



## UIL's strategy for strengthening the capacities of governments and civil society to attain EFA and lifelong learning in Africa (2010-2013)

### Introduction

The current lack and under-utilisation of existing capacity development opportunities in Africa represents a key challenge to sustainable development in the region. Low literacy rates and large and growing numbers of out-of-school youth indicate that a huge percentage of the population, the majority of them women and girls, is being marginalised. To reach them, appropriate policies need to be developed and programmes implemented. At the moment, however, it is clear that many governments are lacking the wide range of capacities and conducive policies needed to do this.

In response to this reality and in line with UNESCO's priority focus on Africa, the Institute's strategic objective for the region (as articulated in its Medium Term Strategy, 2008-2013) is **to strengthen capacities of government and civil society to advance quality lifelong learning, adult education, literacy and non-formal education for all** (p. 26). To help define the priorities for the remaining period covered by the Mid-Term Strategy, an analysis of the recommendations and commitments emanating from five Africa-related conferences organised by UNESCO from 2006 to 2010<sup>1</sup> was undertaken. To complement this analysis, UIL collected information from Member States in Africa to identify their priority actions and needs for capacity-building. The results of this survey will be further verified through broader national and regional consultation processes with a wide range of stakeholders. The analysis of the recommendations and Member States' needs so far points to four areas of priority: policy, governance structures & institutional capacities, financing and quality. A fifth area – the monitoring and evaluation of recommendations – has been added, having featured prominently at the Nairobi and Belém CONFINTEA VI conferences.

The objective of this paper is to facilitate the elaboration of UIL's capacity development strategy pertaining to the achievement of the aforementioned objective within the identified priority areas. This will allow the Institute to 1) define its strategic focus with regard to capacity development in Africa ("what") and 2) design an implementation strategy to support governments and civil society in genuinely and meaningfully strengthening their capacities in the move from rhetoric to action ("how").

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<sup>1</sup> 1) [Bamako Call to Action](#) from [Regional literacy conference in 2007](#); 2) [Maputo Strategic Platform](#) from [LIFE regional meeting in 2008](#); 3) [African Statement on the Power of Youth and Adult Learning and Education for Africa's Development](#) from [CONFINTEA VI Regional Preparatory Conference in Nairobi, 2008](#); 4) [Belém Framework for Action](#) from [CONFINTEA VI in 2009](#); and 5) [final communique](#) from [Conference on the Integration of African Languages and Cultures into Education in Ouagadougou, 2010](#).

In consultation with various African stakeholders, UIL will design a comprehensive set of activities geared towards improving capacities for advocacy, resource mobilisation and effective governance, and increasing accountability. Researchers, practitioners and institutions possessing the relevant experience and know-how will be central to strengthening the capacities of government and civil society.

## **Guiding principles for capacity development**

The Institute considers itself as a catalyst in developing and strengthening capacities in the region. It will collaborate with governments and national, regional and international organisations to provide the support needed at the country level. The mapping of capacity-building will involve adult education stakeholders at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. Country-based effective institutional partnerships and the use of national expertise for capacity-building will be promoted. Depending on the thematic areas (see below), capacity development will take place at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

The main objective of the capacity-building activities is to provide support (i.e. targeted, up-to-date and tailor-made interventions) to governments and civil society in the priority areas identified. In order to cater to different learning needs and support peer learning, the approach to provision will be multi-pronged, including, for example, short interventions to upgrade knowledge, longer courses to lay good foundations, field visits to observe practice and the development of inter-country exchange networks. Transversal issues, such as gender equality, HIV/AIDS, the use of information and communication technologies and lifelong learning, will be integral to these interventions.

## **Thematic area: Policy**

African Member States have committed themselves to working towards a holistic and diversified educational vision. This vision includes the effective integration of African languages and cultures into multilingual and multicultural education systems and the creation of literate environments (20 African Member States adopted a policy guide to this effect – developed in collaboration with UIL – in early 2010). To realise this vision, Member States need to develop comprehensive and fully-costed national adult literacy and education policies, with well-targeted action plans focussing in particular on women and highly-disadvantaged populations. Such policies should be backed by legislation and must be an integral part of national poverty reduction and overall development strategies. To operationalise them, specific and concrete action plans for adult learning and education – embedded in the MDGs, EFA, DESD, UNLD and activities relating to the Second Decade of Education for Africa – must be elaborated. Furthermore, careful consideration must be given to ways of ensuring that these plans are articulated with national and regional development plans, as well as UNESCO priority programmes, namely the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), the Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

A comprehensive policy makes provision for the establishment of appropriate coordination and monitoring mechanisms. Moreover, such a policy seeks to assure quality by improving the professional qualifications, training and working conditions of adult educators and facilitators. In 2008, the African LIFE countries expressed an urgent need to adopt and implement an African Literacy and Language Charter that would strengthen quality literacy programmes.

Member States have furthermore indicated the pressing need for capacity-building that would equip Ministry of Education beneficiaries to formulate holistic education policies and implement appropriate programmes in partnership with other Ministries and civil society.

### **Thematic area: Governance structures & institutional capacities**

Good governance facilitates the effective, transparent, accountable and equitable implementation of adult learning and education policy. Representation by and the participation of all stakeholders are indispensable in order to guarantee responsiveness to the needs of all learners, in particular the most disadvantaged. To date, however, only a few countries in Africa have established effective multi-sectoral governance bodies in the area of youth and adult learning and education. Moreover, ensuring that such bodies look beyond literacy and basic education towards systems of lifelong learning remains a challenge. Capacities for initiating and maintaining dialogue, mobilising people, exploiting research and gaining awareness and understanding of adult education and lifelong learning are crucial in this regard.

Where decentralisation of governance and/or provision takes place, the problem of inadequate resource allocation is felt at all levels. There is hence a need to put in place efficient, effective and transparent mechanisms for the management of internal and external resources. For example, the outsourcing/faire-faire strategy has enabled a number of governments in Africa to develop partnerships with other stakeholders to mobilise funding and increase and improve provision for literacy and adult education.

Concrete measures to reinforce governance structures and institutional capacities could include the following:

1. The creation and maintenance of mechanisms for the involvement of public authorities at all administrative levels, civil society organisations, social partners, the private sector, the wider community and adult learners' and educators' organisations in the development, implementation and evaluation of adult learning and education policies and programmes;
2. The implementation of 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;
3. The promotion and support of inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation; and
4. The fostering of trans-national cooperation through projects and networks for sharing know-how and innovative practice.

### **Thematic area: Financing**

Significant financial investment is essential to ensure the quality of adult learning and education. Since the Bamako Conference, a number of Member States in Africa have been working to achieve the target of allocating more than 3% of national education budgets to adult literacy. There have been increased calls for renewed commitment from the state sector, the private sector and international partners to sustainable funding for adult learning and education in Africa. It has also been recommended that concerted follow-up actions be taken in order to accelerate progress towards achieving increased investment in education (equivalent to at least 6% of GNP).

It is evident that an integrated adult education policy can only be achieved if Member States mobilise their own budgetary and internal resources across all governmental departments. It

is recommended that civil society and the private sector work to obtain increased funds by intensifying joint advocacy efforts with international partners and governments. Incentives can be created as a means of promoting new sources of funding, e.g. from the private sector, NGOs, communities and individuals, without prejudicing the principles of equity and inclusion.

To achieve EFA Goals 3 and 4, there is an urgent need to develop an international resource mobilisation strategy. More funds must be mobilised and large-scale technical support provided for Member States with literacy rates of less than 50%. International partners should consider establishing new transnational funding programmes for literacy and adult education. A further recommendation proposes that the coordinators of the EFA Fast Track Initiative be urged to include credible support for adult literacy on their agenda.

Member States have likewise committed to establishing efficient, effective and transparent financial accountability mechanisms, and to giving priority to investment in education for women, rural populations and people with disabilities.

Given that African Member States report that adult learning and education are still being accorded low priority and scarce financial resources, it is crucial to develop and strengthen capacities for resource mobilisation and management.

### **Thematic area: Quality**

African Member States have committed to fostering a culture of quality in adult learning and education. This will require relevant content and modes of delivery, learner-centred needs assessment, the professionalisation of educators, and the enrichment of learning environments.

In the region, the professionalisation of trainers and educators of adults is a key priority. In parallel to improving their status, working conditions and salaries, there should be increased professional training for adult educators (e.g. through higher education institutions and vocational/technical institutions). Teacher associations and civil society organisations have taken the lead in advocating for improved working conditions and status for adult educators and facilitators. Member States have also identified professionalisation and the training of trainers as key areas for capacity development.

While acknowledging the importance of quality criteria, Member States still lack capacities that would enable them to develop such criteria for curricula, learning materials and teaching methodologies as well as to assess and monitor progress in adult education programmes, taking into account planned outcomes and impact measures. One key quality criterion is the use of African languages as the means of instruction. In addition to catering for various languages, there is a need to make literacy provision relevant to learners' specific needs: consequently, capacities must be strengthened to ensure that relevant literacy curricula and measures are designed and implemented to address gender issues and to reach highly-disadvantaged populations including people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and prisoners.

Assessing the learning outcomes of individual learners remains a challenge, and there is a need to analyse and disseminate practices relating to equivalency frameworks that recognise, validate and accredit all forms of learning. This will play an important role in increasing knowledge and developing capacities in this domain.

To enhance quality, the region needs to capitalise on the digital dividend by promoting open and distance learning and by making use of both traditional media and the newer ICTs.

Governments could be offered assistance in developing their capacities to establish strategies and partnerships that foreground the use of ICTs and media as a means of advancing adult learning and education.

It is furthermore crucial that research capacities be enhanced so that the results can be used to inform policies and programmes. Regional information, communication and management systems should be created to produce and share innovative experiences and practices in Africa. Support could be provided to enable interdisciplinary research on the impact of adult learning and education. At the national level, a monitoring and evaluation system that collects and analyses both qualitative and quantitative data/information needs to be established and subsequently strengthened.

### **Monitoring & evaluation of the recommendations**

In order to implement the recommendations of the five conferences cited in footnote 1, African Member States have committed themselves to establishing an ALE monitoring mechanism based on relevant benchmarks and indicators. The region has recommended that UIL set up a monitoring committee that would meet annually to monitor progress in adult learning and education performance. In the short term, the terminology and concepts pertaining to adult learning education must be clarified and standardised across the region in order to facilitate regional collaboration and the dissemination of information and research. A road map listing the goals and deadlines required in order for this challenge to be met must be developed on the basis of a critical assessment of progress made, obstacles encountered and weaknesses identified to date.

Member States in Africa have expressed a strong need to develop capacities that would equip them to systematically collect reliable data and information. It is consequently of prime importance that measures be taken to reinforce research and evaluation capacities that will help Member States to identify information that will allow them to reach well-informed policy decisions at the national and regional levels.

### **Partnerships for the implementation of the strategy**

Partnerships are essential to the success of capacity-building initiatives designed to equip government and civil society to advance quality lifelong learning, adult education, literacy and non-formal education for all. In partnerships we can reach out, share knowledge and resources, become multipliers and agents of change, and create a broad movement which will have a considerable impact. In this regard, UIL will further deepen its collaboration with the UNESCO family: BREDIA, IICBA, the Intersectoral Platform on Priority Africa, the Africa Department, field offices and National Commissions for UNESCO. UIL will also monitor and support the activities initiated nationally (by stakeholders within a country), sub-regionally (by organisations such as CREEA), regionally (by organisations such as the Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the African Union, the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) and the African Platform for Adult Education) and internationally, as well as activities spearheaded by multi-lateral and bilateral organisations (e.g. dvv international). Furthermore, UIL will also aim to broaden its partnership base by placing special emphasis on furthering cross-sectoral collaboration – which plays a crucial role in the context of youth and adult education. The Institute will need to sensitise the Regional Economic Commissions so that partnerships can be developed. Training institutions and national experts will also be drawn upon in the context of the Institute's capacity-building activities.