



BREDA



EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF LIFE IN AFRICA

Workshop Report

**3-5 March 2010
Azalai Hotel,
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso**

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I. Introduction

The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) was launched in 2006 as an initiative to accelerate the progress towards EFA Goal 4 with the focus on countries with more than 10 million illiterate adults or those with 50 per cent illiteracy rates. Since then, LIFE has been operational as partnership framework between UNESCO and 35 Member States. These include the nine most populous countries (E9) and 15 countries in Africa. Therefore, LIFE represents by far the most important means of addressing the literacy challenge in the world. In addition, since most LIFE countries are in Africa, LIFE has become the major initiative for addressing literacy and non-formal education of the Continent.

To measure the progress made, the difficulties encountered and discuss perspectives, it was important to assess the implementation of LIFE in the country who participated in this program while waiting the mid-term evaluation of LIFE planned by UNESCO in 2011,. To this effect,, BREDA in collaboration with UIL conducted a survey in the African LIFE countries through a common questionnaire the results of which would be discussed at the regional workshop in Ouagadougou from 3rd to 5th March 2010.

Workshop objectives

The main objective of the workshop organised by BREDA in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and the Government of Burkina Faso, was to discuss the achievements, progress, difficulties and challenges in implementing of LIFE in Sub-Saharan Africa.

More specifically, the workshop was to:

1. Share the results of the evaluation survey;
2. Discuss lessons learned in terms of implementation modalities and achievements of LIFE;
3. Strengthening South-South cooperation through exchanges and sharing of innovative NFE experiences enriched by a peer review;
4. Discuss partnership and Resource Mobilization
5. Exchange on some perspectives

Participants

Some 80 participants, from 16 countries attended the workshop. The participants were those responsible for LIFE, often referred to as LIFE focal points, in the 16 countries represented, government officials (Directors) in charge of literacy and non-formal education, NGO representatives, education programme specialists from UNESCO Field Offices covering the countries represented, UIL, International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) and the Section for Basic Education, Literacy and Non-formal Education, UNESCO Headquarters. The Directors of UNESCO BREDA, UIL and the Bamako Cluster office also participated in the Workshop.

The opening

The Director of the Bamako Cluster Office Mr. Juma Shabani welcomed the participants and introduced the Workshop thematic areas, reminding the gathering of the importance of the UNESCO initiative LIFE. He underlined that it was important for UNESCO to receive feedback from countries concerning the implementation of LIFE in order to make the necessary adjustments.

Ms Ann Therese Ndong-Jatta, Director, BREDA, gave a key-note address in which she underlined the enormous urgency for African countries to act. She reminded the audience of the still millions of

illiterate children in Africa. According to her, we talk about this problem for 50 years but there is no concrete action to fight against Illiteracy.

Indeed, she underlined that this problem has thwarted the continent's development and has hampered the well-beings of its people, hindering thereby the overall socio economic development of the continent. Despite the large investments in education we are yet to find sustainable solutions to educational problems. States have often concentrated on formal education neglecting Non-formal education. It would appear that states should offer alternative modes of education/training for those that cannot access formal education. She added that it is possible to eradicate illiteracy through government political will and acting in a coordinated manner. Africa must address the challenges of illiteracy in order to achieve sustainable development.

The workshop was officially opened by the Minister of Basic Education, H.E. Ms Marie Odile BONKOUNGOU, who thanked UNESCO for choosing to host such important workshop in Burkina Faso. "This gesture," she said, "demonstrates the good cooperation between Burkina Faso and UNESCO, and the importance the Government of Burkina Faso gives to literacy in particular".

The modalities of the Workshop

The workshop presented an opportunity to alternate plenary presentations and panel discussions. The main presentations were related to *LIFE: Strategic Framework, Trends challenges and opportunities*, the Belem experience and declaration by UIL (Ms Hassana Halidou) and on the findings of the Evaluation of LIFE in Sub-Saharan Africa by BREDIA (Mr. Ydo Yao) who ceased the opportunity to provide the background, context and expected results of the Workshop. The series of seven panel presentations and discussions was facilitated by panellists from different countries and UNESCO Offices. They highlighted the strengths and challenges of literacy programmes, lessons learnt, including recommendations and provided an opportunity to examine some innovative approaches, especially the one on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which demonstrated how ICT can be used to promote literacy.

II. Evaluation of LIFE- a summary of findings

II. 1. Summary of findings

In his presentation, Mr Ydo underlines the following points as main outcomes of the survey:

Advocacy and communication

- The launching of LIFE in many countries enjoyed the support of high level national authorities and personalities, especially by First Ladies;
- Situational analyses were undertaken and validated in workshops and official ceremonies;
- The media were mobilised to publicise LIFE, especially through radio broadcasting;
- LIFE websites were created;
- Actions were taken to advocate the integration of literacy and non-formal education in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP).

Financing and policy

- There has been an increase in national budget for literacy and non-formal education (Niger, Mali, Senegal, Nigeria);

- A special fund for literacy and non-formal education was created (Burkina Faso);
- Effective awareness raising has resulted in an increase of financial support of Development partners (Benin, Burkina, Senegal)
- FTI funding was mobilised for LNFE
- Weak mobilisation of resources from the private sector in all countries, notably due to a lack of effective strategy.

Capacity building

- The capacity gaps were identified especially the insufficient number and inadequately prepared human resources for addressing LNFE;
- Institutional weakness and lack of specialist's training.

II. 2 Analysis of challenges

Advocacy and communication

The major challenge of LIFE so far has been the inadequate understanding of LIFE by its key stakeholders. It is worth recalling that LIFE is neither a project or a programme but a framework for partnership;

There is a lack of strong evidence and arguments in favour of LNFE in the countries. By extension, there is little evidence and few arguments for building a case for LIFE. The issue lies with the insufficient proofs of the impact of LNFE and the lack of capacity to capitalise on the gains made in LNFE. UNESCO is invited to invest in that area.

Enthusiasm and mobilisation aroused by the initial big bang created by the launching of LIFE by dignitaries (including: first ladies, personalities and ambassadors of good will) didn't lead to active partnership. There has been a weakness or an inadequate strategy to maintain the momentum, and get profits for LNFE in terms of greater support.

At policy and institutional level

In many countries, LNFE is under Ministries that do not allow its visibility and do not value it.

The issue "LIFE Focal Points" was discussed; in many countries, the LIFE focal point is still different from the head of LNFE at country level. (Problems of cohesion)

Life should not be considered as an independent entity from the rest with its own activities, this is why it is necessary that the head of the AENF is also the contact of LIFE

The gains of literacy and non-formal education especially its impact on social and economic development still needs to be made more visible in many countries;

The persistent question is how to better integrate literacy and non-formal education in the PRSPs and other national strategic documents;

At national level, there has been weak coordination and try-out of the literacy and non-formal education programme; and LIFE should provide strategies for improvement;

The socio professional status of literacy personnel needs to be improved, namely by ensuring that they are taken into consideration in the overall national policies and strategies on teaching profession.

LNFE is said to be a governmental priority in almost all LIFE countries, but concrete actions are still weak on the ground.

Partnership and financing

- The enduring and recurrent question is how to identify, track and optimise funding for literacy activities already allocated by and in ministries other than education;
- The weak support from private sector and the UN family were also raised as a concern, and UNESCO was urged to continue the advocacy in that area.

III. Panel presentations and discussions

Seven panel discussions were organised following the plenary presentations. This was indeed, a departure of the more conventional presentations where each participant presents his/her experience. Instead, the panel discussions were designed to assist the participants to highlight their major achievements or their strengths, their problems and the challenges facing them. Each panel consisted of 4-5 panelists from a few countries. They were requested to speak on their own experience which could be lessons for others. Rather than speaking on their country situations in general, the panelists were asked to concentrate on a specific experience deemed appropriate for sharing. For example, Burkina Faso, who recently won a UNESCO International Literacy Prize, was asked to speak on the Prize, Cap Verde, who has implemented a radio-based literacy programme spoke on that.

III. 1. Panels

The following panels were presented and discussed:

- Panel 1: Advocacy and communication for literacy and non-formal education
- Panel 2: Strengthening capacity for policy development
- Panel 3: Strengthening capacities to implement programmes
- Panel 4: Knowledge management and sharing
- Panel 5: Mobilization of resources for literacy and non-formal education programmes
- Panel 6: Mechanism for management of LIFE
- Panel 7: Innovations
- Panel 8: LNFE: significant advances, new sites

III. 2. Summary of Panel discussions

The presentations by UNESCO BREDIA and UIL inspired stimulating and frank discussions among participants. Serious concerns were expressed about the way LIFE was operationalised in the various countries, and the need to make clarifications with regards to different aspects of LIFE. It was reported that there has been confusion among the participating LIFE countries leading to false expectations and frustrations. The participants regretted that the enthusiasm that followed the launching of LIFE in the countries was not kept to engender fund mobilisation. Countries were expecting UNESCO to give them support for strategies in that context.

About funding, discussions showed even if the majority of LIFE countries are still far from the 3% of the ED budget to LNFE, several countries made noticeable progress that need to be encouraged.

The support from donors remains very weak and the participants suggested that UNESCO be more active in advocacy. Countries lack efficient strategies to get private sector involvement and financial support.

Participants urged UNESCO to develop research based advocacy tools for the use of countries. Participants were also informed of the possibility to henceforth have access to FTI funds. The example of Burkina who recently benefitted from FTI funds was shared.

The challenge of lack of human resources was raised as major handicap to good planning, monitoring and follow up of LNFE programmes. UNESCO was invited to work with other partners to reinforce the capacity of training institutions for LNFE personnel. On the basis of the recommendations of Bamako +5 workshop on teachers, countries were advised to integrate the concern of LNFE personnel in the national strategies related to teaching profession. UNESCO was also invited to help organising workshops on training for curriculum developers at country level.

The experiences shared in the use of ICT (mobile phones, TV, computer...) were highly appreciated; the issue of cost and equipment that can be the main hindrance. Participants wished to have more details on the experiences for information.

The question of certification was raised and participants called for means to value the acquisitions and competences acquired in AENF programmes. The creation of NQFs was referred to, as one of the solutions. Participants also wished the creation of sub regional qualification frameworks and asked UNESCO to work on that. The harmonisation of the alphabet of cross border languages was identified as requisite for Sub regional qualification frameworks. UNESCO is committed to supporting ACALAN in this area.

In a word, the workshop presented a unique opportunity for collective reflection on the progress made by the LIFE countries in Africa. It also offered an opportunity for stocktaking and realignment of understanding by concerned parties. It became clear that such stock taking was crucial as there was much misconception and many false expectations of LIFE and of UNESCO as partners to LIFE. Substantial progress was discussed and lessons learnt were drawn. Greater efforts are urgently needed to introduce improvement that will bring about real impacts on the lives of illiterate or semi-literate women and men and out-of-school youth. The improvements have to include all areas: advocacy, policy and planning, programme design and implementation, resource mobilisation, monitoring and evaluation. The challenges facing LIFE in Africa is how, collectively as Africans, and individually as countries with specific needs, to renew and sustain commitments in order to achieve literacy for empowerment for all (women, men and youth). Collectively, it is important to capitalize on sharing experiences and even resources to create a synergy that cannot be achieved individually. This requires articulating visions, sharing the conviction that literacy is fundamental to achieve social and economic development and having the capacity to take full responsibility for the destiny of each country, nations and the continent.

IV. Recommendations and future actions to be taken

The participants to the meeting made the following recommendations:

- LIFE should be integrated into national education sectors and development strategies as well as UNDAF, UNESS, One UN sectoral strategies; the approach should be inter-sectoral. UNESCO needs to clarify the role of LIFE.
- The term “coordinator” or “facilitator” could be more appropriate. Ministries should appoint a coordinator who is a specialist in literacy and NFE and is currently working in this area. The coordination of LIFE activities should be under the rubric of national agencies of literacy and NFE to ensure full integration of LIFE into the national system.
- The coordinating role of the “focal point” needs to be redefined. There is also a need to develop effective sub-regional and regional capacity building strategy, strategy for sharing knowledge and building
- UNESO needs to provide the LIFE countries with assistance in developing evidence-based advocacy strategies and in conducting research on the wider implications of literacy for development.

- UNESCO needs to mobilize more international resources, participate actively in the technical and financial partners' coordination meetings and use the Capacity Building for EFA (CapEFA) funds for literacy more efficiently. UNESCO should organize modular capacity building on advocacy and financial resource mobilization and collect and share effective practice on funds mobilization.
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- UNESCO needs to assist the countries in developing a strategy for capacity building including using ICTs to provide literacy/NFE experts with distance learning.
- More cooperation among LIFE coordinators is needed.
- UNESCO is invited to help countries to create NQFs to value LNFE acquisitions and to also work on sub regional qualification frameworks based on cross border languages

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

- Translate the report into French and disseminate it.
- Undertake 2 case studies on experiences showing the socio economic impact of LNFE, publish and disseminate them.
- Document the ICT experiences presented during the workshop and disseminate them.
- Develop strategies for mobilizing private sector resources and disseminate them.
- Support the work with FONDATION KARANTA for the elaboration of referential of qualification and set standard of qualification.
- Work with ACALAN on the harmonisation of the alphabet of cross border languages in view of the creation of sub regional certification frameworks or standards.
- Help countries to create NQF to value LNFE acquisitions

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: List of participants

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ANNEX 2: AGENDA

ANNEX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LIFE EVALUATION

Sample of issues and questions to be addressed in the LIFE evaluation

1. Visibility and profile of LIFE in the country

How was information about LIFE provided/ obtained?

Launching Workshop

information during meetings

Other specify -----

Did this information allow to understand LIFE as a global strategic framework and key operational mechanism for achieving the goals and purposes of the UN Literacy Decade?

Explain briefly how LIFE has been used to underpin and improve the literacy policy in the country?

What are the strategies to develop partnerships or alliances around LIFE at the country level to mobilize political and financial support for literacy?

Does the country provide of a framework or strategy for advocacy and resource mobilization for literacy and NFE.

If yes, how does it work?

If not, which factors impede this and how to create one?

What are the concrete actions to reinforce commitment to literacy by?

- The government (Ministries):

- The partners at the country level (bilateral donors and NGOS)

- The international partners (multilateral agencies and INGOS)?

What is the impact of the actions of the government, the donors and NGOs in the implementation of literacy policy? Could you give some examples of these aspects?

- Political impact

- mobilization of resources

- Promoting gender equality (in policy and programmes)

- Improving the quality of literacy programmes

2. How do you assess the contribution of LIFE as a catalyst for action and partnerships to boost literacy and non-formal education efforts? (At policy and programme levels? at national and local levels?)

What are the achievements?

Which difficulties had to be surmounted during the implementation of LIFE and how where they addressed?

What are the results concerning the literacy situation obtained through LIFE?

3. How do you evaluate the collaboration with and among UNESCO entities (Headquarters, UIL, BRED, cluster / country offices)? What would you propose for its improvement?

4. Is there an experience to be shared as good or innovative practice? If yes, which one? How could it be up-scaled at national level?

5. Which are the major planned activities in the country for the coming months and for which LIFE could be a supportive opportunity

6. Based on the foregoing, how could the LIFE framework best be used in the country, for example as a platform for partnerships and synergic interventions

