

BRAZIL'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LITERACY INITIATIVE FOR EMPOWERMENT (LIFE)

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1. Introduction

Since the launch of LIFE - Literacy Initiative for Empowerment in Brazil¹, UNESCO's Representation in the country, in partnership with the Ministry of Education - MEC, has been promoting the development of a set of actions aimed at generating national processes and capacities to help improve and expand literacy activities, with a view to raising literacy rates in the country. The LIFE initiative is coordinated by UNESCO and is one of the tools for implementing the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD, 2003-2012), conceived as a strategic framework spanning a 10-year period (2005-2015).

In this period of activities in Brazil, the actions have been regularly monitored, which has provided useful information on the status and progress achieved in the field of literacy, covering institutions, partnerships and resources mobilized. Nevertheless, the present moment requires an interim review of actions related to the LIFE initiative in Brazil, in light of the commitment undertaken at the LIFE Regional Meeting in Maputo, Mozambique, in 2008. Thus, the following report presents an in-depth survey of the planned actions, based on a set of documents produced by the agencies and institutions involved and, in a complementary way, on interviews with key players with some sort of impact on the process, mainly in order to clarify issues brought up in the documents surveyed².

Thus, to review the actions of LIFE in Brazil, the following initiatives were focused on:

- ✓ Development of the *Brazil Alfabetizado* (Literate Brazil) Program, with emphasis on vulnerable population groups (farmers, fishermen, women, *quilombola* communities, prison population etc.).
- ✓ The contribution of CONFINTEA VI (International Conference on Adult Education) in strengthening the national youth and adult education policy;
- ✓ The contribution of Brazil and UNESCO in the construction of the South-South Cooperation Network among Portuguese-Speaking Countries in the Field of Youth and Adult Education, founded in 2006, and its impact on youth and adult education policies in countries that comprise the network.

• Contexts, incidences and discussions on Youth and Adult Education in Brazil

Brazil began 2011 with significant advances in the field of youth and adult education (YAE), in particular the expansion of institutions in the last ten years. YAE was included in government agendas, legislation, administrative structures of government and public funding. One can see a significant increase in the supply of education in local teaching networks (municipalities and states)³, bringing municipal, state and federal

¹ The LIFE Initiative was created by UNESCO in 2005, but Brazil joined it officially in 2008, after attending the African Regional Meeting in Maputo.

² The list of documents studied and the list of interviewees are contained in the references.

³ It is worth noting that throughout the first half of the 2000s, expansion of the number of school vacancies was accompanied by a considerable increase in enrollment numbers. However, in

governments closer, as well as non-governmental organizations and social movements, which accumulate significant experience in the area. There was also progress in the quantity and quality of production - preparation of proposals and projects, teaching materials, methods, research, inclusive teacher training in university-level pedagogy courses - and, of course, the consolidation of a critical mass in the area, made up of experts in literacy, reading and writing, youth and adult education, as well as institutions and specialized networks.

Regarding the concept of YAE, its scope has been expanded beyond literacy acquisition strictly speaking, with its incorporation as a form of Basic Education (Law of Directives and Bases of National Education - LDB 9.394/96) from the perspective of *lifelong education*, as a guarantee of everyone's right to education, recognizing and respecting, in particular, the diversity of individuals who undertake it.

However, results regarding the permanence and the learning of learners participating in YAE supply have not matched the potential of the set of actions that have been developed. Thus, many challenges remain, beyond the 13.9 million illiterates over 15 years of age, 9.6% of the population (IBGE, 2010Census)⁴, reaching 26.5% of illiterates in the 60+ age group. Among the Brazilian regions, the Northeast presents the worst results. While in the Southeast illiterates account for 5.5% of the population and in the South, 5.1%, in the Midwest they comprise 7.2%, in the North, 11.2% and in the Northeast, 19.1%. One can say that for every two Northeasterners aged 60 or older, one is illiterate, a key reason for the slow drop in the illiteracy rate. Comparing the 2000 census (13.64%) to 2010 (9.63%), one observes a 4.1% decline of illiteracy in ten years.

Undoubtedly, the regional issue is a strong indicator of the condition of illiterates in the country, as is color/race. While the 2008 National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) identifies 6.2% of the white population as illiterate, 13.6% of blacks over 15 years of age were found to be illiterate. The distribution of educational opportunities among ethnic groups continues to show significant differences. According to the 2006 PNAD, of the total number of illiterate Brazilians at the time, more than 10 million were black and *pardo* (mixed). Illiteracy rates for the population aged 15+ were 6.5% for whites and more than double, 14%, for blacks and *pardos*. The functional illiteracy rate was also much lower for whites (16.4%) than for blacks (27.5%) and *pardos* (28.6%). The average years of schooling of the 15+ population revealed a two-year advantage for whites - 8.1 years of schooling - in relation to blacks and *pardos* - 6.2 years of schooling (UNESCO, 2007). Regarding men and women, 10.1% of women were illiterate, while 9.8% of men were in this condition.

A study conducted by the Laboratory of Economic, Historical, Social and Analyses and Statistics of Race Relations (Laeser), linked to the Institute of Economics, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (IE-UFRJ), shows that 90% of black children attend public schools, while 80% of white children attend the same type of school. The study also shows that over a third of public schools attended by black students have little or no infrastructural conditions. Less than 20% have good or very good security conditions. There is also a huge gap between the conditions of private schools and public schools. The data from this study help explain the reasons for the higher rates of illiteracy among blacks compared to those recorded for the white population of Brazil.

recent years, there has been a decline in enrollments, which can be explained by demand accommodation, i.e., the existence of a better balance between supply and demand.

⁴ The total Brazilian population in 2010, according to the IBGE census, was 190.7 million people, of which 160.9 million (84.4%) were living in urban areas and 29.8 million (15.6%) in rural areas. Among the 16.2 million people (8.5%) in extreme poverty in Brazil, 22% were illiterate in urban areas and 30.3% in rural areas.

With respect to illiteracy among youths (15 to 29 years, in Brazil), the rates have been decreasing steadily, reflecting the process of universal access to primary education observed in the country since the mid-1990s. However, according to the 2007 PNAD, there are still approximately 1.5 million illiterate youths, mostly concentrated in the 25 to 29 age group, especially in rural areas.

It should be noted that the set of positive data reflects, in particular, the investment made in recent decades on universal access to primary school during childhood. Thus, one can infer that post-1990s generations had greater access to public schools than previous generations. An example is the fact that in the 6 to 14 age group, 97.5% were enrolled in primary education (IBGE/PNAD, 2007). The young generation today is undeniably better educated than previous generations. However, one cannot always conclude that access is accompanied by assurance of permanence with quality.

The debate on YAE in Brazil today is focused on the challenge of ensuring completion of primary and secondary education for this population that went through school and, for various reasons (work, family responsibilities, pregnancy, etc.) was forced to abandon it. This process should respond mainly to the basic learning needs of these individuals, seeking to overcome the traditional concept of YAE programs that fit only in the physical structure and symbolic models of school, rather than actually fitting in the lives of the youths and adults that need them.

Another important debate that should be remembered refers to the fact that, besides the strengthening of an YAE agenda focused on schooling, Brazil still has room to discover and explore non-formal or non-school processes of extreme value for the expansion and consolidation of the population's socio-cultural and political horizons. To this end, it is essential to take advantage of the rich tradition that the country has accumulated in the field of popular education, which is best represented by the conceptual and methodological contribution built by Paulo Freire. Popular education, as Freire claimed, is educational action associated with processes to build citizenship, because without education it is difficult to consolidate the latter. He also points out that citizenship is created with an active, critical and decisive presence of all with respect to public affairs (FREIRE, 1995, p. 74).

Finally, in order to analyze the initiatives in question, it is crucial to note that the right to education is always connected to other human and social rights. Education programs for youths and adults *are not attractive or successful in isolation. Their results depend on broader changes in people's living conditions, which requires coordination of literacy programs with other policies of participation, social assistance, health, culture, environment, local development, vocational training, income generation and distribution, which make literacy more relevant, contributing to wider processes of socio-economic and cultural improvement of communities* (UNESCO, 2008, p.168).

2. Brazilian initiatives

2.1 Literate Brazil Program

• Brief Background

In 2003, the Federal Government, with a view to the educational inclusion through literacy of people aged 15 or older unable to read and write, launched a youth and adult literacy policy, the Literate Brazil Program (*Programa Brasil Alfabetizado* - PBA). To manage it, the Special Secretariat for the Eradication of Illiteracy was created in the Ministry of Education - MEC. This initiative took place in the context of goals and commitments undertaken by the country at the World Conference on Education for All

(Jomtien, 1990), at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V, Hamburg, 1997) and the National Plan for Education (approved by Law N. 10,172 of 09/01/2001), in order to invest in the reduction of absolute and functional illiteracy rates. According to Henriques (2006), MEC recognized illiteracy as "a focal problem that needs to be tackled, in order to promote a sustainable cycle of social and economic development for the country" (p. 31).

Even in view of the long history of youth and adult education in Brazil, the recognition by the federal government of the importance of providing literacy courses to the youth and adult population with low schooling levels meant a significant increase in the allocation of financial, organizational and human resources, greater political visibility and intensification of the monitoring and evaluation of results achieved in this field.

Currently coordinated by the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion - SECADI, linked to MEC, the Literate Brazil Program is present throughout the country, and is delivered primarily in the 1,928 municipalities with illiteracy rates equal to or higher than 25%, most of which are located in the Northeast.

Its formal goals, updated by Resolution CD/FNDE N. 32 of 01/07/2011, are: "I - to contribute to the overcoming of illiteracy in Brazil, by providing universal access to literacy to youths, adults and senior citizens, and progressive continuation of education at higher levels, promoting access to education as a universal right, at any time of life, through the joint responsibility of the Federal Government, the states, the Federal District and municipalities; II - to collaborate with the provision of universal access to primary education by supporting literacy actions for youths, adults and senior citizens conducted by the states, Federal District and municipalities, either through direct transfer of additional financial resources to the federate entities that join the program, or through payment of grants to volunteers working in it".

Throughout its eight years of existence, the PBA has experienced adjustments and changes, based on studies and evaluations performed during its implementation and delivery and on the need to monitor the evolution of the country's education as a whole.

• **Three versions of the program**

In its first version (2003 - 2004), the program was carried out through partnerships with states, municipalities and the Federal District and agreements with civil society organizations, with funds transferred directly to the public institutions, upon approval of their literacy projects and registration of learners and literacy teachers, as well as accreditation by the National Education Development Fund - FNDE and agreements, in the case of private entities. The decentralized structure, with direct participation of the states and municipalities, was aimed at using the experience of the various partners and respecting the diversity of local realities, ensuring also the use of various methodologies in the pedagogical work. The financing of activities lasted for a period of six months, covering the training of the literacy teachers (initial and ongoing) as well as their remuneration, which varied according to the number of learners.

The partner institutions used the literacy method they considered most appropriate to the reality of the communities where they operated, and committed to ensuring that the learners would be able to read, write, understand and interpret texts and perform basic mathematical operations by the end of the course. It was pointed out that the teaching-learning process should take place according to the learners' interests and socio-cultural contexts, with a direct link to the local reality. The time allotted for the acquisition of literacy was limited to the six months of funding. It was also recommended that the classes have a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 25 students. The total workload was defined as a minimum of 200 class-hours per course.

As regards the literacy teachers, MEC believed that the Program would provide jobs and income and investment in their training, which are factors that stimulate further education, especially for those who had not completed their schooling. The training of literacy teachers was to take place as part of the entire educational work, and should preferably be in person and contain political aspects related to social inclusion, and techniques related to the acquisition of writing, linking the theory and practice of the literacy teacher's activity.

This first version of the Program had some weaknesses and was questioned by many who identified aspects of models that had already been tried out, with problematic aspects and outcomes. An example is the relation between teachers' remuneration and the number of students, capable of generating distortions, such as the existence of almost fictitious classes, many of which in areas where it is difficult to attract students.

The second version of the PBA (2004 - 2006), developed in dialogue with the National Literacy Commission, began with the creation in 2004, within MEC, of the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD), focused on the coordination of youth and adult literacy and education policies. In this context, the intention was to broaden the focus of literacy acquisition, with a view to the continuation of the learners' education, which led to the political orientation of the funding towards instances that could accommodate newly-literate youths and adults in the public education networks. At the same time, an attempt was made to diversify the provision of alternatives in the program, from an inclusive perspective, expanding the possibilities of targeting specific groups and making room for innovative experiences.

It should be noted that one of the main concerns of the PBA was the issue of quality of students' learning in the literacy process. Thus, MEC considered it crucial that the partners responsible for the Program's implementation should carefully evaluate the results, to ensure that at the end of the literacy process, students would be able to produce, read, understand and interpret texts and perform mathematical operations. For MEC, as pointed out by Henriques (2006), the challenge was to "turn the literacy programs into a doorway to enter or reenter the public school systems, enabling the achievement of increasingly higher levels of schooling" (p.33). To this end, as of 2004, the PBA increased the promotion of mechanisms aimed at ensuring continuation of education, so that the graduates of youth and adult literacy classes would be encouraged to enroll in YAE classes.

Therefore, one of the Program's achievements, pointed out in papers and books published by MEC, is the PBA's Evaluation Plan. The Plan focused both on evaluation of the learners' literacy (cognitive tests) and on the PBA's management and implementation. The cognitive tests, conducted since 2004, were designed by the Centre for Literacy, Reading and Writing (CEALE), linked to the Education Faculty of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (FAE/UFMG). Reading/Writing and Mathematics tests were applied to measure the cognitive performance of youth and adult learners participating in the program (HENRIQUES et al., 2006, p. 09). The tests are applied at the beginning and at the end of the literacy process. The creation of a *Reference Framework* for the evaluation of youths and adults participating in the PBA, the result of a partnership between the Department of Youth and Adult Education of SECAD with CEALE, was a major step forward, in that it enabled the development of benchmarks between PBA students and students in other educational programs and projects. This evaluation model conferred legitimacy to the program and allowed learners to continue their education in the various spaces and opportunities of the Brazilian educational system.

In addition to this innovation, other important changes were introduced in the Program, including: more time for literacy acquisition, with an increase from six to eight months, and corresponding extension of the funding period; expansion of class-hours from 240

to 320 hours; increased amount of resources allocated to states and municipalities, which now account for 68% of the PBA's resources, when previously they accounted for 42%; 50% increase of the funding line for initial and continuing training of literacy teachers; change in the criterion for calculating the grant for remuneration of the literacy teachers, encouraging the setting up of classes in low-population areas and poor communities in urban peripheries; design of an integrated system for monitoring and evaluating the Program.

Between 2006 and 2007, the PBA was again restructured, once again with a view to achievement of its goals. In this third version, some innovations were crucial to its present configuration.

The first concerns the fact that only states and municipalities would be able to join the Program. This change was intended to enable the inclusion of PBA graduates in YAE classes, as they were already participating in the public networks since the literacy process, thus reducing the obstacles to the continuation of their education and increasing the commitment of public authorities with this goal. Municipalities can implement their partnership with MEC directly or indirectly, through the state secretariats for education. They can also join the Program through the two modalities, with part of the demand directly linked to the municipality and part linked to the state level. NGOs, which previously made agreements with MEC to provide literacy classes, began to provide only the training of literacy teachers and class coordinators, through agreements made with states and municipalities.

A second innovation refers to the transfer of funds: the grants for literacy teachers began to be paid directly by MEC. It should be noted that until 2006, the partner institution received the total amount of financial resources, from which it paid the literacy teachers, teaching materials, support materials and training of the literacy teachers⁵.

The third innovation is the introduction of the position of pedagogical coordinator, on a voluntary basis, to support a minimum of four classes, actively participating in the literacy process, observing the actions in the classroom, verifying the difficulties and successes of the literacy teacher and using this information to feed the continuing education process. The coordinator must necessarily be a public servant, appointed by the municipality or the state when they join the Program. A grant is also provided to the pedagogical coordinator, so the volunteer work will not entail costs. In the case of partnerships with a very small number of classes, this role is played by the local manager of the Program.

According to information produced by the YAE technical staff of MEC, the PBA students' entry in the formal education system must be ensured by the quality of the PBA itself, i.e., "this entry must have such a level of quality that it really provides to adults opportunities that exceed the precariousness of late insertion in a school system organized largely for individuals at a different phase of the life cycle". Moreover, insofar as we understand that education is a right, "the individual has the freedom of choice in achieving this, in terms of choosing an educational path that does not occur

⁵ According to Resolution CD/FNDE N. 32 of 07/01/2011, the amount of resources allocated to youth and adult literacy is intended to support the financing of the following actions: (a) initial and ongoing training of literacy teachers, class coordinators and LIBRAS (Brazilian sign language) interpreters, including training for the application of visual acuity tests under the *Olhar Brasil* Program; (b) purchase of school supplies, including the costs of reproduction of the cognitive test to be applied to literacy learners; (c) purchase of foodstuffs for the learners' school meals; (d) transportation of the learners; (e) purchase or reproduction and distribution of educational materials and literature for classroom use; (f) purchase or reproduction and distribution of educational material only for Implementing Entities that are not part of the National Program of Textbooks for Youth and Adult Literacy Acquisition (PNLA).

within the formal education system." Thus, "there was a need to take the provision of literacy acquisition to adults, not only geographically but also in terms of family structure, participation in the labor market, etc., that is, in terms of life stage. Providing different options, including formal and non-formal education, is the fulfillment of the right to adult literacy with equal opportunities".

With respect to the literacy teachers, public school teachers are preferably selected, although it is possible for any citizen that has completed secondary school to become a literacy teacher under the Program. To this end, it is necessary to register with the municipality or the state education secretariat, which will provide appropriate training.

Another important innovation in the current version is the fact that the Program now has a continuous flow. With this, the partner institutions, in addition to being able to open new classes at any time, also have flexibility in the processes of mobilization and registration of students, and may open classes anywhere, anytime, at any stage of the year, and thus cater to the characteristics and possibilities of the learners.

The creation of an online system of information on the Program is another innovation aimed at its improvement, enabling decision making at different levels - reviewing of targets, training strategies, etc., and follow-up actions across the country.

From the standpoint of teaching resources, significant progress has been achieved with the creation of the National Textbook Program for Youth and Adult Literacy (PNLA) in 2007, later incorporated into the National Textbook Program for Youth and Adult Education (PNLD-EJA).

The Literate Brazil Program today

Today, the main goal of the Literate Brazil Program is to target socially disadvantaged groups such as indigenous peoples, fishermen and workers in the fishing industry, small farmers, seasonal workers in rural areas, prison inmates, etc.

The Program's map, which has been recording its numbers since 2007, shows total attendance. In 2010, 1,573,145 youths and adults were taught to read and write. These learners were divided into 134,718 classes (average of 12 per class), with 142,546 grantees/literacy teachers.

As noted above, the Northeast is the region with the highest rate of illiteracy among the population aged 15 years or older: the 2001 Census indicated 26.2%, a figure well above the national average of 13.63%. On the other hand, the 2010 Census shows a significant evolution of these data in the region, with the illiteracy rate dropping to 19.1%. Even considering that this rate is still much higher than the national average, its decline is very significant. Moreover, in 2010 the Northeast concentrated the majority of PBA participants, with 1,271,568 learners (80% of total), 118,777 grantees/literacy teachers and 110,511 literacy classes, distributed across the region's nine states.

The states of the North Region ranked second in demand and number of learners. Next, in descending order, come the Midwest, Southeast and South regions of Brazil. The latter has the lowest illiteracy rates (7.66%) and, consequently, less demand for the Program.

In this scenario, MEC relied on the partnership with the UNESCO Office in Brazil to hire more than 50 consultants specialized in YAE for the design or implementation of public policies in the social area, as well as consultants with experience in education management to work in 1,900 municipalities with illiteracy rates above 25%, according to the 2000 census. The hiring of these consultants was intended to improve the

technical capacity of the municipalities by providing support, without ignoring their experiences and cultural domains⁶.

In 2009, the total number of literacy learners was 1,916,790, of which 1,456,331 were in the states of the Northeast. In all the years recorded on the PBA map, a proportion of approximately 80% of cases were concentrated in the Northeast is maintained. In 2008, the total number of literacy learners was 1,370,111, and in 2007, 1,387,498. Thus, over the past four years, approximately 6,250,000 persons over the age of 15 participated in the Program⁷, therefore potentially generating the same demand for continuing education programs in the YAE's first cycle of basic education.

From a territorial point of view, the Program is present in almost every part of the country, the exceptions being the States of São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul and Espírito Santo. According to its national coordinators, São Paulo develops local actions, which reduces the state's demand for partnership with the federal government. Espírito Santo also has its own literacy program for youths and adults. In turn, Rio Grande do Sul has always had lower targets for PBA delivery because its illiteracy rates are significantly lower than the national average. The low demand in this state might be one of the reasons it has not proposed a partnership with MEC in 2010. Still, it has significant population groups located mainly in rural areas for which youth and adult literacy actions are required.

After nearly 10 years of implementation, the Literate Brazil Program has accumulated many achievements, having redesigned its proposal based on evaluations conducted during that time. It has evaluated itself, listened to partners and experts and sought, as much as possible, to adjust to the demands of the states and municipalities and the needs of the learners.

However, from the point of view of its results, in the opinion of some experts, the current version of the PBA is not much different from previous ones. YAE researchers, activists and managers are clear that it is necessary to defend, very firmly, a much broader right than literacy, which entails promoting society's awareness that education is everyone's right.

FNDE Resolution 32/2011, which regulates the actions of the Program for the year 2011, is an attempt to implement this effort. It clearly shows, for example, concern over learners with special needs. Specific resources are allocated to hiring and training of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) interpreters, as well as the need to integrate the special learners in regular classes, developing extraordinary activities, if necessary. There is also concern over learners with eye problems. Such care is based on the finding that a significant proportion of PBA learners are over 50 years of age and have vision problems.

The guideline on class size also shows concern for regional specificities and for the target audience of literacy actions. Classes in rural areas should have between 7 and 25 students, while classes in urban areas should have a minimum of 14 and a maximum of 25 students. Classes located in prisons or socio-educational facilities should have the size established by the institution where the classes are developed.

⁶ According to MEC, the consultants had the following tasks: diagnose the educational situation of the municipalities, with a focus on youth and adult literacy; build a database with relevant information about YAE education to support public policies in the area; design or review multi-annual literacy plans; support implementation of PBA's actions in the selected municipalities, concentrated in the North and Northeast regions and in specific areas of the state of Minas Gerais.

⁷ It should be noted that a large share of learners in the PBA is not composed of absolute illiterates. MEC recognizes that many have been through literacy experiences. However, the non-continuity of education prevented the consolidation of the process, leading them once again to YAE classes.

The same Resolution 23/2011 provides in its annex cross-sectoral actions of the PBA focused on specific communities and territories that require special programs. This is the case of *quilombola* communities, for which the PBA dedicates the program "*Quilombola, come learn to read and write*", in cooperation with the Special Secretariat for Promotion of Racial Equality - SEPPIR. With the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Ministry of Education developed the program "Fishing Letters", and with the Ministry of Justice and the Special Secretariat for Human Rights, it is coordinating efforts to continue and expand the supply of literacy acquisition in the YAE modality for prison inmates and adolescents undergoing socio-educational measures.

The cross-sectoral actions developed with the different Ministries are intended to support MEC in the educational activity, since they already have other programs for specific populations and are better able to mobilize and provide access to target groups of the PBA.

MEC experts claim the "Fishing Letters" Program has managed to achieve significant results, but that among the actions listed above, the one that requires the most complex strategies is the "*Quilombola, come read and write*" program, because of the difficult access to the remnants of *quilombo* communities, often located in remote rural areas of the country. These experts also emphasize, in targeting specific populations, the importance of the "production of documentary series about people who started the process of literacy acquisition and how this has affected the lives of individuals from different ethnical-racial groups, such as *quilombolas*, rural segments, fishermen, riverside communities, low-income suburban residents, prison inmates, among others. The gender focus was also taken into account in the production of the documentaries, which have been recorded on DVD and distributed to those involved with YAE provision, and also abridged and aired on public television for the whole country".

The previously mentioned *Reference Framework* for evaluation of youth and adult learners is also another important achievement of the PBA, especially for its contribution towards more effective integration of YAE to the network of programs and activities of the educational system.

• **Lessons learned**

The PBA started as a campaign that proposed to *eradicate* illiteracy in Brazil in a short time. Previous experiences with such campaigns in the country had revealed that the model was not effective for this purpose. First, literacy is only guaranteed if the newly-literates continue the learning process, by entering the schooling processes that should follow literacy acquisition. Thus, public provision of YAE in the early grades is essential and has always faced many obstacles, since the beginning of the Program. In addition, other obstacles were encountered in the management and methodology plan, some of which were overcome over the years and through remodeling, while others persist.

The model for mobilizing educators (lay or professional), which implies voluntary participation, with no effective link with the public authorities, in situations of precarious work (from the standpoint of labor guarantees) and with little specific training for the task, weakens the Program significantly.

Some changes in the Program's model sought to address such weakness. One of the initiatives is to focus on teachers of the state and municipal networks, who already have experience in literacy actions, but not all PBA teachers are linked to the networks. The entering of agreements only with states and municipalities sought to ensure this, but there are still educators mobilized only for literacy actions who receive only the short training sponsored by the Program. While the training may be sufficient for experienced teachers, it is precarious for the inexperienced.

The creation of the position of pedagogical coordinator within the PBA, as mentioned above, also seeks to address the weaknesses pointed out above. Coordinators supervise a minimum of four classes, providing didactic and methodological support to the teachers, helping them to solve any problems in everyday classroom work. Thus, inexperienced teachers and those with little initial training are supported by the coordinators, who, according to MEC experts, have been doing important work in supervising the groups, with obvious positive results.

A longstanding demand of education experts and stakeholders from different social movements of this field is the transformation of the initial and continuing training actions into certified activities, with a workload and content consistent with the certification, to ensure that such activities can be used in the career progression of school teachers. This will encourage them to participate, and force the organizers of training courses to develop a truly meaningful course for educators, providing greater assurance of appropriate training to teach youths and adults to read and write.

The recent change of the notices allowing the opening of the classes at any time of the year in which the notice is in force was also identified as a major achievement in the quest to make the Program more suited to its audience. With the constant flow, the aim was to increase opportunities for states and municipalities to address the specific dynamics of each region, especially as regards PBA students limited by seasonal issues (cycles of agriculture, fishing, work in specific industries, etc.). Therefore, classes can be organized and initiated according to the times of the year when learners have more time to study, rather than during more work-intensive times.

According to one of the PBA coordinators at MEC, the agreements are more attractive to municipalities than to states, a fact pointed out as an advantage, since contact and negotiation with municipalities is easier than with states. The information provided directly by the municipalities is more reliable and reaches the central system of the PBA faster than when it goes through the state's "filter".

The Program's latest innovation has been the creation of a national website with an integrated data system that provides information such as number of literacy teachers, literacy learners, YAE schools, among others, broken down by states and municipalities. Thus, any person may request access to MEC, simply by registering a password, which provides free access to all content. The website, among other things, helps PBA-providing schools or places to find schools that offer YAE's first cycle of basic education, in order to refer the newly-literate learners. It also provides registration information on all schools of the municipal and state networks of each municipality of every state of the federation (names, addresses, directors). The Literate Brazil System is a potential instrument of social control, as it publicizes the Program's goals and achievements, in a systematic and user-friendly way for those who wish to keep track of its actions. It allows managers and those interested in exercising social control to have a broad and systematic view of the Program, improving the processes of planning and intervention.

Regarding the key challenges it faces, according to its national coordinators, there is the issue of mobilization of both educators and learners. By maintaining the initial proposal, to be an action performed by volunteers who receive a grant to teach the literacy classes, it is still necessary for the PBA to raise awareness, recruit and train people interested in the task of teaching youths and adults all over Brazil to read and write. However, the demand for mobilization also includes the learners, who must be recruited and organized into groups with a minimum number of students, often in remote areas with little infrastructure to support educational activities. Thus, the Program reaches places with lower rates of illiteracy more easily - urban areas - and still finds it hard to reach populations that have had, throughout their lives, less access to schooling - the residents of rural areas.

The national coordinators of the PBA point out yet another challenge, which is the need for didactic and pedagogical teaching tools to be made available during the process of teacher training, so that the educators can work with their preferred audience, namely, adults between 35 and 49 years of age. It's an older audience, for which illiteracy rates show less variation over the time series. Experts say this small variation indicates that the literacy process has not been appropriate for this population.

Certainly, some changes are still needed, especially in the forms of teacher recruitment and remuneration, with a commitment regarding paid hours of study and systematic learning, and transforming the extension courses that teachers take into initial training courses, in which teachers learn pedagogical practice, at the same time theorizing and studying it, and establishing themselves as YAE educators. Such changes, among others, are essential for there to be significant improvement in any design adopted by the Program.

The problems of permanence and dropout can be understood as characteristic of all YAE programs, given the peculiar conditions of the moment in life that learners targeted by the policy are undergoing, as well as the persistent weaknesses of the policy's educational actions.

It is essential that public authorities provide and ensure appropriate continuity for learners who require YAE, making the process of literacy schooling at the end of primary education a coherent continuum for learners, indispensable to their lives.

Another necessary step is to strengthen the coordination of the PBA with other programs that enable continuity (ProJovem, Proeja, YAE of the education system) and the other sectors of the social area (labor, health, culture).

Therefore, it is by focusing and investing in a role based on integrality, inter-sectorality and coordination that literacy actions should be promoted. The Literate Brazil Program does not stand alone.

2.2 CONFITEA VI

• Background

In December 2009, sixty years after it was created by UNESCO in Elsinore, Denmark, the International Conference on Adult Education - CONFITEA was for the first time held in Latin America, in Belém, Brazil, with the participation of 1,125 people from 144 countries. This was very significant, not only for bringing to the Southern Hemisphere the most important international forum for discussion of adult education, one of the main issues of its social agenda, but because the process of mobilization and organization contributed to strengthen the coordination and democratic and plural participation of the various YAE representations in the country.

CONFITEA V, held in Hamburg, Germany in 1997, was a milestone in the discussion of the importance of adult education and non-formal education for the consolidation of a concept of lifelong education, in tune with global demands and challenges facing society today, translated into crucial issues: democracy, peace and human rights, respect for diversity, conflict resolution, economic and ecological sustainability and development of the workforce. However, its impact on the implementation of public policies intended to address these challenges has been limited, according to the analyses and decisions made at a meeting held in 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand, upon the initiative of UNESCO, with a view to a Midterm Review of CONFITEA V. At the time, it was concluded that efforts to sensitize governments towards the abovementioned themes needed to continue.

Thus, the CONFINTEA VI inherited from the previous one the responsibility to move forward in this perspective of renovation of adult education and non-formal education, strengthening its recognition from the perspective of lifelong education. But its biggest challenge was to seek to coordinate formal and non-formal adult education with other international education and development agendas, among which the Literacy Initiative For Empowerment - LIFE, and with wider national sector strategies. Moreover, it was also aimed at evaluating whether the commitments undertaken in the CONFINTEA V were achieved and at producing benchmarks to ensure that those challenges, together with the current ones, are addressed as priorities and turned into concrete actions.

• Preparation and holding of the Conference

The intense mobilization that occurred in Brazil prior to the completion of CONFINTEA VI began with the organization of the country's participation in the Hamburg Conference, and was critical for the national coordination of different bodies related to YAE, such as the various forums throughout Brazil - which were particularly leveraged and strengthened in the process - civil society organizations/social movements, state and municipal education secretariats, etc. In addition, the enthusiasm generated by the World Social Forum, which, from 2001 to 2009, had five of its meetings held in the country, contributed so that the social agendas - including those referring to YAE - could count on the increasing participation of different sectors of society.

Therefore, the CONFINTEA VI drew on this "warming up" of the national debate on YAE, which had been resumed before the previous Conference and had matured in the following years when gradually the National Meetings on Youth and Adult Education (ENEJA)⁸ gained strength and visibility, as did their preparatory meetings at both state and regional level. Furthermore, Decree N. 4834 of September 8, 2003, of the Presidency of the Republic (replaced later by Decree N. 6093 of April 24, 2007), instituted the National Commission on Youth and Adult Literacy and Education - CNAEJA, chaired by the Minister of Education and composed of "nationally renowned personalities and persons nominated by representative institutions and bodies in the area of education, nationwide, with up to sixteen members and respective substitutes, appointed by the Minister of Education" (BRAZIL, 2007).

It should be noted that, even in view of the fact that there was a considerable mobilization aimed at the Brazilian presence in CONFINTEA V, the representativeness of the participants was less important, since the forums were beginning to take shape at that time and MEC's dialogue with stakeholders was very discreet. Even the document that was produced collectively, within the preparatory meetings, was not forwarded by the official representation of Brazil, which decided to produce unilaterally another document to present in Hamburg⁹.

⁸ The ENEJA, which first occurred in 1999, brings together educators, policy makers, researchers and representatives from universities and non-governmental organizations, in order to evaluate, discuss and draft proposals for YAE policies in Brazil. Its history began during preparations for Brazil's participation in CONFINTEA V (Hamburg, 1997). Throughout 1996, several state meetings, three regional meetings and one national seminar made it possible to recover the history of YAE in the country and seek the participation of different groups in proposing new paths for the area (UNESCO, MEC, 2004).

⁹ It should be noted that the Hamburg Conference occurred at a time when Participatory Democracy was still being consolidated in the country. It was institutionalized in the 1988 Constitution, and materialized in forums for meeting and discussion between representatives of civil society and governments at each level (municipal, state and federal). The Sector Forums (Education, EJA, Health etc.) were instances for coordination of civil society to participate and demand policies in these hybrid participation spaces of government and organized society. For

On the other hand, the preparation for CONFINTEA VI was characterized by the involvement of almost all the people who discuss YAE in Brazil. MEC, through the Directorate of Youth and Adult Education Policies of the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity - SECAD (current Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion - SECADI), determined that the process of preparation for the Conference should rely on the participation of all segments. To this end, the YAE Forums played a crucial role in mobilizing the participants and in the organization of state and regional meetings, along with the education systems and social movements linked to popular education. It should be noted, as pointed out by Machado (2009), that this process, in fact, gained strength in 2007, when governments of all countries were urged to prepare their national reports, with a view to the systematization of representative documents on the discussions planned for the five international regional preparatory meetings for the Conference, which would later be reflected in the Belém Framework for Action

Thus, the Ministry of Education organized 33 preparatory meetings - 27 state, five regional and one national, allowing broad debate with society, with the participation of managers, educators, students, non-governmental organizations and trade unions, universities, groups and collegiate bodies linked to education, among others. This effort led to the development of a detailed study and mapping of YAE in the country, reflected in the "National Preparatory Document to the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education" (BRAZIL, 2009), a rich instrument for guiding educational policy.

To support mobilization actions promoted by CNAEJA and MEC, the Brazilian government created an inter-ministerial group to assist in the organization of CONFINTEA VI. "This group continued working and remained as a group that coordinates with CNAEJA in the pursuit of more integrated policies to meet the training demands of the people involved in YAE. This process resulted in important achievement, in both the visibility of the issue in other ministries, with greater awareness, and the formulation of concrete initiatives of inter-sectoral projects for YAE".

Brazil made a significant contribution of resources to the Conference, with emphasis on the state of Pará - both with regard to resources and local logistics - after its capital was chosen to host it. Belém was chosen after MEC consulted the states of the North and Northeast regions, which then sent their projects. A committee appointed by the Ministry examined the projects to assess actual conditions and contribution of each of these states. Pará, besides presenting a satisfactory project from the point of view of requirements and demands, had features of the Brazilian reality that could leverage the discussions to be held during the Conference, such as environmental issues, land issues, migration flows, etc.

The fact that the period originally envisaged for the holding of CONFINTEA VI was postponed from May to December 2009, due to the incidence of influenza A H1N1 caused some difficulties, especially for MEC, which was in charge of the organization at the national level, and for the state of Para, which had mobilized all the necessary infrastructure, both in terms of human resources and material resources. However, contrary to what one might expect, there was no significant demobilization of those involved in the work or decreased expectations regarding the meeting.

It is worth noting, in this process, that Brazil relied on the partnership of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and the UNESCO Representation in Brazil, which played a critical role, combining the support of an Advisory Group composed of international experts in adult and non-formal education - especially created to offer

support (CONFINTEA VI Advisory Group) - and coordinating the various national bodies and institutions involved in the production of the Conference.

• Results

Several experts estimate that, in terms of achievements, domestically, Brazil moved forward significantly, with the contribution of a large group of people who discussed and formulated the initial proposals of CONFINTEA VI at state, regional, and finally, national levels. Internationally, however, some consider that little progress was made beyond the results of CONFINTEA V, particularly with a view to structural changes and new issues arising in the time that elapsed between the two conferences.

The Belém Framework for Action, although it welcomed the participants' suggestions and additions in its development process, had a more conceptual and referential tone, not reflecting the richness and diversity of the contributions made by the countries represented, which would certainly have made it richer. According to some experts, this is not a document of action, but of principles, more general references, that have to be translated in each context, in the light of its specificities. However, as pointed out by Machado (2009), it would have been crucial for the international conference reporting team to take the process of collective construction that occurred in the regional meetings - in the case of Brazil, the one that took place in Mexico in September 2008 - as its working reference.

Thus, as regards its impact on the education of youth and adults in the country, the most important result of the holding of CONFINTEA VI may have been the consolidation of coordination and representation of the various bodies that constitute the field of YAE, as illustrated by the CNAEJA, which represents a unique experience nationally and internationally, especially considering the difficulties that youth and adult education face in most countries - especially those where the processes of democratic participation are still incipient or non-existent. Certainly, the fact that the Conference was held here was a decisive factor for this achievement.

The document submitted to the Conference by Brazil illustrates the importance of the participatory and coordinated process of its production, for which the workshops that took place in the various units of the federation were essential. As stated by a MEC expert, for the diagnosis of YAE in Brazil to reveal as accurately as possible the diversity, richness and barriers that characterize the country's experience in this field, with a view to proposing concrete recommendations based on reality, organizations and individuals from various segments that work locally in YAE were invited, so that the states could build their own diagnoses from their own perspectives, seeking and discussing data and information on youth and adult education.

Such a strategy, on the one hand, made it possible to reach the proposition of the recommendations contained in the document for the different bodies responsible for thinking, proposing and implementing YAE policies in the country - the Ministry of Education, the Education Councils - state, municipal - the social movements, Forums, universities, among others. On the other hand, it had a very significant underlying effect, contributing to the consolidation of local groups, that, by diving into reality, seeking to build a detailed and relevant diagnosis, were able to learn and take ownership of information and processes that had previously been uncoordinated and to become aware of the existing weaknesses and gaps. As claimed by Machado (2009), "a careful listening and a concrete assessment of what is done and what has been done in the field of YAE" began inside the country.

This process culminated in the launching, by MEC, of the Territorial Agenda of Integrated Development of Youth and Adult Literacy and Education, to establish a social pact aimed at improving and strengthening the area in the country, through the

territorial coordination of YAE actions and, therefore, the rational use of resources and increased efficiency, effectiveness and quality of activities. In other words, the Ministry took over the need to promote joint action between government and civil society to ensure youths' and adults' right to education (BRAZIL, 2011B). According to a MEC expert, in the Literate Brazil Program, for example, the Territorial Agenda is today a key element in the definition and directing of actions, in seeking to meet the demands and needs of groups and sectors often left out by the national coverage programs.

For some experts, the CNAEJA took on an even more significant role after the Conference, becoming more active and influential in the discussion and formulation of policies for youths and adults. In addition, the Commission has also been opening up to the Forums, which are already represented in it. As the CNAEJA become stronger, the Forums increased their participation in discussions on YAE policies, with significant influence in the Territorial Agenda, and with representatives in its state commissions.

It should be noted that several strategies and actions already underway or planned, directly or indirectly associated with the field of YAE, with respect to the official policies, are structured towards enabling the recommendations of the National Document, as is the case, among others, of the possible coordination of programs (Literate Brazil Program, National Program for Integration of Professional Education with Basic Education in the Youth and Adult Education Modality - PROEJA), of the increased funding for YAE, of incentives for a more prevalent role of universities in the training of teachers, of the introduction of the diversity perspective and themes in the YAE curriculum, of investment in the production of quality teaching materials, of the discussion of a reading policy.

In terms of specific actions derived from the recommendations of the Belém Framework for Action, attention should be drawn to the process of development, with MEC's support, a proposal for a system of YAE indicators for the region (Latin America and the Caribbean), in coordination with UNESCO, the Organization of Iberoamerican States for Education, Science and Culture - OEI and the two main Brazilian agencies that produce official statistics on education, the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira - INEP and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE. To this end, the city of Rio de Janeiro has already hosted in December 2010 an International/Regional Technical Meeting on YAE Indicators for Latin America and the Caribbean.

• **Lessons and challenges**

When thinking about the lessons and challenges in the wake of CONFINTEA VI, attention should be drawn to the extent to which Brazil's experience may contribute to the other countries that have similar contexts in the social field and, more specifically, in the area of youth and adult education.

A first reference is the treatment given today to the issue of diversity and inclusion, embodied in the institution, within the Ministry of Education, of the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion, which represents a major contribution to youth and adult education, and is strengthened by the discussion of human rights and the consequent need to value groups traditionally excluded from mass policies, through actions directed to them.

A second reference, associated with the first, is the incentive towards consolidation of a participatory process in policy making, as occurred in the preparation of the Conference, characterized by wide mobilization of various segments related to YAE, mainly educators. Certainly, the achievements that are being incorporated into the youth and adult education policy are being produced by civil society pressure. As a MEC expert claims, YAE currently occupies a different place in the Ministry as a result

of this pressure, which takes place in the plurality of representations - beyond the state secretaries, which are responsible for the implementation of policies, social movements, universities, councils, representations of the field take part in the decisions. The construction of the Territorial Agenda is a consequence of this process¹⁰.

If the Brazilian experience can contribute to other countries in promoting youth and adult education more attuned to human rights and diversity, Brazil also has lessons to learn. For example, a MEC expert points at multilingualism and multiculturalism as some of the fields in which we can draw on the experience developed in countries like Paraguay, where progress greater than ours has been recorded. Another possibility concerns the issue of certification of knowledge, a discussion still underdeveloped here and that can be fed by countries that have already advanced more in this area, such as Cape Verde.

2.3 Network of South-South Cooperation among Portuguese-Speaking Countries in the Field of Youth and Adult Education

• Brief Background

Despite a history heavily influenced by the Portuguese colonial expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and East Timor - countries where Portuguese is the official language - until very recently shared little in the social field, particularly in education. The creation of the Network of South-South Cooperation for Youth and Adult Literacy and Education in 2006 has made it possible to reverse this situation of fragile dialogue among Portuguese-speaking countries in the southern hemisphere, supporting their governments in meeting their demands in this area, in compliance with commitments undertaken in various international forums - the World Declaration on Education for All (World Conference on Education for All - Jomtien, Thailand, 1990), Agenda for the Future (CONFINTEA V - Hamburg, Germany, 1997), the United Nations Literacy Decade - UN, 2001), Belém Framework (CONFINTEA VI - Belém, Brazil, 2009).

Formed by the seven countries mentioned above and also by Portugal, whose integration was consolidated with the holding of the 3rd workshop, the South-South cooperation network seeks to overcome enforced or paternalistic vertical models, typical of earlier cooperation¹¹, through horizontal processes and exchange, support and cooperation instruments that materialize the principles of sovereignty, solidarity and respect for diversity, with the following objectives: (i) reaffirm education as a right for all people at all levels and modalities and at any time of life, thus understanding the youth and adult education as a State public policy, (ii) include YAE among the development priorities of South-South cooperation among Portuguese-speaking countries, (iii) expand and encourage learning communities and cultural expansion in a

¹⁰ However, attention should be paid to the fact that such participation process would have been substantially richer if it had relied on the mobilization and incorporation of learners in all the discussion and development of policies that concern them, including the organization of the Conference itself. Indeed, learners, despite the strong participation of various social actors, were not represented in the organization of CONFINTEA VI nor have they been participating in the regional spaces of educational policy-making in the YAE modality.

¹¹ MEC experts involved in the network report that there is a history of agreements between Brazil and African countries in which our country exported models of youth and adult literacy and education programs without any kind of cooperative work and joint production methodologies and educational strategies adapted to local realities.

group of nations that unites 230 million people who speak Portuguese as their official language.

The network is designed based on the needs, interests, demands and desires of the countries involved, seeking joint solutions to shared problems. Accordingly, in spite of the joint meetings of all the associated countries, cooperation agreements may be concluded separately by certain countries only, to the extent that they meet particular interests and possibilities. That is, the discussion of joint work agendas does not dilute the specificities of each country and their search for specific solutions.

UNESCO's support is crucial for some of the actions developed, particularly with regard to coordination of the network and maintenance of communication among its members. In Brazil, ABC - Brazilian Cooperation Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - is the body responsible for implementing the network and specific partnerships that arise from the actions of the participants.

• How the Network operates

In the pursuit of the Network's objectives, the countries comprising the Network have sought to keep a routine of workshops that are attended by representatives of all the countries, as well as UNESCO representatives and guests that are connected to specific topics addressed in each workshop. Since the creation of the network in 2006 until the end of 2010, four workshops were held, the first two in Brazil and the next two in two different African countries, allowing the representatives of these countries to circulate and learn in person about the reality of their partners.

The 1st Workshop was held in Brasilia in August 2006 and allowed participating countries to identify recurring problems in the field of YAE, and, from there, to develop a strategic cooperation plan, choosing priorities and respective strategies.

The 2nd Workshop took place in February 2008, in Salvador. The aim was to evaluate and review the strategic plan established in August 2006. Participating countries also updated information on current YAE programs and policies in their countries and built a common agenda for participation in CONFINTEA VI. These two workshops were held with the support of MEC's International Advisory Office and ABC.

The 3rd Workshop took place in October 2009, in Cape Verde, in the city of Praia. Again, it was attended by representatives of the participating countries and UNESCO, with the additional participation of members of Radio ECCA, Canary Islands (Spain), which supported the holding of the meeting. At this point, the strategic plan of action had already defined four priorities: collection of statistical data and information on educational in all countries, learning and impact assessment, teacher training and access and use of information and communication technologies. Each axis was treated as a specific session, giving them the importance that should have in the context of demands and cooperation among countries in the network. A new action plan for 2009-2010 was prepared at that workshop.

The 4th Workshop was held in October 2010 in Maputo, Mozambique, with its main reference being the Belém Framework for Action, the final document of CONFINTEA VI. The Belém Framework for Action recognizes that the exercise of the right to YAE is conditioned by aspects related to politics, governance, funding, participation, inclusion, fairness and equality. These should, therefore, be principles to be followed in the activities developed within the network.

The network's collegiate coordination also alternates among participating countries, having been exercised first by Brazil and Cape Verde, with subsequent integration of Mozambique. Today, the collegiate coordination is under the responsibility of Cape Verde and Mozambique.

While the third workshop indicated as one of the priorities for action access to and use of information and communication technologies, the second workshop reported on the communication difficulties among the participating countries, notably the precariousness of some of the national internet networks. The occurrence of serious conflicts and wars in some countries of the network raised the problem of reconstruction of schools and other infrastructure necessary for the schooling process in these countries. It also pointed at the lack of financial resources and qualified staff for the task of building and implementing educational policies aimed at youths and adults.

The cooperation network's action is aimed precisely at minimizing these effects, but official documents, released as a result of the workshops, indicate persistent difficulties in the construction and implementation of concrete and effective actions in the field of YAE in many of these countries.

The summary document of the second workshop reports on the difficulty in forming partnerships in the network. Participants claimed that the discussions and proposals raised in the workshops are interesting, but upon returning to their countries, they are unable to follow up on the proposals. This stems from the fact that the cooperation network has not yet achieved sufficient visibility to become a political force in negotiations with their local governments¹².

The same document, however, also reveals the progress made by countries between the first workshop - when the first strategic plan was developed - and the second. *Cape Verde* was able to train technical staff in the field of YAE and prepare books for educators and practical exercises for students. The country relied on Spain's collaboration in the training of its technical staff. *Mozambique* made technical visits that contributed to the implementation of literacy proposals linked to the technical activities carried out. *Sao Tome and Principe* created a National Department of Education, previously non-existent. *Guinea-Bissau* had a proposal to develop instructional materials for YAE and informed that it had the technical capacity to develop the proposed education project, as well as the layout of the material. *Brazil* developed, along with Mozambique, work in the area of YAE and pointed out the necessary care to be taken in order to safeguard Mozambique's autonomy and avoid the establishment of a relationship of dependency. *East Timor* had been developing projects in the area of professional education, in partnership with SENAI (Brazilian National Service of Industrial Learning). Moreover, had also partnered with Cuba for the development of a literacy methodology. Finally, *Angola* had also managed to conduct training of trainers and training of YAE managers, with funding from its own local government and UNICEF.

It is worth noting the linguistic diversity of countries that comprise the network. Despite Portuguese being the official language, it is not the only language, and there is also considerable variation, especially in the case of East Timor, where it is used by a minority. Mozambique and Angola, for example, have more than 20 local languages and numerous dialects. Thus, the linguistic challenges are also huge in this cooperation network, because the diversity of languages must be dealt with and respected by the youth and adult literacy and education policies. The teaching and literary materials must also respect and correspond to this plurality and the public policies need to consider regional specificities.

In addition to formal meetings, represented by the abovementioned workshops, the network has taken advantage of every opportunity to coordinate, such as preparatory meetings for conferences, academic meetings and the like. One of the preparatory

¹² The final document of the 3rd Workshop, held in Cape Verde, seems to move toward a solution to this problem by establishing the initial formalization of the network, guaranteeing its concrete existence beyond the workshops.

workshops for the CONFINTEA VI served as a meeting place for the South-South cooperation network, which made proposals for joint action and strategy during the course of that Conference. In 2010, during the First International Congress of the UNESCO Chair in Adult Education in João Pessoa, the network also met formally and its representatives attended the Congress officially. In February 2011, the network took advantage of the ECOSS Network¹³ meeting to once again convene and plan joint activities. The use of different spaces and moments to coordinate and plan actions of the South-South cooperation network is intended to make the best of every opportunity to strengthen its activities.

• Ongoing actions

The 3rd Workshop of the Network developed a new plan of action, based on the first plan prepared in 2006, the achievements in this period and the possible demands arisen. In general, the plan established the beginning of the formalization of the cooperation network, the seeking of funding for its activities, management and dissemination of the network's activities, production and dissemination of educational and literary material study of the terminology and concepts used in Portuguese-speaking countries, in relation to YAE and learning certification.

The formalization of the network has not been completed yet, but some actions are taking place in this direction, showing that countries are willing to maintain and strengthen the cooperation initiated in 2006.

Nationally, one of the achievements inspired by the constitution of the network refers to the opening, to writers of the member countries, of the contest "Literature for All" - held by MEC as a strategy aimed at the democratization of access to reading for newly literate youths, adults and senior citizens, through the creation of a specific literary bibliographic collection and a community of readers. Authors of the member countries participate in the contest, competing for a specific prize, as of the second edition. In the third edition, they also joined the board of examiners of the competing works. Thus, participation now occurs in all processes of the contest. Therefore, there are works by authors from other countries in the collection distributed by the National Textbook Program for Youth and Adult Education.

Another achievement, according to MEC experts, refers to the study of terminologies and their standardization, also following a guideline developed at CONFINTEA VI.

Regarding the certification of learning, countries such as Cape Verde, for example, are more advanced in this field than Brazil. Cape Verde, assisted by Portugal, has accumulated knowledge in the area and can help Brazil to move forward on this issue. The 4th Workshop had a discussion panel on the subject, as a follow up on one of the items set out as targets at the end of the 3rd Workshop.

The 4th Workshop also discussed issues related to the network's management and determined that the workshops should be held biennially, from that moment on. Coordination continued to be exercised by Mozambique and Cape Verde, which will gradually pass it on to the next country, probably Angola.

One of the central issues for the operation of the network seems to be the implementation of the proposal to establish a fund to finance its actions, not just the meetings and workshops, but also programs and projects in the participating countries. Attention was also drawn to the need to mobilize a network of providers in each country in order to ensure online publication of annual reports and other documents produced by the countries as a result of the cooperation. The issue of access to the internet is a touchstone for this network. If it can only count on biennial meetings, without

¹³ Below, we describe the objectives and actions of the ECOSS Network.

communication and exchange of information and experiences in-between meetings, the network will find it difficult to coordinate integrated actions and cooperation among the member countries. In this sense, it is worth noting the provision of reading and teaching materials by MEC, in partnership with the UNESCO Representation in Brazil, to the member countries. The textbooks can be accessed on the MEC/SECAD webpage, in a special section on Youth and Adult Education.

During the 4th Workshop, held in Maputo, a proposal was presented by UNILAB (University of International Integration of African-Brazilian Lusophony) to create a Reference Center on Youth and Adult Education, aimed at bringing together the history and current proposals for YAE of all countries of the Network. Regarding this action, it is worth highlighting the performance of UNILAB.

• **UNILAB (University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony)**

Created by a presidential decree in 2010, the University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony - UNILAB was established based on the principles of cooperation with solidarity, seeking, in partnership with other countries, particularly in Africa, to develop strategies for economic, political and social growth among students, with a view to the multiplication of such strategies. However, the implementation began in 2008.

Headquartered in the town of Redenção, in Ceará¹⁴, UNILAB welcomed its first students in early 2011, with 5 university courses¹⁵ offered to students from eight countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe, East Timor and Brazil).

When it created UNILAB, the Brazilian government proposed to widen and deepen the international cooperation with solidarity, share experiences, enhance innovation, particularly in the context of South-South cooperation, especially among member countries of the CPLP (Community of Portuguese Language Countries), in particular the PALOP (African Countries with Portuguese as Official Language). Therefore, the action fits within the principles adopted by the network in the scope of YAE.

Creating a Reference Center on Youth and Adult Education for Portuguese-speaking countries is part of the strategy of MEC/SECAD, which provides for the establishment of reference centers, in coordination with public universities, in order to recover the memory of YAE and survey and organize YAE collections. Based on teaching, research and extension, the proposal is contextualized in the constitution of a network that has a common base, but maintaining the specificities of each region. The centers, according to a criterion of territoriality, will be located in different regions of Brazil. UNILAB, under this proposal, proposes the creation of the "ECOSS: Reference Center on Youth and Adult Education and South-South Cooperation."

To implement this proposal, a technical meeting was held with representatives of all countries that make up the network, UNESCO and researchers from Brazilian public universities. On that occasion, a work proposal was defined for the year 2011. One of the actions in progress refers to the production of a video documentary on Youth and Adult education actions in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau through a Brazilian mission to these countries to work together, with a focus on observing how the theories of Paulo Freire are being put to practice nowadays in these countries.

¹⁴ The town of Redenção, located in the Baturité Massif, pioneered the abolition of slavery in 1883, and this was one of the reasons for it being chosen as headquarter of the new university.

¹⁵ Agronomy, Administration, Nursing, teacher training in the areas of Exact Sciences and Humanities and Renewable and Non-renewable Energies.

Another action proposed by the ECOSS Network refers to the creation of a portal that allows exchange and publicizing of experiences in the online environment, facilitating communication among member countries. The portal would also include the directory of documents related to YAE in the participating countries. This directory would gather documents already compiled by other directories, expanding its collection with new bibliographic searches.

News on the implementation of these actions is still limited, but the proposals are also new and need time to take effect. It is expected that the next workshop of the network - to be held in 2012, according to the biennial schedule - will bring promising news on the implementation of actions proposed by UNILAB.

• **Challenges and opportunities**

The Cooperation Network was formed in 2006 and held four workshops with representatives of member countries in 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2010. The collegiate coordination and itinerant meetings have allowed greater circulation and deeper knowledge of different realities. However, the network has not yet acquired the necessary institutionality and formalization, which would ensure greater political power for working and negotiating with governments for the elaboration and implementation of effective policies in the field of YAE. The network also needs to seek legitimacy to present itself to non-governmental actors in order to seek financial and technical resources to support its actions, as well as technical advice on issues related to YAE.

Overcoming communication barriers, especially those related to the quality of Internet access, is also a major challenge to the network's consolidation. Through the Internet and exchanges through an online portal, communication and exchange of experiences will be greatly enhanced and made deeper and more frequent. The online communication does not lessen the need for physical meetings, but it makes them richer and more productive due to prior exchanges of content, practices, shared agendas and work proposals, and knowledge of actions taking place in each country.

In this context, Brazil has an important role to play due to the experience it has accumulated over the years, especially in the last two decades, when participatory democracy allowed the strengthening of policies aimed at YAE. The sharing of experiences with other countries in the network can be very beneficial, especially as regards issues arising from diversity and inequality, which we face in an open and democratic manner.

2.4 Final Remarks

In the scope of the Literacy Initiative For Empowerment - LIFE, the situation in Brazil is quite promising because, although the country still has a significant illiteracy rate, this is concentrated in older age groups. This shows that, somehow, ongoing educational policies are making course corrections. The greatest challenges lie in the process of post-literacy, consolidation of literacy, and especially the completion of Basic Education.

A key aspect to consider is the fact that the country, in recent decades, has built a tradition of participatory design of public policies and initiatives. The experience of a military dictatorship between 1960 and 1980 produced paradoxical effects in relation to Brazilian civil society. The dictatorship established its bases on repression of the regime's opponents. However, in contrast, an active civil society grew in the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s.

With a stronger and more integrated civil society in the mid-1980s, interaction with the State began to be established as civil society occupied public spaces to claim, protest, argue, present possible solutions. The process of re-democratization of the country required that the relationship between civil society and the State become more cooperative, with the possibility of opening channels of dialogue and conflict resolution. These dialogue channels were created gradually, and the greatest expression of participatory democracy, institutionalized in the 1988 Constitution, are the deliberative sector councils, such as the ones on Education, Health, Children and Adolescents, etc. These councils bring together representatives of the State and civil society to deliberate and develop public sector policies (BRENNER, 2006).

It is this participatory practice, still in the process of consolidation in Brazil, which produces processes such as the CONFINTEA VI mobilization, and that is also apparent in the design or criticism of the Literate Brazil Program. If, on the one hand, the mobilization of various actors and their active participation in these deliberative processes are praised and are visible, on the other hand, there is criticism against the limits to their participation. The presence of learners in the decision-making processes is still incipient. In addition, there are limits to the conversion of the voice of social actors into action by public officials, i.e., the various actors are heard by government officials, but few see their suggestions contemplated in government initiatives. The participation of all, therefore, seems to be more rhetoric than practice.

With regard to the South-South cooperation network, although governmental actors reinforce the idea that Brazil is a partner with the same potentialities as the others, the country, no doubt, may be more prominent in some respects. Although the process of re-democratization is defined as recent, its political stability is consolidated, and its democratic experience with political stability is significantly higher than that of other countries in the network, except for Portugal. This stability helps build more effective policies and inspires other countries that are still taking their first steps in this direction. Educational policies, as well as others, depend on minimal agreement between the different forces involved in a country's political processes. The stability of electoral process, peaceful alternation of power and transitions between governments based on dialogue allow continuity in policies, maintenance of effective actions and redesign of aspects identified as technical weaknesses or poor management of governmental actions. Thus, Brazilian political stability can be inspiring for local political forces, contributing to the processes of stabilization and implementation of effective social policies in other countries in the network.

It should also be noted that financial, economic and monetary stability achieved more recently in Brazil also allows the country to contribute more than other countries in the South-South cooperation network. On the one hand, the country can serve as an example in the management and allocation of public funds to education policies, since it is able to test the impact of higher or lower investment. On the other hand, it can also contribute financially to the cooperation initiative, requiring, however, political will to do so.

It can be argued that at present Brazil is inserted in the list of nations that already have a powerful educational structure, with its own capacity to develop, implement, manage, monitor and evaluate its initiatives in the field of education, including literacy actions. Therefore, LIFE, although relevant in terms of what it can add, is not responsible for the launching of this set of actions. The country's rich and diverse history generated a range of literacy initiatives and actions to promote reading and writing, with significant variations on themes and identities.

For the country today, LIFE comprises a set of potentialities, especially when the Brazilian experience is associated with a wider network, from cooperation perspective. However, according to MEC experts, it would be necessary to design strategies for

broad dissemination of the LIFE project in Brazil, to explain the proposal to implementers of YAE in the country and to mobilize them around it. This would be an important role to be developed by the UNESCO Office, including the mobilization of other national and international actors. It should be noted that the process of transfer of the LIFE initiative's coordination from Paris to the UIL in Hamburg as part of the reform of the Education Sector in 2006 had some impacts on the development of the strategy. The tensions generated between the coordinating unit of the UNLD in Paris and the UIL did not go unnoticed by many countries involved, and raised questions as to who should be responsible for the overall coordination of UNESCO's literacy work. In Brazil, the activities related to the initiative and YAE in general were fully supported by the UIL. Within the South-South cooperation network, the same cannot be said of the support provided by BREDA (Regional Bureau for Education in Africa) to the Portuguese-speaking African countries. It would also be important for the UNESCO country offices in LIFE countries to designate specific funds for the initiative in its budget. Thus, definitions regarding coordination of the initiative and the way in which the Organization commits to their own strategies are elements that require analysis.

Another aspect to be noted is that several government representatives mentioned achievements mostly reached through the mediation of the LIFE Initiative. The process is still continuing and the various gains can already be felt in terms of the new position of YAE in the Federal Government, which can be illustrated by the new location of the area of MEC responsible for YAE in the organization chart, and in budgetary terms. There are other examples - projects started through a partnership between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice and UNESCO to provide education in prisons (such as "Educating for Freedom"), partnerships with the private sector (such as "Weaving Knowledge", with the Roberto Marinho Foundation); a partnership with the Ministry of Culture and civil society networks for projects to promote reading and specific literature for newly-literate readers; a national program of specific educational materials for adults learning to read and write; projects combining digital inclusion with adult literacy, among others.

The YAE initiatives should be evaluated in this context. Even on fertile soil, its development will require a political, cultural and socio-pedagogical arrangement that takes into account the current basic learning needs of individuals, groups and societies.

Another MEC initiative still under construction is the provision of support to the creation of a national network of Reference Centers in YAE in Brazil. With support from the Ministry, each region indicated a set of educational and research institutions that would join the project to establish a reference center for YAE in its territorial space. These centers are connected through a national network, supported by MEC. Resources from MEC's areas of YAE and Professional Education were invested to support costing and capital expenditures. The proposal is that these centers serve as references for YAE training, research and extension, but also act to safeguard the memory of YAE in the country. Each center was responsible for the recovery, documentation, preservation and dissemination of YAE memory in its territorial space. Without doubt, this is an innovative action in Brazil and will contribute significantly to the future of youth and adult education in the country.

With regard to UNESCO initiatives related to the LIFE initiative, a study was commissioned by the Country Office (UBO) to identify good literacy practices in Brazil. The study was aimed at systematizing information and offering practical suggestions for managers in literacy and YAE programs. The book resulting from this study (Youth and adult literacy: lessons from practice. Unesco, 2008) was published in Portuguese and then translated into English and Spanish, and was also posted on UNESCO's website ([http://unesdoc.unesco.org / images/0016/001626/162640por.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001626/162640por.pdf)).

Finally, more than being a platform to strengthen partnerships - in the case of Brazil the partnerships are national - there is a need for technical cooperation and a commitment by the UNESCO country offices to effectively develop the necessary coordination for the implementation of the LIFE Initiative. Such technical cooperation should, according to one of the actors involved with its implementation, be the result of a South-South cooperation or North-South-South cooperation. At the same time, the context in Latin America requires coordination among international agencies (OREALC - Regional Office of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, CREFAL - Regional Cooperation Centre for Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean and OEI - Organization of Iberoamerican States) operating in the continent also in the field of education, in order to leverage efforts and resources, rather than scattering them in isolated initiatives.

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Interviews

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- **Jane Paiva**. Prof. at UERJ and member of YAE Forum in Rio de Janeiro. Interview conducted by e-mail on 20.07.2011.

- **Mauro Silva.** Current Director of DPEJA/SECAD and former coordinator of the Literate Brazil Program (MEC/SECAD). Interview on 06.07.2011.
- **Timothy Ireland.** UNESCO. Entrevista concedida em 01.07.2011.
- **Jorge Telles** – Former Director of the Directorate of Youth and Adult Education Policy (MEC/SECAD). Interview conducted by e-mail.

Acronyms

BREDA - Regional Office for Education in Africa

CEALE - Centro de Alfabetização, Leitura e Escrita (Center for Literacy, Reading and Writing)

CNAEJA - Comissão Nacional de Alfabetização e Educação de Jovens e Adultos (National Committee for Adult and Youth Literacy and Education)

CONFINTEA - International Conference on Adult Education

CPLP - Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (Community of Portuguese Language Countries)

CREFAL - Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe (Regional Cooperation Centre for Adult Education in Latin America and Caribbean)

ECOSS - Reference Center for Youth and Adult Education (YAE) and South-South Cooperation

YAE - Youth and Adult Education (in Portuguese: EJA - Educação de Jovens e Adultos)

FNDE - Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação (National Fund for Development of Education)

IBGE - Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)

LDB - Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (Law of Directives and Bases of National Education)

LIFE - Literacy Initiative for Empowerment

MEC - Ministry of Education

OEI - Organisation of Iberoamerican States for Education, Science and Culture

OREALC - Regional Office of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean

PALOP - Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa (African Countries with Portuguese as Official Language)

PBA - Programa Brasil Alfabetizado (Literate Brazil Program)

PNAD - Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílio (National Household Sample Survey)

PNLA - Programa Nacional do Livro Didático para a Alfabetização de Jovens e Adultos (National Textbook Program for Youth and Adult Literacy)

PNLA-EJA - Programa Nacional do Livro Didático para a Educação de Jovens e Adultos (National Textbook Program for Youth and Adult Education)

SECAD - Secretaria de Educação Continuada, Alfabetização, Diversidade e Inclusão (Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion)

SEPPIR - Secretaria Especial de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (Special Secretariat for Racial Equality)

UBO - UNESCO Brasilia Office

UIL - UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Education

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNILAB - University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophone

UNLD - United Nations Literacy Decade