Regional Expert Meeting for the Follow up of CONFINTEA VI in Africa:
Increasing the participation of youth and adults in learning and education
Cape Verde, 26-29th September 2012
Organized by UNESCO and the Government of Cape Verde,
In cooperation with ADEA

Context and Rationale for the Regional Expert Meeting

Youth and adult education are a human right to be exercised by all. Conceived as an integral part of lifelong learning, youth and adult learning and education are an indispensable foundation for creating and sustaining personal, social and economic well-being. Only with an inclusive, informed, literate and active citizenry, the challenges of the 21st century can be met effectively. By bringing youth and adult learning and education into the centre of policy and action, a transversal agenda will be created that cross-cuts policy domains and resource allocations.

Since 1949, UNESCO and its partners have organized six International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA). The latest, CONFINTEA VI, was held in Belém, Brazil from 1 to 4 December 2009, hosted by the Government of Brazil. Prior to this international meeting, five preparatory regional meetings had been organized, hosted by the Governments of Hungary, Kenya, Mexico, the Republic of Korea and Tunisia. For the African region, the preparatory meeting focusing on “The Power of Youth and Adult Learning for Africa’s Development” was held in Nairobi from 5 to 7 November 2008. UNESCO Member States along with the regional civil society organizations working on literacy and adult education attended this meeting. The main outcomes of this meeting included the African Statement on the Power of Youth and Adult Learning and Education for Africa’s Development. This statement comprises the main recommendations made by the Ministers of Education and the civil society organizations for the promotion and revitalization of youth and adult education within the perspective of lifelong learning in Africa.

The African Statement along with the other four regional outcome documents served as the basis for the elaboration of the Belém Framework for Action, adopted by UNESCO Member States at CONFINTEA VI in Belém. African countries comprised forty of the 144 UNESCO member states represented. The Belém Framework for Action serves as the main policy document designed to guide decisions at national, regional and international levels as we attempt to move from “rhetoric to action” in achieving the goals of CONFINTEA.
In the two years since CONFINTEA VI, a number of regional and sub-regional initiatives have been undertaken which support the implementation of the Belém Framework for Action in Africa. The most important ones are the ADEA Triennale 2012 which called for the right of access for young people and adults to common core skills, and the Africa Policy Forum on Literacy and Basic Life Skills for Vulnerable Youth, which forged partnerships among seven West-African countries to gain more knowledge and experience in addressing the specific challenges of vulnerable youth. Against this background, it is imperative to assess how countries are implementing the Belém Framework for Action and are pursuing the agendas of the Triennale and Policy Forum. Concretely this means to identify, share and learn from achievements and successful examples of policy and practice, and to develop an effective regional strategy to address the challenges that remain before us.

Low literacy rates and educational attainments, coupled with low participation in youth and adult education, remain one of the major challenges, in particular with regard to marginalized populations, which are also the most vulnerable parts of society. They need to be specifically targeted in order to effectively increase participation and redress inequity. Identifying the different marginalized groups, determining their learning needs, developing appropriate programmes and sustaining their participation are interrelated approaches that need to be further discussed and developed with the active participation of the learners themselves.

To that end, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and the UNESCO Regional Offices in Africa, notably the UNESCO Office in Dakar, in cooperation with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), are mobilizing youth and adult education specialists from national governments, international and regional development organizations and civil society organizations to get together in an African Regional Expert Meeting for the Follow-up of CONFINTEA VI.

Focus and Objectives of the Regional Expert Meeting

The African Regional Expert Meeting for the Follow-up of CONFINTEA VI will aim at increasing the participation of youth and adults in learning and education.

Concretely, the meeting will be essentially devoted to:

1. Assessment of progress in implementing the Belém Framework for Action in countries and at regional level, mainly on the basis of data and knowledge collected through the national CONFINTEA progress reports;

The key background documents for the Expert Meeting are:

- African Statement on the Power of Youth and Adult Learning and Education for Africa’s Development, Nairobi 2008;
- Belém Framework for Action, Belém 2009;
- CONFINTEA VI Global Monitoring Matrix, UIL 2010;
- ADEA Triennale Synthesis Report “Critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for accelerated and sustainable development in Africa”, Ouagadougou 2012; and
(2) Presentation, review and analysis of successful examples of youth and adult learning policy and practice;

(3) Identification of factors that are conducive to successful youth and adult learning policy and practice, with a particular view towards increasing participation and equity, and including a special focus on marginalized and vulnerable youth; and

(4) Identification of priorities for reinforced attention in Africa, with a particular focus on developing youth and adult literacy and education in a lifelong learning perspective, widening participation in youth and adult learning, and improving the quality of adult learning; and the

(5) Development of regional collaborative forward-looking strategies and action points for all stakeholders to strengthen the follow up of CONFINTEA VI at the regional level. Possible action points might include the development of indicators for a region-specific monitoring and implementation matrix; the creation of an observatory on the development of adult education in the region; the promotion of skills development; and peer-learning activities on specific topics among smaller groups of countries.

**Expected Outcomes of the Regional Expert Meeting**

By the end of the **African Regional Expert Meeting for the Follow-up of CONFINTEA VI**, the following results will have been achieved:

(1) Progress and gaps in youth and adult literacy and youth and adult education in the African Region assessed and the challenges to design comprehensive, inclusive and strategic lifelong learning policy approaches identified;

(2) Factors identified that are conducive to successful youth and adult learning policy and practice, with particular view towards increasing participation and equity, and including a special focus on marginalized and vulnerable youth;

(3) Action-points and strategies crystallized which will help develop youth and adult literacy and youth and adult education in a lifelong learning perspective, widen participation in youth and adult learning, and improve the quality;

(4) Advocacy and momentum for youth and adult literacy and education in a lifelong learning perspective created; and

(5) Cooperation and new partnerships in the African Region reinforced.

To follow up on the forward-looking strategies and action points resulting from the Meeting and to provide guidance and technical advice to countries and stakeholders, a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) will be set up, consisting of the main partners of the Regional Expert Meeting, namely: the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), the UNESCO Regional Offices Africa, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), as well as one representative of a Member State and one from the civil society network.
Date and venue

26 to 29 September 2012 (4 days)

One day of the meeting will be allotted to the special focus on marginalized and vulnerable youth. To contribute to insights into successful adult learning practice, half a day will be reserved to field visits, which will be organized by the host country.

Venue: to be decided by the host country

Participants

About 35-45 experts will be selected according to an assessment of what works in developing youth and adult education in Africa. They will include:

(1) National government directors responsible for youth and adult education representing African countries in the four sub-regions of the continent;

(2) National government directors of other sectors; e.g. labour, health, development, youth;

(3) Representatives of regional and international civil society organizations working in literacy, non-formal education, youth and adult education in the region (African Platform for Adult Education, German Adult Education Association (DVV), Forum for African Women in Education (FAWE), International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), Pan-African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (PAALAE), and SIL International, etc.);

(4) Representatives of UN Agencies in the Region, in particular WHO, ILO and UNICEF;

(5) Programme officers of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); and

(6) Programme specialists from UNESCO Regional Offices.