permanent tension between adaptation and change. As Theodor Adorno used to say, it is true that education would be impotent and ideological if it ignored the objective of adaptation, not preparing individuals for life; however, it would be dubious if it only worked towards adaptation, towards the production of well-adjusted persons, unable even to imagine other possible worlds and engage in their own social transformation.
For the above reason I am an advocate for Lifelong Learning and education of ambidextrous nature, metaphorically using both hands (see my book “Educação ao Longo da Vida: Entre a Mão Direita e a Mão Esquerda de Miró”, São Paulo, Cortez, 2007). To this end, I searched for inspiration in one of the greatest Portuguese speaking poets, Pernambucan João Cabral de Melo Neto, in his poem “O sim contra o sim” (“Yes against Yes”), where he writes:

“Miró felt his right hand
to be too wise
it knew so much that
nothing new it could devise
He wanted it to unlearn
the plenty it had learned
and with the fresh strokes
of the left hand be reacquainted
Unable it was to do so
that with his left hand he began to draw
before operating on himself
to have it on his right arm grafted
If you’re not left-handed
your left is a hand without skill,
learning at every stroke,
at every moment to restart.”

The most skillful, deft and wise hand, the most functional, adaptable and instrumental hand is the right hand of education throughout life and Lifelong Learning. It is certainly indispensable but the problem is that it now dominates the political discourses and many education practices and even civil society and the much heterogeneous “third sector”.

After the registration
Source: Maria de Fatima Rodrigues
For the above reason, by advocating for an ambidextrous education, of both hands, I am compelled to praise the left hand – which is capable of unlearning in order to learn again; the one that manifests itself as critical and dissatisfied, that seeks transformation, that is more creative and accepts to take risks, exactly because it is less wise and less trained. Yet, it allows to perceive how exaggerated the functionalist praise of adaptation learning is outside of a democratic and critical concept.

Sometimes I fear that the more humanist, democratic and critical notions have been diffused by substituting education for learning, the social for the purely individual, transformation for mere adaptation, solidarity for rivalry.

Significantly, I want to make note of the fact that the term “lifelong...” has remained unaltered: Lifelong Learning, qualifications, competences, skills. At present the most pragmatic and technocratic Lifelong Learning approaches have been actually subordinating life to a long series of useful and efficient learning, in accordance with certain economic notions, instrumentalizing life and amputating its less marketable dimensions. These approaches forget or deny life’s substance along the learning processes since such learning processes have already opted for limited utility patterns, sometimes bordering on alienation.

On account of the above, it is urgent to remind political leaders those things we have been learning for long in Adult Education. We learn that education’s main strength lies, paradoxically, in its apparent fragility; in its own pace, which is slow most of the time; in trial and error attempts; in the uncertainty and lack of immediate and spectacular results; in its processes of dialogue, coexistence and participation in decision-making. Education is all that and precisely for this it is incompatible with the mere training, indoctrination or conditioning of human beings, regardless of the political, ideological or economic agenda.

Finally, we who know well the power of education and learning know nonetheless that education, although capable of many things, is not capable of everything, as Paulo Freire concluded so many times. I remember him because it seems we are going through a “pedagogism” phase rooted in economics and management; that is to say, in the naïf belief in the rescuing and almighty nature of Lifelong Learning for each individual, capable of transforming society and economy. For each social and economic problem there is a learning therapy or solution, as if it was possible to face structural problems with biographic solutions, with the isolated action of useful, efficient and lone subjects. But this is not the Adult Education we learnt with out best teachers anymore, based on hope, activism and civic militancy.

I hope that CONFINTEA VI, to be held in Latin America within a context of popular education traditions and great social creativity, will let itself be influenced positively by that context and will be able to return to its best democratic and critical origins.
Roberto Bissio also deals with the financial crisis and its impact. Most affected are the developing countries and, disproportionately high, the women in them. Bissio gives examples from different regions of the world and calls for “Invest in the People”. The author is Coordinator of Social Watch and the director of the Instituto del Tercer Mundo, based in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Roberto Bissio

Multiple Crisis, one Solution: Put People First

A high level (presidents and ministers) United Nations conference held last June 2009 in New York unanimously\(^1\) concluded that the world is confronted with the worst financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression. It added that developing countries, which did not cause the crisis, are nonetheless severely affected by it. It also noted that this crisis is connected to multiple, interrelated global crises and challenges, such as increased food insecurity, volatile energy and commodity prices and climate change, as well as the lack of results so far in the multilateral trade negotiations and a loss of confidence in the international economic system.

Remember the perfect storm movie, when three storms came together in one big catastrophic hurricane? Many people are now talking of the perfect crisis, due to this combination of global crises and challenges.

According to the same UN General Assembly resolution, which expresses the highest level political consensus of the world, the global economic downturn is deeper than many early estimates, and the recovery is predicted to be gradual and varied. The latest estimate of the United Nations indicates that world gross product will fall by 2.6 percent in 2009, the first such decline since the Second World War. The crisis threatens to have calamitous human and development consequences. Millions of people all over the world are losing their jobs, their income, their savings and their homes.

\(^1\) Some reservations were expressed at the end by certain countries, but nobody blocked the consensus outcome document.
The list of social impacts recognized by the UN include:

- Rapid increases in unemployment, poverty and hunger
- Reduced ability to maintain social safety nets and provide other social services, such as health and education; and
- Increased infant and maternal mortality

The leaders of the world recognize that the drivers of the financial and economic crisis are complex and multifaceted and they list among them systemic fragilities and imbalances, the inadequate functioning of the global economy, inconsistent and insufficiently coordinated macroeconomic policies and inadequate structural reforms. To make matters worse, also quoting the UN consensus document, these factors were made acute by major failures in financial regulation, over-reliance on market self-regulation, overall lack of transparency, financial integrity and irresponsible behavior leading to excessive risk-taking. Financial regulators, policymakers and institutions failed to appreciate the full measure of risks in the financial system or address the extent of the growing economic vulnerabilities and their cross-border linkages. Insufficient emphasis on equitable human development has contributed to significant inequalities among countries and peoples.

But the recognition of the problem and the unprecedented mobilization of trillions of dollars to rescue the big banks and bankrupt industries has not led to similarly ambitious reforms in the economic governance. And the stimulus packages to revitalize the economy are directed more towards trying to turn back to where we were before than to investing in the people and in the promotion of a new low carbon economy that would create green jobs and distribute wealth globally in an equitable way.

In capitalist finances, like in a casino, the riskier the bets the higher the earnings. But risky bets also means frequent losses. In that logic, the scandal is not the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, but the decision by US president George W. Bush and his Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson to spend hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayers money to rescue failed banks, such as Goldman Sachs, of which Paulson was Chief Executive Officer before joining the Government, and insurance groups, such as A.I.G.

When President Yayi Boni of Benin, elected owing to his solid reputation as a banker, learned of this decision, he wondered publicly where the trillions of dollars of rescue funds would come from and concluded that the poor would end up paying for the crisis. The Belgian report for Social Watch agrees: When the shares of banks and the principal enterprises in the country collapsed, the Belgian Government went to the rescue of the banks and provided deposit guarantees.
The crisis is still causing unemployment to rise, while the cost of the bank rescue is making itself felt in the drastic increase of public debt, with serious repercussions in the provision of social security.

As the UN noted, women tend to suffer the impact of the crisis disproportionately. In the words of the Polish Social Watch coalition, the decrease in family incomes due to the economic crisis might cause pauperization of whole social groups. This will in turn have a more significant impact on women, since they traditionally are the main person responsible for family well-being (this is particularly true among the lower income groups). According to some analysts, crises amplify the grey (informal) sector in the Polish economy as many, especially small entrepreneurs try to minimize labour costs and avoid taxation and other costs associated with formal employment. It seems very likely that the growth of the grey economy will affect women more than men, as they are more often engaged in low paid jobs, especially in the private service sector (e.g. in retail).

In France the global crisis has had a direct impact on the people, as it has in all the developed countries where it began. The most obvious effects have been rising unemployment and increased social exclusion, and sectors that not long ago were in a comfortable situation are even suffering food shortages. Similarly, the German Government’s crisis management strategy does not include social or indeed ecological goals. Its stimulus packages and tax cuts are socially inequitable; layoffs and the rise in part-time workers are revealing the ugly face of deregulation.
Polarization

In March 2009, at the height of the crisis and the political debate on how to cut expenses in Serbia, an automobile fair was held in Belgrade. All the most expensive models were sold on opening day for a total of more than USD 2.6 million!

Polarization is being exacerbated everywhere by the crisis. The Social Watch report from Bahrain describes increasing numbers of millionaires, and a shrinking middle class and impoverished lower class. The sense of unfairness, more than absolute poverty, has led to repeated confrontations and tension between impoverished communities and security forces, especially in the villages, which is why the World Bank now ranks Bahrain low in political stability.

In Vietnam, frequently quoted as an example of a development model that lifted millions of people out of poverty, consumption by the richest 20% of the population accounts for 43.3% of total expenditure in the country, while the remaining 80% spends very modestly. Similar polarization is described by the Social Watch report for Honduras, where the confrontation between rich and poor is clearly at the root of the coup that deposed President Manuel Zelaya in June 2009, reviving a regime change practice that Latin America had seemed to have abandoned in favour of democratic methods two decades ago.

Further, not all attempts to stimulate the economy are successful, or even fair. In Canada, jobs being created by Government investments are in male-dominated industries, while women are over-represented in part-time and precarious work and are often the first to be laid off.
In Thailand one of the most controversial measures was the one-time cash handouts to government and private-sector employees, leaving the informal sector workers ineligible.

**Invest in the People**

A Peruvian activist explains: When times are good, workers are typically asked to wait patiently for the benefits of growth; in times of crisis, they are expected to tighten their belts.

But this is not fair and, economists now realize, does not even work. Stimulus packages that have relied on cutting taxes to the rich and subsidizing big banks and corporations have not produced the desired results. Anticipating a prolonged recession, the rich and the middle classes tend to save any additional money, instead of spending it, while banks have used stimulus money to rebuild their assets instead of lending it.

But when funds are channeled to the poor it is spent immediately. Not because they have a better understanding of their role in contributing to the recovery of global economy, but just because they do not have a choice.

All around the world, civil organizations are demanding similar things in different ways. In Morocco, as reported by the local Social Watch coalition, there have been several sectoral strikes (education, health, local communities, etc.) and a general strike as well. Amongst other particularly dynamic social movements, it should be
mentioned the various struggles fostered by the Coordinating Committee against the High Cost of Living, as well as by the National Associations of Unemployed Professionals. Several collective action strategies have been deployed, such as sit-ins, spontaneous popular marches and national mobilization days against poverty. Demands make reference to halting the increase of prices, sustaining the Compensations Fund, applying a mobile salary scale, bringing public services up to standard, stopping the privatization of water and electricity distribution, and claiming the right to work in the civil service.

In Ghana, civil society demands support for women farmers in the form of investments in inputs, such as fertilizers, and also in training and access to markets. These would boost agriculture while contributing to job creation, economic growth, and the well-being of the population. A similar demand comes from Senegal, the most food-import dependent country in West Africa, where civil society proposes returning to traditional agriculture, duly encouraged and supported by the State.

Real wage increase should be the stimulus, concludes Social Watch in Bulgaria. And in the Philippines, a stimulus package is definitely in order but, unlike the one outlined by the Government, it should be based on a clear national strategy that is rights-based, pro-poor and sustainable that aims to strengthen domestic demand. It should place a premium on food security, on job creation by strengthening local enterprises to benefit both male and female workers, and on investment in pro-poor and green infrastructure projects (e.g., construction of a network of irrigation systems, electrification of far-flung villages and developing clean energy) as well as expansion of social and economic security for the poor and unemployed. (…)

In the United States, where the crisis started, and where the number of unemployed is reaching double digit figures, the Republican Party was punished by the electorate that elected Barack Obama on a platform of hope and change. Now, movements for human rights, green jobs, fair trade, healthcare and housing are advancing proposals and stepping up demands for real and structural change. The U.S. cannot afford to squander this opportunity for real change.

This window of opportunity for change is open all around the world. The time to act is now.
What are the most compelling issues for us as youth and adult educators to take up at this time of multiple, interconnected crises? Thoughts about the subject by Shirley Walters from the University of Western Cape, South Africa.

Shirley Walters

The Bridge We Call Home: Putting People First

Harold Pinter, the British playwright, in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005 closed by saying,

“I believe that despite the enormous odds which exist, unflinching, unswerving, fierce intellectual determination, as citizens, to define the real truth of our lives and our societies is a crucial obligation. If such a determination is not embodied in our political vision we have no hope of restoring what is so nearly lost to us – the dignity of man”.

(He was writing at the height of the USA’s invasion of Iraq.)

In Southern Africa, as in many parts of the world, there are millions of political and economic refugees, searching for a better life. But often they don’t find a home to belong; they become increasingly desperate. Some commit suicide in public places, like hanging themselves from a tree, where commuters can be made aware of their tragic plight. South African poet, Malika Ndlovu, describes such a moving and desperate situation on Friday 15th August 2008, around 7a.m., when a Zimbabwean man in his early thirties, Adrian Nguni, was found hanging from a tree along the Black River in Cape Town, visible to all in peak traffic on the busy street parallel to the river. A few days before, an unidentified body was found floating in the same river. Nábva’s poem is called “Black River”.

These are not isolated incidents as the extremities of poverty and wealth in the world are increasing, with corporate capitalism in charge on a global scale sup-
ported by sympathetic governments, where countries vie for hosting mega events as the Football World Cup or the Olympics, in the hope that the billions of dollars of tax payers money that will be spent on stadiums, instead of going to support health, social welfare and education, will somehow trickle down to them/us. Why are we dazzled by the consumerist hype time and time again? The powerful individualizing ideology that encourages the culture of “me, myself, I”, rather than other conceptions like that of “ubuntu” which acknowledges that “I am a person because of other people”, still holds most people captive. Is it not time that we as youth and adult educators focus on a counter-narrative, that “puts people first”, and that emphasizes our interconnectedness; our need to belong; for solidarity with one another, if we and the planet are to survive?

As I increasingly recognize that all people across generations (including ourselves as educators and learners), suffer hardships, whether from poverty, abuse of various kinds, illness, or loss, our approaches in our educational practices must firstly help people “to belong”. People cannot learn if they are fearful, in pain, alienated, i.e. if they don’t feel “at home”. Equally, in the time of multiple crises, none of us has the answer. The spaces to encourage learners and educators to be free to create alternative visions, playfully, to imagine hopefully, become ever more important. To do this we all, across social classes, cultures, histories, need to come out of our comfort zone into zones of crossings, contacts and possibilities.

Chien Siew Sim describes such zones of crossings, contacts and possibilities through the concept of “nepantla” which is described by Anzaldua and Keating in their book “The bridge we call home”. The authors use the Aztec notion of “nepantla”, the in-between land, to stimulate discussions of transformation. Accordingly, “nepantla”, as sites of transformation, is:
“The place where different perspectives come into conflict and where you question the basic tenets and identities inherited from your family, your education and your different cultures. ‘Nepantla’ is the zone between where you struggle to find equilibrium between the outer expression of change and our inner relationship to it.” (Chien Siew Sim p. 549)

“Nepantla” is where creative and alternative ways of belonging and learning are fostered. It is a cultural (re)construction of identity and belonging that requires stepping out and across boundaries; which demands a social accountability attached to transformative learning, and one which makes us reach out to the likes of Zimbabwean, Adrian Nguni.

Adult and youth educators are called on to help to build bridges and cross borders to provide elements of vision and hope in the struggle for change, especially when the public narrative is suggesting that we are living in a time of multiple crises which threatens the existence of life itself. Our first step is for us all to recognize our inter-connection with one another; a connection of hearts and a respect for the sacredness of all life forms. This will help us heed Harold Pinter’s call and also to hear Bell Hooks (2009) who offers a remarkable vision of a world where all people – wherever they may call home – can live fully and well, where everyone can belong.

But in doing this we do need also to heed the wise words of Lily Walker, an Australian aboriginal woman leader, who said:

“If you come here to help me, then you are wasting your time. But if you come here because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let’s begin”.

The youngest participant
Source: Claudia Ferreira
Adult learning and education: a key to transformation

The ICAE World Assembly is a forum that brings together people and organizations working on lifelong learning and adult education around the world and it takes place every four years, as a celebration of the importance of adult education for the construction of just and equitable societies. The first one was held in 1976 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, under the presidency of Julius Nyerere.

ICAE World Assembly is open to members, partners, and friends and also to all those networks that work or are linked to the adult education movement promoting adults’ right to learn. It will be an excellent opportunity to reflect on the changing current context and the challenges for the education movement.

It will take place from June 14 to 16, back to back with the General Assembly of the European Association of Adult Education (EAEA), a Swedish national conference on Popular Education and a Conference of the Nordic Folk High Schools (NFR).

Objectives:
- To provide a collective space to strongly affirm the right to lifelong learning and education for all and to assert the immense value of adult education and learning in enabling citizens to build a world worth living in.
- To identify the priorities of lifelong learning and education and to develop proposals for action at a global, regional and local level.

After this global event ICAE General Assembly will take place on June 17 where new authorities will be elected.

The International Council for Adult Education, ICAE, formed in 1973, is the main global network promoting Youth and Adult Education and Learning and doing advocacy for the right to learn of young people and adults.

It provides support and operates as a link for cooperation and solidarity among national and regional networks. While supporting capacity building for nongovernmental agencies in the area of Youth and Adult Learning—in line with objectives 3 and 4 of EFA (Education for All) - it also plays a role in development processes in the South. ICAE is an NGO in formal consultative relations with UNESCO and with consultative status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

ICAE is formed by NGOs, associations, sectoral, national and regional networks as well as individuals, in more than 75 countries and has regional members in 7 regions: Africa, Arab Region, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and North America.

You will find more information about the assembly at: VIII World Assembly ICAE Facebook, www.icae.org.uy, ICAE Facebook and through our electronic bulletin: Voices Rising.

Please visit:
http://www.youtube.com/user/ICAEMWA2011
Janine Eldred of NIACE is also concerned with the impact of the financial crisis and in particular its impact on development assistance. The crisis has set back the fight against hunger and poverty three years. It also led to the fact that the importance of Adult Education is negated by many political actors. Janine Eldred has arguments on why this negative position is wrong.

Janine Eldred

Adult Learning, Literacy and International Development: Hope or Hypocrisy?

The House of Commons International Development Committee report of June 2nd 2009, Aid Under Pressure; Support for Development Assistance in a Global Economic Downturn, records that reductions in trade, decreased foreign investment, fluctuations in exchange rates, decreased remittances and changes in development assistance are impacting on the poorest countries. The same report estimates the impact of such financial reductions on human development as;

“An additional 90 million people are expected to be living in extreme poverty by the end of 2010, and the World Health Organisation has warned that child mortality could rise by 400,000 deaths a year.” (P10, 2009)

It also states:

“the eradication of hunger and poverty has been set back by three years.” (op.cit)

Credit must be given to the UK Government in this context, which has committed to meeting its aid target of 0.7% of GNP by 2013, and to this end has increased assistance to developing countries in 2009. However, in spite of the government’s Department For International Development White Paper, Eliminating World Poverty; Building our Common Future (July 09) and its commitment to developing a
new education strategy, no indication is made of the importance of adult learning. Priority is given to the eradication of poverty without a clear commitment to the importance of educated, skilled and knowledgeable adults who can develop enterprise, employment and effective health and education services.

In such economically extreme times as these, some might argue that prioritising adult learning is likely to be a long way down the agenda. Nevertheless, a reflection on the UK's response to economic challenges and the resulting relative poverty for some groups of people, suggests a contrary view and could help to illuminate why adult learning should be a priority in international development agendas.

In recent decades, during phases of economic downturn, governments have pledged to increase opportunities for education and training. Budgets, attached to skills development and improvement, are made available through work programmes. Information, advice and guidance also increased around the learning opportunities available, along with the support for such things as child-care and travel expenses. Such budget commitments are not confined to governments. For example, the Honda company in the UK declared, at the end of 2008, that the down-time created by the market downturn would be used for training and developing staff, ready for the upturn and new opportunities in trade.

Such responses are in addition to the regular opportunities for developing skills through such massive development as Train to Gain, the employer-driven learning opportunities, including developing literacy and numeracy.

We must assume that the sophisticated machinery of government, which prioritises evidence-based policies, is satisfied that such investments will help to maintain and improve the economic welfare and opportunities of individuals, their families and the nation. Research in this area indicates how those with the lowest levels of skill, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy, are likely to be the poorest people. Moreover, these adults are also likely to raise families whose children struggle with these essential skills and who find that initial education does not provide the stimulus and satisfaction to encourage them to continue learning. (Parsons, S and Bynner, J (2008) Literacy Changes Lives)

The UK government established its Skills for Life Strategy in 2001, supported by huge funding resources, clear objectives and programmes of action. The work continues today, and indeed, forms a crucial aspect of the support available for people in or out of work, during times of economic difficulty.

Why then, I asked at a conference in Bonn earlier this year on the topic of Financing Adult Learning in International Development, does not only our own government, but also many others in the industrialised world who recognise the importance of adult literacy and numeracy to their own populations, not use the same
Some of the arguments against supporting adult learning and literacy in developing countries concern the lack of teachers, the poor quality of provision, a lack of literate environments; in some situations, a history of high drop-out rates, a lack of relevant materials and resources and no clear policies to frame development. Many of these criticisms were features of adult literacy and numeracy development in the UK in the past. They became the reasons for development, not arguments against it.

Under the Skills for Life strategy, teachers had to become qualified to national standards and volunteer teachers were given opportunities to develop, or offered different supporting roles. Curriculum standards were agreed, resources written and produced and all stakeholders were brought to the table. These included employers, trades unions, policy-makers, providers and practitioners. Learners too, increasingly featured as key contributors to policy and practice development. Teaching methods and pedagogies were reviewed, developed and shared, including embedded or integrated approaches, where literacy and numeracy are closely woven into vocational education and training, creative activities and family learning. Such progress can be made where there is the political will.

Some argue that there are subtle, but pervasive forces at play, which stop adult learning being higher on the agenda of developing countries. A recent letter from the Minister for International Development to the Global Campaign for Education (GB) emphasised how partnerships and support for education in developing countries is driven by individual country plans. Where adult learning is not in the national plan, then it is not supported. However, many developing countries feel that, because donor partners indicate that Universal Primary Education is their priority, they will not cite adult learning in their plan, believing it will not be supported. Simply, and understandably, they design the sort of education plans they feel the donor wants to see rather than the plan they would really want in place. They suspend their understanding of the realities of living and working in an African or Asian country in favour of a perceived reality of the potential donor. Governments lose their confidence and capability to drive their own agendas in the face of a fear of reduced donations. The worst aspects of aid dependency emerge in this scenario.
A healthier and more productive approach would be for improved partnerships, where greater equality is exercised. Developing countries should be able to articulate and assert clearly their dreams and ambitions. Partners and donors should examine and reflect on their own in-country policies, especially where these support the Millennium Development Goals, for their effectiveness and potential for translating and sharing in different contexts and countries. For the UK this would mean an analysis of where Adult Education and training contribute to their own policies around employability, workforce development, health agendas, skills improvement, environmental challenges and sustainability as well as to justice, community development and governance, families, early childhood and poverty reduction.

Such analysis would reveal how adult learning does not sit in a silo belonging only to a particular department but intersects, complements and affects policies and programmes across the whole public agenda.

In this environment, developing nations would be better able to negotiate and encouraged to assert where they, in turn, feel adult learning has something to offer in pursuit of their aims and objectives. Partnerships would begin to take on real significance instead of a donor-recipient relationship perpetuating old hegemonies.

Analysis of the Millennium Development Goals, which drive UK international development policies, suggests that most development agendas should have adult learning woven into them. Learning with parents and carers supports effective early childhood health and education; health literacy enhances not only maternal and familial health but also ways of preventing or living with HIV-AIDS. Skills for work in all their complexity are vital for economic development, and more effective where adult literacy and numeracy are included (NRDC, 2006, UK). In the poorest communities, the economic unit is the family unit, whether this is around subsistence farming, produce retail, bicycle mechanics, craft production, local catering or re-cycling initiatives. We know that family learning has much to offer re employability, entrepreneurship, financial education and building skills within the family to be an even more effective economic unit. Building on what works in specific contexts adds value, builds capacity and supports autonomy. These are essential aspects of development anywhere in the world.

By marshalling evidence, experiences and some encouragement, the UK government could lead the way in offering an enlightened, egalitarian approach to development. Investment in initial primary education alone, in any country, is not enough to respond to challenges of now and the next decade. Industrialised countries, working in co-operation and partnership, should recognise the realities of their developing partners in a spirit of global social responsibility.

Adult learning, in all its diverse richness is an imperative in creating the other world we know is possible. We need the political will.
CONFINTEA FOLLOW-UP: COMMENTS AND PLANS
Marina Silva, an indigenous Brazilian from the poorest family background, has made it: Through participation in the National Adult Education Programme, she became literate and successfully completed her studies. In 2002 she became Minister for the Environment and currently she works as a Senator. Her story can give courage to others, even if not every participant in literacy campaigns will achieve a university degree, in any case, adult education can help to improve their living conditions. Dr. Ahmed is Senior Adviser at the Institute of Educational Development, BracUniversity. He was at Belém as a UNESCO resource person.

Manzoor Ahmed

Facing the Truth about Literacy

Marina Silva, Brazilian Senator and former Environment Minister, illiterate until age 16, worked as a housemaid to support herself through adult education course and university.

Belém, Brazil. This provincial capital on the Amazon in the north-eastern state of Para was the host to the Sixth World Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), 1-4 December.

At the opening of the conference, Senator Maria Marina Silva, an indigenous Brazilian from the western state of Acre, one of 11 children in a family of rubber tappers, and illiterate until 16, told the emblematic and moving story of her struggle to overcome the curse of illiteracy and poverty.

Having lost her mother at 14, trapped in a life of deep poverty and a frequent victim of malaria and hepatitis, Marina decided that the only way to escape from a life of endless misery and despair was to become a nun. But she found she could not be a nun unless she was literate.

Marina traveled to the provincial capital of Rio Branco and enrolled in a course of Mobral, the national Adult Education programme. With fierce determination, working as a housemaid to support herself, Marina completed secondary educa-
Marina became an organizer of rubber plantation workers and an activist in supporting the rights of the indigenous people and conserving the fast disappearing Amazon rain forests – the target of national and multi-national industrial farmers and loggers. She was elected a state deputy in 1992, and later, in 1995, she became the youngest senator in Brazil at age 37.

With President Lula’s victory in Brazil, Marina became the Minister of Environment in 2002. Even in an era of blossoming democracy, Marina’s stand on the protection of the rain forests and the rights of the people of the Amazon was too much for the business and farming interests of Brazil. Marina Silva resigned from the Cabinet in 2008. She remains a senator and an icon among environmental activists.

Tall, thin, and youthful at 51, her voice tinged with a fighting edge, Marina’s story was both inspiring and symbolic of the hard struggle of the poor who are also deprived of literacy. It also showed the challenges that have to be faced in literacy and Adult Education programmes. Of some 3,000 children, contemporaries of Marina in Seringal Bagacao, her village with 320 families of plantation workers, Marina was the only one who persisted in the Adult Education course to go on to the university.

Every decade or so since the first international conference was held in 1949 in the Danish city of Elsinore, government representatives and others committed to promote Adult Education have been meeting to take stock and attempt to chart the course ahead. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was a keynote speaker in the last one held in Hamburg in 1997. State Minister of Primary and Mss Education, M. Motahar Hussain, came this time.

The world has changed radically in the last six decades; so have the ideas and expectations about education, learning and adult literacy. Meeting learning needs of youth and adults, complementing formal education provisions, is now recognised as critical for personal development and society’s progress and a matter of human right and dignity. International agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All, as well as national constitutions, support this position.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire famously said literacy is about reading the “world,” not the “word.” Ironically, the prominence given to literacy has led to launching of quick-fix campaigns and “movements,” though the proponents argue that it has to be designed as the first step to continuing, non-formal and Lifelong Learning.
The outcome of these campaigns is mostly not much more than a mere passing acquaintance with the alphabet or symbolic signing of one’s name. This is very far removed from Freire’s concept of reading the world, development of critical consciousness, use of knowledge and information to transform one’s life and engagement in further learning.

During the last Awami League regime, a literacy programme known as the Total Literacy Movement (TLM) was started in 1997 with the goal of making 18 million people literate in five years. In 2000, it was declared that the adult literacy rate had reached 65 percent from an estimated 40 percent. The successor BNP regime continued the programme, stood by the announced statistics, but did not claim any further progress. Corruption and lack of results led to closure of the programme in 2003.

_Education Watch_, an independent research group, conducted a national sample assessment of literacy skills in 2002, using recognized research techniques. It was found that 41 percent of the 15+ population had literacy and numeracy at a
rudimentary level (less than functional), and only 20 percent had skills that could be regarded as functionally useful in their own life.

This state of affairs is not unique to Bangladesh. India’s official literacy rate is 65 percent. Brij Kothari, a professor of communication at the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad, carried out surveys following a methodology similar to the one used by Education Watch. He found, in samples drawn from four Hindi-speaking states, only 26 percent could read a simple text of 35 words in Hindi. Another 27 percent could be regarded as “budding readers,” who could read haltingly with little comprehension. (International Review of Education, November 2008).

The simplistic, almost meaningless, measurement of literacy skills, based on self reporting (typically, the subject responding to the question if he/she can read and write a letter), usually as a part of population census every ten years, has encouraged the sloppy approach to literacy measurement.

In fact, it does not make sense to label people as either literate or illiterate, because literacy and numeracy have to be regarded as a continuum of skills, from very basic to more advanced. Literacy for a learner becomes sustainable (i.e., the learner is not at risk of relapsing back into illiteracy), and functionally useful, only when one goes some distance beyond the basic level.

UNESCO, the agency responsible for setting standards of assessment and tracking progress in literacy, routinely accepts national data reported by governments based on self-reporting. The current number of adult illiterates in the world according to UNESCO is 776 million. “The number would be at least double of this, if a reasonable measurement method and criteria are applied,” said David Archer of Action-Aid, a well-known Adult Education scholar. Archer also pointed out that several rates based on levels of skill acquired and corresponding numbers would be appropriate to represent the continuum of skills.

The participants of CONFINTEA VI recognized the conundrum faced in many countries with high levels of illiteracy. In the Belém Framework of Action adopted unanimously on December 4, they committed themselves to

“develop literacy provision that is relevant and adapted to learners’ needs and leads to functional and sustainable knowledge, skills and competence of participants empowering them to continue as lifelong learners.”

The Belém Framework also stipulated that all surveys and data collection should “recognize literacy as a continuum.” It requires that the achievement of the literacy learners would be “recognized through appropriate assessment methods and instruments.”
The newly elected government of Bangladesh, in fulfilling its election pledge, has plans to launch a literacy programme to “eliminate illiteracy” by 2014. The spirit of the pledge is admirable, but it is in danger of being reduced to a populist and meaningless tokenism, for reasons noted above. The TLM experience of the past must not be repeated.

It is essential that: a) the goals and targets for 2014 be defined in terms of bringing learners into a process of sustainable and relevant learning which will continue beyond 2014; b) an institutional structure for Lifelong Learning be developed in phases in the form of a network of multi-purpose and permanent community learning centers through local government and in partnership with community and non-governmental organizations; and c) quality and relevance of the learning programme be ensured with appropriate content and learning materials, motivated and trained teachers, and proper assessment of outcomes.

A credible programme for adult literacy placed in a Lifelong Learning framework has a good chance of attracting the Education for All “Fast Track Initiative” Fund, set up by donors to support EFA.

It is not expected that every participant in an Adult Education programme will emulate Marina and graduate from the university. However, a programme worth its name has to ensure that most acquire knowledge and competencies to improve their life chances.
Facing the Truth about Literacy

Participants from different regions all over the world

Source: Fatima Rodrigues

Source: Felipe Giordano

Source: Fatima Rodrigues
The Steering Committee of the African Platform for Adult Education met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from February 22 to 24, 2010 to deliberate on a new orientation for the Platform following the conclusion of the CONFINTÉA VI Conference which was held in Belém Para, Brazil in December 2009.

African Platform for Adult Education

African Adult Education Networks Meet to Develop Post-CONFINTÉA Strategy

The Platform was created on March 28, 2008 with the aim of mobilizing African civil society to actively partake in policy advocacy on Adult Education and literacy specifically in preparation for the sixth CONFINTÉA, a level 2 UN conference held every 12 years to revisit progress in the field of education and Lifelong Learning.

Four regional networks working on Adult Education issues and with adult learners created the Platform, mainly: ANCEFA, FEMNET, PAALAE and PAMOJA. The members comprise the Steering Committee. Platform activities are coordinated by a small secretariat based in Mali.

The original mandate of the Platform was modest, focused on the regional and international CONFINTÉA processes. Platform members resolved to advocate for high level government participation in the regional preparatory conference and in the UN Conference in order to raise the profile and commitment of Adult Education among governments decision making institutions in Africa and the populace generally. The Platform also provided an alternative perspective of AE progress on the
continent through a CSO shadow report they prepared which fed in the Regional Report for Africa prepared by UNESCO. The regional report formed the basis of putting together the Global Belém Framework of Action.

The Platform was also instrumental in popularizing the Adult Education agenda in different fora of social movements such as the World Social Forum, the Africa Social Forum and in diverse global campaigns such as the Campaign Against Poverty or the Global Movement of Education. Its collective initiatives ensured that African CSO were visible and their voices and those of learners were amplified at the Regional CONFINTEA Preparatory Conference held in Nairobi towards the end of 2008; at the International Civil Society Forum (FISC) on Adult Education held before the start of CONFINTEA VI and during CONFINTEA VI. This is a very different picture from the last CONFINTEA conference held in 1997 in Hamburg where the presence and engagement of African CSOs and governments was insignificant.

Says Lalla El Oumrany, the current coordinator of the Platform,

“We were able to achieve all the four main objectives set for ourselves which is an accomplishment in itself considering the circumstances in which the Platform came to be and the daunting task that lay ahead”.

Ms. Jennifer Chiwela, the Chairperson of ANCEFA, agrees with the assessment emphasizing that,

“The CONFINTEA process confirmed to us that the Platform is critical albeit the fact that our initial agenda has since evolved, challenging us to revisit our raison d’être and our future orientation”.

While members of the Steering Committee express great satisfaction with the achievements of the Platform, they recognize that important reforms are due towards making the work of the Platform more relevant and strategic. Chief among the challenges is defining a clear identity for the Platform and its rootedness. In the past, the fact that the Platform was hosted by another organization created tensions at the operational level. Similarly, the acute dependency on (limited) donor funding has compromised its integrity and autonomy. It also led to the Platform to be conceived in transitory terms rather than in more strategic and enduring terms.

Members of the Platform envision a more robust role for the Platform to actualize the programme of the Belém Framework for Action as well as other international and regional commitments related to Adult Education, Lifelong Learning and People’s empowerment. Specifically, they want to see the Platform become a continental advocacy platform for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. Also, they see it
The African Platform for Adult Education

La Plateforme Africaine de l'Education des Adultes

A Plataforma Africana de Educação Adulta
spearheading knowledge development in the area of Adult Education, Lifelong Learning in Africa. Moreover they want the Platform to synchronize members’ efforts (and those of other actors in Africa) in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.

The Steering Committee has succeeded in developing a strategy document to inform the new orientation for the Platform. The challenge is to interest those who see a link between Adult Education, LifeLong Learning and people’s empowerment to support wholeheartedly the Platform in its new directions. Platform members understand that the momentum created by CONFINTEA has to be vigorously pursued in Africa where the rates of illiterate adults, most of who are women, remains high.