GLOBAL REPORT ON
ADULT LEARNING
AND EDUCATION
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Lifelong learning is at the core of UNESCO’s mandate. Since its founding, the Organization has played a pioneering role in affirming the critical role of adult education in the development of society and promoting a comprehensive approach to learning throughout life.

The universal right to education for every child, youth and adult is the fundamental principle that underpins all our initiatives. Adult learning counts more than ever in the era of globalisation characterised by rapid change, integration and technological advances. Learning empowers adults by giving them the knowledge and skills to better their lives. But it also benefits their families, communities and societies. Adult education plays an influential role in poverty reduction, improving health and nutrition, and promoting sustainable environmental practices. As such, achieving all the Millennium Development Goals calls for good quality and relevant adult education programmes.

Since the First International Conference on Adult Education in 1949, UNESCO has worked with Member States to ensure that adults have the basic right to education. In 1976, the UNESCO General Conference approved the Nairobi Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education which enshrined governments’ commitment to promote adult education as an integral part of the educational system within a lifelong learning perspective.

Two landmark documents – the Faure Report (1972) Learning to Be and the Delors Report (1996) The Treasure Within – were instrumental in promoting a framework for lifelong learning. The publication of this Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) marks a timely contribution as the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education meets for the first time in the Southern Hemisphere, in the Brazilian city of Belém. Based on national reports from 154 Member States, GRALE analyses trends, identifies key challenges and best practices, and recommends a course of action to improve vastly the scope of adult education and learning.

As this Report shows, the field of adult education is highly diverse. Literacy classes provide women and men with foundational skills which empower them, increase their self-esteem and enable them to continue learning. Vocational training courses improve the employment prospects of youth and adults, enabling them to acquire or upgrade their competences. Life-skills programmes equip learners with knowledge and values on how to deal with issues like HIV prevention. Learning to use new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) effectively is now a must for many, if not all.
While this Report demonstrates the value of adult education in helping women and men to lead better lives, it also underlines that large numbers of adults are still excluded from learning opportunities. Low participation among groups who stand to benefit most from learning programmes maintains a cycle of poverty and inequity. Addressing this is the key challenge facing policy-makers and the international community at CONFINTÉA VI. Governments, the private sector and civil society need to work around well-articulated policies with clearly defined targets and governance arrangements. Such synergies, together with adequate funding, are central elements of a strategy to make lifelong learning a guiding principle of educational policy.

The Report finds that in industrialised countries, adult education policies are informed by a lifelong learning perspective and integrated into other policy portfolios. But globally, successful coordination of a wide range of stakeholders is rare. Adult educators all too often suffer from low status and remuneration, affecting the quality and sustainability of programmes. Sufficient, predictable and well-targeted funding is more the exception than the rule.

We are not short of answers. Good practice exists on how to develop policies that integrate adult education with poverty reduction strategies. Governance frameworks that promote genuine participation of all stakeholders are found in some countries. A few governments have measures in place to increase funding in this chronically-under-funded sector of education. Accounts of how governments, civil society and the private sector assure quality in adult education programmes warrant broader analysis and dissemination.

Five CONFINTÉAs have provided us with many recommendations on how to improve the situation of adult education and, by doing so, to reach out to the marginalised and disadvantaged who stand to benefit most from learning opportunities. We need to translate these into policies and programmes now. Two UN Decades – the United Nations Literacy Decade and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development – are occasions for advocating adult education and promoting equitable and inclusive policies. The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), which I launched as a flagship programme, is proving that the concerted and coordinated efforts of all stakeholders towards a common vision make a real difference.

I hope that this Report will contribute to clarifying the main challenges and to providing some pointers on how we can make sure that adult education truly counts.

Koichiro Matsuura
Director-General of UNESCO (1999-November 2009)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This first-ever *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* is the result of a 20-month collaborative effort, involving many individuals and organisations around the world.

One hundred and fifty-four UNESCO Member States submitted reports on the state of adult learning and education in their countries. We are grateful to the governments of these countries, who provided us with a valuable source of raw material. The support of the staff in UNESCO Field Offices and UNESCO National Commissions in facilitating these National Reports is greatly appreciated.

On the basis of these National Reports, five Regional Synthesis Reports were drafted, and we owe an enormous debt to the authors for piecing these together from such a mass of information: Manzoor Ahmed, John Aitchison, Hassana Alidou, Helen Keogh, Rosa Maria Torres and Abdelwahid Abdalla Yousif. We specially would like to acknowledge CREFAL for supporting the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Synthesis Report.

We wish to express our gratitude to the host countries of and participants in five Regional Preparatory Conferences (Mexico City, September 2008; Seoul, October 2008; Nairobi, November 2008; Budapest, December 2008; and Tunis, January 2009), during which the draft Regional Synthesis Reports were presented. These events provided some initial feedback which was used to give pointers to the further development of the eventual *Global Report*.

Producing the *Global Report* was nothing if not an iterative process. The very first incarnation was in the form of chapters written by Richard Desjardins, Soonghee Han, Sylvia Schmelkes and Carlos Alberto Torres. We are very grateful to them for their important contributions, in putting together vital information from the National and Regional Synthesis Reports, but also from their own wide and deep experience.

Lynne Chisholm and Abrar Hasan as lead editors had the task of ensuring editorial coherence and reconstruction of the text following various rounds of extensive feedback. This they undertook in excellent spirit, and we are extremely grateful to them for their efforts which produced the first draft of the *Report*.

The CONFINTEA VI Consultative Group, which convened on several occasions to prepare the Conference, provided valuable editorial guidance and comments. We would like to thank Paul Bélanger, Jean-Marie Ahlín Byll-Cataria, Arne Carlsen, Marta Maria Ferreira, Lavinia Gasperini, Heribert Hinzen, Timothy Ireland, Joyce Njeri Kebathi, Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan, Ki-Seok Kim, Ana Luíza Machado, Ann-Thérèse Ndong Jatta, Abdel Moneim Osman, Clinton Robinson and Einar Steensnaes for their contribution to this process.

The following colleagues at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning gave precious feedback as well as additional information: Bettina Bochynek, Christine Glanz, Ulrike Hanemann, Lisa Krolak, Werner Mauch, Madhu Singh, Raúl Valdés-Cotera, Christiana Winter and Rika Yoruzu. At different stages of the *Report*, we also received feedback from Massimo Amadio, Sergio Haddad, Christopher McIntosh and Ekkehard Nuissl von Rein.
As the drafting and redrafting of the text neared its final phases, a helpful meeting took place in Belém, Brazil, to discuss the latest version. We are grateful to Ana Agostino, Michelle Berthelot, Vincent Defourny, Cheik Mahamadou Diarra, Celita Eccher, Jorge Bernardo Camors, Abrar Hasan, Timothy Ireland, Gwang-Jo Kim, Ki-Seok Kim, André Luiz de Figueiredo Lázaro, Giovanna Modé, Albert Motivans, Mohammad Tanvir Muntasim, El Habib Nadir, Abdel Moneim Osman, Pedro Pontual, Jorge Teles and Yao Ydo.

The macro statistics referred to in this Report have been reviewed by colleagues at the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. We are thankful to Said Belkachla, César Guadalupe, Olivier Labe, Albert Motivans and João Pessao for their contribution as well for additional information they have provided. Soo-yong Byun likewise provided technical support for the statistical analysis. Complementary information was also supplied by William Thorn of OECD.

This Report was produced under the guidance and supervision of the Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Adama Ouane. The Coordinator of GRALE, Carolyn Medel-Añonuevo, shouldered the final editorial work of the Report, with the invaluable editing advice and support from Aaron Benavot, Chris Duke and Sue Meyer. Copy-editing was undertaken by Virman Man. Without the invaluable research assistance of Anna Bernhardt and Jung Eun Lee, the writers and editors would not have had access to the data from National Reports and other secondary literature.

They were supported by Markus Ginter, Marianne Kraußlach, Tanveer Maken, Daniel Marwecki, Tebeje Molla, Sonja Richter and Nasu Yamaguchi. Cendrine Sebastiani has been most helpful in coordinating the translations as well as providing support in translating French references.

We are thankful to Philippe Boucry, Aurélie Daniel, Jean-Luc Dumont, Sara Martinez, Nathalie Reis, Ann-Sophie Rousse and Véronique Théron for French translation, under the auspices of Network Translators, and to Alfonso Lizarzaburu for Spanish translation. Thanks also to Christiane Marwecki of cmgrafix, who speedily designed and produced the layouts.

Finally this Global Report would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the governments of Denmark, Germany, Nigeria, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

Adama Ouane
Director
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the rapid pace and complexity of economic, technological and cultural changes require women and men to adapt and re-adapt throughout their lives – all the more so in the context of globalisation. In this era of the knowledge society – where production structure is shifting towards greater knowledge use and away from reliance on physical capital, manufacturing and agricultural production – growth in personal, national and regional incomes is increasingly defined by the ability to create, manage, disseminate and innovate in knowledge production.

The new information and communication technologies (ICTs) intensify the rate of exchange of information. They also allow users to participate actively in virtual networks that can easily be mobilised to shape public opinion. Globalisation means that individuals and families are crossing national borders in large numbers. They, as well as the receiving communities, need to learn new ways of living together amidst cultural differences. These developments not only highlight the importance of continuous learning in general; they also demand that adults keep on acquiring more information, upgrading their skills and re-examining their values.

The critical role of adult education in the development of society has long been recognised. Since the First International Conference on Adult Education in 1949, UNESCO member states have dedicated themselves to ensuring that adults are able to exercise the basic right to education. Later Conferences in Montreal (1960), Tokyo (1972), Paris (1985) and Hamburg (1997) reaffirmed this right, and proposed ways of making it a reality. In 1976, the UNESCO General Conference approved the Nairobi Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education (UNESCO, 1976) which enshrined governments’ commitment to promote adult education as an integral part of the educational system within a lifelong learning perspective.

Over the course of these 60 years the landscape of adult education has evolved. This Global Report aims to describe the current position. First it sets out to document trends in key areas of adult education at the global level, intended to serve as a reference document for policymakers, practitioners and researchers. Second, it provides an advocacy tool to promote the importance of adult education as well as to share effective practice. Finally, as one of the key inputs to CONFINTEA VI, it will provide evidence to support the outcome document of the meeting.

The understanding of the role of adult education has changed and developed through time. From being seen as promoting international understanding in 1949, adult education is now seen as a key in the economic, political and cultural transformation of individuals, communities and societies in the 21st century. While UNESCO has spelled out a definition of adult education in the Nairobi Recommendation, what is considered as adult education is still subject to a wide range of interpretations. The shift from education to learning also constitutes an important change in conceptualising the field (see Definitions box, p. 13).

But what, exactly is an “adult”? Cultural and social factors have significant impact on the division of the human life-course into age-linked stages and phases. These phases vary widely across time and space. Furthermore, there is no inevitable or automatic correlation between age and learning needs or preferences beyond
**Definitions of adult education and related concepts**

**Adult education** "denotes the entire body of organised educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development, adult education, however, must not be considered as an entity in itself, it is a sub-division, and an integral part of, a global scheme for life-long education and learning."

(From the Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education, UNESCO, 1976: 2)

**Lifelong education** and learning "denotes an overall scheme aimed both at restructuring the existing education system and at developing the entire educational potential outside the education system in such a scheme men and women are the agents of their own education, through continual interaction between their thoughts and actions; education and learning, far from being limited to a period of attendance at school, should extend throughout life, include all skills and branches of knowledge, use all possible means, and give opportunity to all people for full development of the personality; the educational and learning processes in which children, young people and adults of all ages are involved in the course of their lives, in whatever form, should be considered as a whole."

(From the Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education, UNESCO, 1976: 2)

**Adult learning** encompasses both formal and continuing education, non-formal learning and the spectrum of informal and incidental learning available in a multicultural learning society, where theory- and practice-based approaches are recognised.

(From the Hamburg Declaration, UIE, 1997: 1)

**Non-formal education**, contrary impressions notwithstanding, does not constitute a distinct and separate educational system, parallel to the formal education system. It is any organized, systematic, educational activity, carried on outside the framework of the formal system, to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children. Thus defined, non-formal education includes, for example, agricultural extension and farmer training programmes, adult literacy programmes, occupational skill training given outside the formal system, youth clubs with substantial educational purposes, and various community programs of instruction in health, nutrition, family planning, cooperatives, and the like.

(Coombs and Ahmed, 1974: 8)
the boundaries of childhood and early adolescent development. The parameters vary with personal and social circumstance, as has always been the case. The boundaries between youth and adulthood, and between adulthood and old age, are much more fluid than cultural and social conventions imply. Especially within a lifelong learning paradigm, it is increasingly unhelpful to make sharp distinctions between ‘youth education’ and ‘adult education’.

Adult learning and education are located at the heart of a necessary paradigm shift towards lifelong learning for all as a coherent and meaningful framework for education and training provision and practice. The framework given by the concept of lifelong learning should engender borderless education. This means open, flexible and personally-relevant opportunities to develop the knowledge, competences and dispositions that adults at all stages of their lives need and want. It means providing learning contexts and processes that are attractive and responsive for adults as active citizens – at work, in the family, in community life and, not least, as self-directed individuals building and rebuilding their lives in complex and rapidly-changing cultures, societies and economies.

Lifelong learning as an integrating framework for all forms of education and training is not new. However, its recent rise as a feature of policy discourse derives from linked changes of global relevance: economic and cultural globalisation; simultaneous dominance of and crisis in market economies; social modernisation processes and the transition to knowledge societies (Torres, 2009; UNESCO, 2005a). In this complex change scenario, Held and McGrew (2007: 243) identify a number of global “deep drivers” as follows:

- changing global communications infrastructures prompted by the IT revolution;
- developing global markets for goods and services, consequent on global information distribution patterns;
- rising rates of migration and mobility, driven by shifting patterns of economic demand, demographic changes and environmental problems;
- transformation of state socialist systems into more open societies based on democratic principles and market relations, with accompanying spread of consumerist and anti-globalisation values;
- emerging global civil society formations and associated incipient global public opinion.

Within the rich overall concept of lifelong learning, adult learning and education must be anchored in respect for the integrity and dignity of adults’ lives in their social diversity. It is in this spirit that this Global Report approaches the available information and data on the sector.

Lifelong learning remains more a vision than a reality. However, the concerted modernisation of education and training systems to meet the challenges posed by contemporary social and economic macro-change – affecting the whole world – is now high on policy agendas. This has brought adult learning into higher profile. However, policy attention thus far typically focuses on vocational education and training of all kinds – public and private, inside and outside workplaces, formal and informal – rather than on general adult education.

Adult literacy rightly continues to occupy centre-stage with respect to international policy initiatives and programmes. It has also re-surfaced as an important issue for the high-income countries, as low levels of functional literacy for living and working in these kinds of countries turn out to be more widespread than had been assumed in recent decades. The Global Report argues that both of these areas are important; but that they are just part of the potential that is offered by real integration of adult learning into the policy goals of governments.

Most importantly, it is clear that those who need it most are the ones who are systematically marginalised from enjoying the benefits of adult education. Low rates of participation and inequitable access therefore remain the key challenges for adult education today.
This Global Report is the outcome of many people working together through several phases. In late 2007, UNESCO member states were requested, on the basis of a structured set of questions and topics, to provide a National Report on progress in adult learning and education policy and practice since CONFINTÉA V in 1997. These guidelines covered the key areas of policy, governance, participation, provision, quality and resources. A total of 154 National Reports were submitted. Most were delivered in time and in formats that could be used for the preparation of Regional Synthesis Reports for sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab states, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Global Report uses the information and analyses in the five Regional Synthesis Reports, together with comparative statistical and survey data (where available) and contextualising research-based material, to provide an overall view of the issues and challenges facing adult learning and education today, and a set of thematic discussions around key dimensions for action.

While the National Reports constitute a wealth of information, there are some limitations in their use as primary data. As a mechanism for accounting for what the countries have accomplished, the data are based on self-reporting, written by either an individual or a team of authors. Except for some countries who validated their National Reports through stakeholder consultations, it has not been possible to verify the data that has been presented. Due mainly to lack of regular and systematic collection of data on agreed areas, most of the information from the National Reports is not comparable. Finally, most of the National Reports covered only the education sector, although the Report Guidelines had specifically advised that governments should incorporate information from other sectors.

The Global Report is divided into six chapters. The first, The case for adult learning and education, examines the international educational and development policy agenda and the place within it of adult education. It reflects on the importance of situating adult education within a lifelong learning perspective. Finally it draws attention to the opportunities offered by CONFINTÉA VI to strengthen and gain recognition for adult learning as a central tool in resisting marginalisation across the world. Chapter 2 presents developments in the areas of policy and governance. It looks at how far appropriate policies have been adopted and then examines governance issues in adult education. Chapter 3 describes the range and distribution of provision of adult education, as reflected in the National Reports, and offers a typology for understanding the variety of provision in the sector. Chapter 4 reviews patterns of participation and access to adult education. It specifies the obstacles to raising participation levels and proposes the directions in which adult education policy must move if these are to be overcome. Chapter 5 deals with quality in adult education, with a particular focus on relevance and effectiveness. It also reviews the status of adult education personnel, given their critical role in ensuring quality. Chapter 6 appraises the current state of the financing of adult education. In particular, it assesses the extent to which the commitment to improve this, made at CONFINTÉA V in the Hamburg Agenda for the Future (UIE, 1997), has been met. A concluding section synthesises the main points of all six chapters to provide an overview of trends in adult education. Finally there are some reflections on building the data and knowledge base in adult education.
The world’s leading economies are slowly recovering from deep recession following the collapse of overblown financial markets in late 2008. Many fragile and weak economies will share the resulting unpleasant consequences, the ultimate depth of which is currently unknown. For public services, including education, the outlook for the coming years is not promising. Progress to achieve the Education for All (EFA) Goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 is mixed and patchy. There continue to be enormous challenges in eradicating poverty, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, promoting gender equality and ensuring environmental sustainability. At the core of meeting these broad development challenges is the importance of respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right of all to quality basic education.

The current situation both exacerbates the problems facing the most marginalised and threatens the funding necessary for education to combat disadvantage. The reality is that side by side with the precarious economic environment, a host of other challenges impinge on adult learning and education. Disease, hunger, war, environmental degradation, unemployment and political instability continue to dominate the lives of millions. These inter-related problems destroy the social fabric of communities and families. Citizens in many countries experience the effects of an erosion of social cohesion. And for many, the cycles of exclusion and marginalisation persist and are passed on from one generation to the next.

Education alone cannot resolve these problems but it is certainly part of the solution. Laying a strong foundation for continuous learning and capacity development are critical measures for all societies. Adult education plays an important role by providing space, time and settings in which adults can – using the terms of the Delors Report (Delors et al, 1996) – learn to know, learn to do, learn to live together and learn to be.

An active and productive citizenry is a fundamental societal asset. Mobility within and across national borders provides possibilities for individuals and communities to experience and learn about other peoples, cultures and languages; and all kinds of knowledge are available through new information and communications technologies to those who have internet access. Indeed, in a connected world, the opportunities for learning are vast and diverse. Adult education – provided in formal, non-formal and informal settings – supports these opportunities as it facilitates learning for all, wherever their location and whatever their particular needs and motivations.

Yet all those working in education know only too well that inadequate resources limit such opportunities, erode the quality of education and reduce learning outcomes. These issues are accentuated in the adult education sector, which is seldom a policy priority and suffers from chronic under-funding.

This chapter examines the global educational and development policy agenda, the significance of adult education as a means to meet the goals of such policy and the evidence that adult learning is key to the achievement of world targets for greater equality. It explores the development of the concept of lifelong learning and the rationales it has been associated with, from the economic goals of education to the wider societal and
personal benefits that learning brings. Finally it evaluates the issues that have arisen since CONFINTÉA V and draws attention to the opportunities offered by CONFINTÉA VI to strengthen and gain recognition for adult learning as a central tool in combating oppression and marginalisation across the world.

1.1 Adult education in the global education and development policy agenda

Equalising opportunities in education is "one of the most important conditions for overcoming social injustice and reducing social disparities in any country […] and is also a condition for strengthening economic growth" (UNESCO, 2008a: 24).

Since the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000, there has been uneven progress towards achieving the EFA Goals (Box 1.1) mainly in relation to universal primary education (UPE) and the reduction of gender disparities (UNESCO, 2008a).

Improvements in early childhood care and education have been limited to date, and wide disparities in pre-primary enrolment ratios between countries in the North and the South remain. During the 1999-2006 period average net primary enrolment ratios rose approximately 10 to 15 percentage points in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. Yet more than 75 million children of primary school age (55% of whom are girls) were not enrolled in school in 2006.

Unsatisfactory progress is especially apparent for the EFA Goals directly related to adult education – namely, ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are equitably met and reducing adult illiteracy rates by 50% by 2015.

**Box 1.1**

The Dakar Education for All Goals

Education for All called for a collective commitment to the attainment of the following Goals:

1. expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

2. ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

3. ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes;

4. achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;

5. eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;

6. improving all aspects of the quality of education an ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

(UNESCO, 2000)
Limited access to educational opportunities in the past has left 774 million adults lacking basic literacy skills, of whom about two in every three are women. In some 45 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, adult literacy rates are below the developing country average of 79%.

Gender disparities in primary and secondary education participation rates had been eliminated in 59 of 176 UN countries by 2006, although most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia and the Arab States have yet to achieve this EFA target.

In the end, because the learning needs of children and adults have received inadequate attention in implementing EFA, the goal of improving educational quality and excellence (Goal 6) is also off target.

Of course, overall progress in early childhood care and education and in basic education has a positive impact on adult learning and education in the medium-term, since children and young people who have had greater access to formal education are more likely to continue their participation in various learning settings as adults. Nevertheless, this progress has to be put in context: poverty, living in rural areas or urban slums and belonging to an indigenous or migrant minority still significantly constrain educational opportunity. Around the world, girls are still educationally disadvantaged – and disadvantage is cumulative.

Worldwide agreement on the EFA agenda was critical in focusing on the key educational challenges. However, the slow and uneven progress sends a message that certain goals are more important than others and therefore should be prioritised when, in fact, all the goals are inter-connected and need to be addressed concurrently. The continued dominance of universal primary education, whether measured by enrolment ratios in the EFA agenda or completion rates in the MDGs, underscores the marginalisation of the youth, adult literacy and lifelong learning objectives which are vital to overall success.

The consensus on the Millennium Development Goals (Box 1.2) was part of an international compact meant to address key global problems at the start of the 21st century. The MDGs not only summarised the development aspirations of the world as a whole, but also brought attention to universally-accepted values and basic rights. Building on the recommendations of UN Conferences in the 1990s, they set out development benchmarks to be reached by 2015, with clear indicators to track progress. However, out of close to 100 strategies enumerated on how to move the MDGs forward, not a single one refers to adult learning and education as a means (United Nations, 2001). The absence of adult education as an MDG strategy, despite overwhelming evidence of its transformative power, is astounding.

We should never set adult education against the education of children and young people…It follows that adult education can no longer be a fringe sector of activity in any society and must be given its own proper place in educational policies and budgets. This means that school and out-of-school education must be linked firmly together.

(Faure et al, 1972: 205)

The MDG Report 2008 (UN, 2008) indicated some improvement in relation to MDGs 2 and 3, which approximate to EFA Goals 2 (universal primary education) and 5 (gender equality), and modest progress in relation to the other MDGs. For example, 51.4% of employed people in sub-Saharan Africa lived on less than US $1 per day in 2007 (compared with 55.5% in 1997).

**Box 1.2**

**The Millennium Development Goals**

- **Goal 1**: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- **Goal 2**: Achieve universal primary education
- **Goal 3**: Promote gender equality and empower women
- **Goal 4**: Reduce child mortality
- **Goal 5**: Improve maternal health
- **Goal 6**: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- **Goal 7**: Ensure environmental sustainability
- **Goal 8**: Develop a global partnership for development

(United Nations, 2001: 56-67)
There were also improvements in maternal and reproductive health. Yet in all regions, mortality rates continue to be higher for children from rural areas and poor families and those where mothers lack basic education (United Nations, 2008). Overall, despite limited progress, the international community remains off-track in fulfilling its MDG commitments (Box 1.3).

Young men and women with better education, training and qualifications can improve their life chances and standards of living. They are more likely to be gainfully employed and able to venture into self-employment. Later life learning brings a return through an improvement in occupationally-based social status (Blanden et al, 2009).

Better educated adults are more able to take care of their health and protect themselves from sexually-transmitted diseases more effectively. They know more about family planning options and the care of young children. Informed parents perceive the connections between infant survival and maternal and reproductive health, and are more equipped to educate and protect their children from life-threatening diseases.

Studies in Bolivia, Mexico, Nepal and Nicaragua show that women participating in adult education programmes, who also have access to radio and other information sources, have become more proficient in managing health issues in their families. Higher levels of education for women have been shown to increase their knowledge of HIV-AIDS prevention (see UNESCO, 2005b; 2007). Meanwhile as a result of their participation in adult literacy programmes, many women have higher self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities (Box 1.4).

Adults of all ages who continue to participate in education have greater access to information and knowledge that are important for forming views and taking action with respect to key social and political issues, such as environmental protection. They are also better able to use new sources of information and knowledge – in particular, information and communication technology (ICT) – independently and meaningfully.
### Box 1.4

**How literacy helps to attain the Millennium Development Goals: evidence from evaluation and research**

**MDG 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**
When adult literacy is an integral element of skill training programmes, e.g. farming, with content derived from the skill and knowledge set, it enables significant minorities of learners – 20 to 30 per cent – to upgrade their productivity. The effects depend also on a context that facilitates and supports behavioural change.

In addition, participants who became literate said that they could handle money, especially paper money, more confidently as a result. More importantly, they felt less vulnerable to being cheated in monetary transactions. This is a key gain for people who are micro-entrepreneurs, enabling them to better manage their businesses – and thus a key signal for initiatives that offer to train women and men in managing micro-credit and small enterprises.

**MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education**
60 to 70 per cent of participants, particularly mothers and female carers, in literacy classes are more likely to send and keep their children in school, as well as monitor their progress.

**MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women**
30 to 40 per cent of women in literacy education develop greater confidence in helping to make family decisions and in participating in local public affairs.

**MDG 4: Reduce child mortality and MDG 5: Improve maternal health**
20 to 30 per cent of participants show increased likelihood of improving the health and nutritional practices of their families, while a long-term study (in Nicaragua) found that ‘graduate’ mothers had healthier children and fewer child deaths.

**MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability**
30 to 40 per cent of participants in literacy education develop a stronger awareness of the need to protect the environment and a willingness to take action for it.

(DFID, 2008)

Improving and enriching knowledge, skills and competences, together with growth in personal development and self-confidence for youth and adults, bring benefits far wider than just those to individuals and their families – valuable and legitimate though these certainly are. There is evidence that the social returns on investment in adult education (starting with adult literacy) compare well with those on investment in primary education (UNESCO, 2005b). Three World Bank literacy projects showed a private rate of return to investment ranging from 25% in Indonesia (1986) to 43% for females and 24% for males in Ghana (1999) and 37% in Bangladesh (2001). In the Ghana project, the social rate of return for females was 18% and for males 14%. Moreover, data from 32 countries indicate that training programmes that incorporate literacy and numeracy bring in significant rates of return to investment (both individual and social) and contribute to the acceleration of the attainment of the eight MDGs (DFID, 2008). A study of the social and personal benefits of learning in the UK demonstrates strong influences on health (cancer prevention up and smoking down), improved racial tolerance and increased civic participation among the least educationally qualified, even when courses taken are primarily for leisure purposes (Feinstein et al, 2008). These examples further reinforce the essential point that the MDGs can only be achieved if adult education receives higher priority in the international policy agenda. Its contribution can no longer be ignored. Confronted with
such complex development questions, adult learning and education offer a clear response.

### 1.2 Adult education within a perspective of lifelong learning

Adult education has long been defined as a vehicle for social change and transformation (Baumgartner, 2001; Mezirow, 1990; 2000). As far back as 1900, Dewey had asserted that adult education is at once an entitlement and a public good, to which all should have access, but in which all equally have a responsibility to participate – in the interests of building and sustaining democracy.

Fostering capacities for critical reflection and learning to learn were central in the traditions of the Folk High Schools of Europe’s Nordic and Baltic countries, and of popular education that originated in nineteenth-century European and North American workers’ movements. Emphasis was placed on the importance of cultural and socio-political fields of knowledge and on the development of community-based, non-formal adult education.

From Latin America, Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed became the most internationally celebrated model of adult education as a cultural act of empowerment and social change (Barreiro, 1974; Freire, 1968; 1996; Puiggrós, 2005; Torres, 1998). It provided a dimension of structural transformation from below, beginning with the circumstances of people’s daily lives and ultimately aiming to shape a more just society.

Many social and political movements have integrated adult learning and education as a powerful means for supporting personal, social and political empowerment (Antikainen et al, 2006; Chrabolowsky, 2003; Gohn, 2008; Mayo, 2009). For example, in Tanzania, Julius Nyerere’s vision of socialism embraced adult education as a means of mobilising people for self-reliant community development and societal transformation.

In the 1960s such community-based political and cultural traditions of adult education were challenged by the introduction of adult education policies as a means for economic development. Framed within the notion of human capital, these policies were developed, either solely or partly, on principles of instrumental rationality that consider the outcomes of learning primarily in terms of use-value. In its narrowest interpretation, such a perspective places education at the service of competitive economies.

Alongside the emergence of this purely economic interpretation of adult education was the development of policy thinking that situated adult education within the broader framework of lifelong learning. Two UNESCO reports elaborated key principles in a lifelong learning perspective. Both the Report of the International Commission on the Development of Education, *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow* (the Faure Report, 1972) and the Report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, *Learning: The Treasure Within* (the Delors Report, 1996) pointed to the need for a learning culture that is open to all and embraces a learning continuum that ranges from formal to non-formal and informal education. They further maintained that learning is not only lifelong but also ‘life-wide’, taking place in all spheres of an adult’s life, whether at home, at work or in the community (Box 1.5).

The Delors Report (Delors et al, 1996), while supporting the same humanist tradition as the Faure Report (Faure et al, 1972), also addressed the challenge posed by education and training policies, through the lens of human capital theory.

The 1996 Report also marked a shift from the use of the term ‘lifelong education’ in the Faure Report to ‘lifelong learning’, which is presently more commonly used. This change signalled not only a semantic change but in fact reflected a substantive development in the field. Lifelong education as put forward by the Faure Report was associated with the more comprehensive and integrated goal of developing more humane individuals and communities in the face of rapid social change. On the other hand, the more dominant interpretation of

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**Human capital theory**

The phrase “human capital” was originally coined by the economist Adam Smith in 1776 but taken further in the 1960s by Theodor Schulz and Gary Becker. Human capital theory posits that investment in education and skill formation is as significant for economic growth as investment in machines and equipment. Economists have tried to measure the rate of return on investment in human capital. However, the validity of applying narrow econometric analysis to educational inputs and outputs for individuals has been subject to thorough-going critique. For a fuller discussion, see Schuller and Field (1998).
THE CASE FOR ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

Box 1.5

Lifelong education according to Faure and Delors

“Now, finally, the concept of lifelong education covers the entire educational process, from the point of view of the individual and of society. It first concerns the education of children and, while helping the child to live his own life as he deserves to do, its essential mission is to prepare the future adult for various forms of autonomy and self-learning. This later learning requires many wide-ranging educational structures and cultural activities to be developed for adults. These, while existing for their own purposes, are also a pre-condition for reforming initial education. Lifelong education thereby becomes the instrument and expression of a circular relationship comprising all the forms, expressions and moments of the educative act...”

(Faure et al, 1972: 143)

“This has led us...to rethink and update the concept of lifelong education so as to reconcile three forces: competition, which provides incentives; cooperation, which gives strength; and solidarity, which unites “ (p 18) “…human resources in every country must be activated and local knowledge and local people and institutions must be mobilized to create new activities that will make it possible to ward off the evil spell of technological unemployment....” (p 80)

(Delors et al, 1996)

lifelong learning in the 1990s, especially in Europe, was related to retraining and learning new skills that would allow individuals to cope with the demands of the rapidly-changing workplace (Matheson and Matheson, 1996; Griffin, 1999; Bagnall, 2000). On the other hand, the emphasis on the learner in lifelong learning could also be interpreted as assigning greater agency to individuals, in contrast to lifelong education’s thrust on structures and institutions (Medel-Añonuevo, 2006). This shift also influenced the outcomes of CONFINTEA V, which discussed adult learning more prominently than previous International Conferences on Adult Education.

We now have a landscape of adult education and lifelong learning where mixed principles, policies and practices co-exist, with the evolution of open and flexible systems of provision capable of adapting to social and economic change. Repositioning adult education within lifelong learning therefore requires a shared philosophy of the purposes and benefits of adult learning. Global complexity calls for the contribution of both instrumental and empowering rationales for adult education. In recent decades, it is the former that have become more prominent, with human capital approaches shaping policies more strongly than in the past. In contrast, the original vision of adult education as contributing to political empowerment and societal transformation has receded: it is rarely considered in policy-making.

This is changing as a more encompassing perspective – the capability approach (Sen, 1999) – considers the expansion of human capabilities, rather than merely economic development, as the over-arching objective of development policy. This approach looks beyond the economic dimension, and the mere pursuit of happiness, to encompass concepts of affiliation such as the capability to interact socially and participate politically.

Today’s case for adult education must begin from the view that it is precisely these values and principles of empowerment that need to be put at the centre. It is this sense of distinct purpose and its accumulated experience of grounded and socially-worthwhile educational practice – that are its critical and indispensable legacy. The principles of the capability approach offer this connection.

The capability approach to development

Amartya Sen’s (1999) understanding of development entails much more than increasing income and wealth. Poverty can be seen as a deprivation of basic capabilities, in the form of high mortality, significant under-nourishment, morbidity and widespread illiteracy. It is, in this sense, a limitation on freedom. For Sen, the enhancement of human freedom is both the main object and the means of development. Human freedom is founded on economic facilities, political freedom, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security.

People have to be seen to be actively involved in shaping their own destinies, rather than as passive recipients of development programmes. In this context, then, adult education is an important component in enabling and empowering communities to strive for social, political and economic freedoms.
In the shift towards lifelong learning, adult education has a pivotal role to play in ensuring that equity and social justice are pursued, together with the sustenance of democracy and human dignity. These principles stand at the heart of the future global adult learning and education agenda. The real value of lifelong and life-wide learning is personal and social agency, enabling people to equip themselves to act, to reflect and to respond appropriately to the social, political, economic, cultural and technological challenges they face throughout their lives (Medel-Añonuevo et al., 2001).

1.3 The need for a strengthened adult education

The Five International Conferences on Adult Education were landmarks in supporting international and national efforts to establish and expand adult education programmes and policies. Moreover, they, along with other milestones such as the Faure and Delors Reports and the influential 1976 UNESCO Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education, set out the vital role of adult education as “forming part of lifelong education and learning”.

CONFINTÉA V broke new ground in 1997 with the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning and Agenda for the Future (UIE, 1997). It identified adult learning and education as “both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society”. They were considered to be a key to reaching the goal of creating “a learning society committed to social justice and general well-being” in the 21st century.

Reaffirming the centrality of the right to basic education and skills for all throughout life, with adult literacy as the cornerstone of entitlement, the Hamburg Declaration underlined public responsibility for adult education provision, funding and quality. It drew attention to the need for partnerships between state, civil society and the private sector in developing and sustaining adult learning and education. The Declaration highlighted the importance of promoting gender equality, the integrity of cultural diversity and indigenous knowledge, the need to extend provision for older adults, and the need to assure education for peace, democracy and environmental sustainability. Addressing the themes set forth in the accompanying Agenda for the Future (Box 1.6) would demand considerably more investment in adult learning and education at both national and international levels.

However, from a worldwide perspective, as evidenced from country reports in the period since 1997, many national government education and social policies have not prioritised adult learning and education as had been expected and hoped-for following the Hamburg Declaration. Some of these issues were already flagged in the Synthesis Report of the CONFINTÉA V Review Meeting (UIE, 2003). Two international agreements – the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Development Goals – are weak in their advocacy for adult education. There is a lack of shared understanding of adult learning which has led to a policy discourse divide between the North and the South, with the former concentrating on the operationalisation of the discourse of lifelong learning and the latter, focusing on basic education for all. The contribution of adult education in development remains unrecognised and unacknowledged.

While countries have reported improvements, adult education as a sector still needs to be strengthened. Some factors that need to be examined in the process are the following:

First, despite the frequent use of the term ‘lifelong learning’ in a variety of legal, policy and programme documents, conceptual clarity about what constitutes lifelong learning and the place of adult learning and education within it has not become generalised. This lack of clarity has not only resulted in a tendency for discussions to continue to prioritise education for the young but has also often resulted in a division of the adult education field between general adult education, on the one hand, and vocational adult education and training on the other. Each set of distinctive actors emphasises differences in principles, purposes and practices rather than establishing connections and seeking cross-cutting alliances and partnerships.

Second, the narrow association of adult education with literacy education and basic skills development in many countries has
Theme 1: Adult learning and democracy: the challenges of the twenty-first century

Theme 2: Improving the conditions and quality of adult learning

Theme 3: Ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education

Theme 4: Adult learning, gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women

Theme 5: Adult learning and the changing world of work

Theme 6: Adult learning in relation to environment, health and population

Theme 7: Adult learning, culture, media and new information technologies

Theme 8: Adult learning for all: the rights and aspirations of different groups

Theme 9: The economics of adult learning

Theme 10: Enhancing international co-operation and solidarity

Box 1.6
The Hamburg Agenda for the Future

| Theme 1 | Adult learning and democracy: the challenges of the twenty-first century |
| Theme 2 | Improving the conditions and quality of adult learning |
| Theme 3 | Ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education |
| Theme 4 | Adult learning, gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women |
| Theme 5 | Adult learning and the changing world of work |
| Theme 6 | Adult learning in relation to environment, health and population |
| Theme 7 | Adult learning, culture, media and new information technologies |
| Theme 8 | Adult learning for all: the rights and aspirations of different groups |
| Theme 9 | The economics of adult learning |
| Theme 10 | Enhancing international co-operation and solidarity |

(UIE, 1997)

often resulted in educationally low-status content and outcomes. Precisely because of this feature of adult education provision, participants – especially in the countries of the South – are likely to be drawn from socially and educationally disadvantaged populations and hence represent a weak political constituency.

Third, adult education provision straddles the entire education continuum, with strong roots in non-formal and informal education contexts and methods. Participation in adult education does not necessarily or even typically lead to formal credentials with high marketable or social value. The quantification of outcomes from investment is also challenging.

Fourth, few countries have allocated the necessary financial resources for adult education. Low prioritisation, public spending constraints and the unequal distribution of resources all contribute to inconsistent, non-predictable and inequitable funding patterns.

Fifth, with such poor resourcing the adult education sector remains under-professionalised. Too many practitioners have minimal specialised training or recognised qualifications, and arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning and experience for those working professionals are insufficiently developed. Employment conditions are typically poor, a situation which does not favour long-term retention of experienced and competent practitioners. These conditions affect the quality of adult education practitioners’ performance and necessarily have an impact on the quality of adult learning experiences. The fragmentation of body of professionals involved means that the ability to lobby for better training and increased investment is difficult. The lack of powerful institutions handicaps advocacy for practitioners and target groups alike. The interconnectedness of this lack of power with the lack of funding mentioned above is a serious problem for all involved.

Sixth, and again a connected issue, the wide dispersion and diversity of adult learning and education stakeholders inhibits effective collaboration with others who share similar agendas. While recognising the state’s main responsibility for the provision of adult education, the contributions of civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders have not been properly acknowledged, valued and tapped.

Today’s international financial crisis, as well as urgent development challenges, has created a critical moment. If adult education is to play a role in improving the quality of economic and social life in the 21st century, considerably more resources – efficiently used and distributed – are necessary. Absolutely essential is a shared vision of adult learning and education that is achievable and that can engage all stakeholders. Vulnerable and marginalised groups need to be at the centre of this vision. CONFINTEA VI offers an opportunity to break new ground and to identify clear objectives and feasible lines of action to be achieved in the coming decade. Moving from rhetoric to action is an imperative.
Recognising the importance of adult education for achieving sustainable social, cultural and economic development means explicit and visible political commitment translated into policy. It also means allocating the resources needed to implement measures well. The basis of any policy should be that adult education is a right for all, without exception.

A key issue for understanding adult education policy, provision and governance is the acknowledgement of a learning continuum between formal, non-formal and informal education and its implications for life-wide and lifelong learning (Chisholm, 2008; Colley et al., 2004; Du Bois-Reymond, 2005; Otto and Rauschenbach, 2004) (see Box 2.1). Recognising where and how learning occurs, and appreciating the full spectrum of learning processes and outcomes, are fundamental for developing the potential of adult education.

In countries that have poorly developed education infrastructures, it is difficult to establish the kinds of comprehensive formal education and training systems that exist in more affluent nations. Effectively, learning in non-formal and informal settings is the most realistic option in these countries. It can also be innovative and empowering in providing greater learning opportunities for the population as a whole, using different and culturally appropriate concepts and practices. Adult education policies therefore need to take into consideration the significance of such learning for individuals and communities.

This chapter first looks at how far appropriate policies have been adopted worldwide. It then examines how the governance of adult education is managed and, within this, the distribution of power from the national to regional, sub-regional and local levels. It concludes with a review of policy and governance as interwoven dimensions of adult education anchored in a lifelong learning perspective.

Box 2.1
The learning continuum

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Learning Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formal learning</strong></td>
<td>Formal learning occurs as a result of experiences in an education or training institution, with structured learning objectives, learning time and support which leads to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-formal learning</strong></td>
<td>Non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal learning</strong></td>
<td>Informal learning results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or ‘incidental’/random).</td>
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Source: European Commission, 2000; 2001
2.1 Policy development in adult education

Of the 154 countries which submitted National Reports in preparation for CONFINTEA VI, 126 (or 82%) declared that adult education is covered directly or indirectly by some kind of government policy (Appendix Table 1). Regional differences exist, with the European region having the highest proportion at 92%, followed by Asia with 83%, the Latin American and Caribbean region with 80%, sub-Saharan Africa 79% and the Arab region with 68%. Closer examination of the responses, however, indicates the wide range of interpretations of the term ‘policy’, starting with the most basic law of the land, the Constitution, through executive fiat and legislative enactments to medium-term development plans and decennial education plans.

When asked about a specific policy on adult education since 1997, only 56 countries (or 36%) responded affirmatively. Almost half of these countries (27) are in the European region. Nineteen (or 34%) countries are from sub-Saharan Africa. The high rate for the European region is to be expected.

The Lisbon Strategy is the European Union’s overarching strategy focusing on growth and jobs. Within the EU, national governments are responsible for education and training but the problems of ageing societies, skills deficits within the workforce and global competition are seen as benefiting from joint responses and learning between countries. As part of this response it is recognised that lifelong learning must become a reality across Europe as a key to growth and jobs as well as being critical for full participation in society.

Member states have strengthened their political co-operation through an Education and Training work programme and a strategic framework for co-operation in education and training. This strategic framework identifies four long-term strategic objectives:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

It is supported by benchmarks for achievement.

Alongside the Lisbon Strategy are specific communication and action plans for adult education respectively – “It’s Never too Late to Learn” (European Commission, 2006) and “It’s Always a Good Time to Learn” (European Commission, 2007) – which focus on adult education policy and practice across the EU. Five priorities are identified for concrete action:

- To reduce labour shortages due to demographic changes by raising skill levels in the workforce generally and by upgrading low-skilled workers (80 million in 2006).
- To address the persistently high number of early school-leavers (nearly 7 million in 2006), by offering a second chance to those who enter adulthood without any qualifications.
- To reduce poverty and social exclusion among marginalised groups. Adult learning can both improve people’s skills and help them towards active citizenship and personal autonomy.
- To increase the integration of migrants in society and labour markets. Adult learning offers tailor-made courses, including language learning, to contribute to this integration process. Adult learning can help migrants to secure validation and recognition for their qualifications.
- To increase participation in lifelong learning and particularly to address the fact that participation decreases after the age of 34. At a time when the average working age is rising across Europe, there needs to be a parallel increase in adult learning by older workers.

Source: European Commission, 2009
given that since 2000, the Lisbon Strategy – which considers lifelong learning as key measure for making the region the most competitive in the world – has been in place (see Box 2.2). In eight of the African countries reporting a specific policy on adult education, closer inspection reveals that these policies are actually centred on improving literacy.

The National Reports prepared for CONFINTEA VI point to some policy features that appear to be shared by most countries:

- Adult education policy is usually subsumed under general education policies. It is rarely mainstreamed within comprehensive development frameworks. Adult education policies are incoherent and fragmented – more like a patchwork of measures responding to specific issues than a framework of linked principles and programmes.
- There are wide gaps between legislation, policy and implementation, with weak relationships between formal policy-making and practice. Adult education policy-making and reform tend to take place in a vacuum: high-level councils and

<table>
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<th>Box 2.3</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adult education policy: key points from the CONFINTEA VI Regional Synthesis Reports</strong></td>
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<th>Arab Region</th>
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<tr>
<td>Throughout the region, adult education is seen as synonymous with youth and adult literacy, including education for those who have left school early. The relevant policies are mostly incorporated into national education policies. Egypt, Kuwait and Tunisia have specific laws on the eradication of illiteracy. Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen have translated such policy into action plans.</td>
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<th>Asia-Pacific Region</th>
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<tr>
<td>Many countries lack a comprehensive adult education policy framework. Many are still struggling to provide basic education for people of all ages, so policy is closely linked with literacy. China and India, the ‘Asian Giants,’ have both focused on literacy, with gradually broadening policy agendas in recent decades. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand have been able to diversify their policy scope through non-formal programmes, and are now moving towards a concept of lifelong learning. Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Singapore have moved towards a policy placing adult education within lifelong learning.</td>
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<th>Europe and North America Region</th>
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<tr>
<td>General objectives and overall policy direction in the region’s countries display broad similarities, with the European Union’s policies having clear influence. Nevertheless, many countries still do not have comprehensive and distinct adult education policies. In former socialist republics, current policies are typically linked to continuing vocational training. Many countries, including Canada and the United States of America, are now identifying the continued need for adult literacy and basic skills programmes.</td>
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<th>Latin America and Caribbean Region</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adult education remains primarily associated with basic and compensatory education, most specifically with respect to adult literacy and the vocational and social integration of out-of-school youth. Recent policy documents – especially in the Caribbean – include references to lifelong learning, typically a synonym for continuing education. Since 2000, adult education has gained greater policy visibility. This is due both to the impact of poor progress of related EFA Goals on public opinion and to civil society pressure for change and improvement. The majority of countries have improved laws and policies with respect to the right to free education and provision for linguistic and cultural diversity.</td>
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<th>Sub-Saharan Africa Region</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult education is mainly associated with literacy and adult basic education and typically subsumed in general education policies. Few countries have specific legal provisions. Few implement specific adult learning and education policies. Cape Verde, Namibia and Seychelles are outstanding exceptions in their comprehensive and coherent approach.</td>
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Source: Ahmed, 2009; Aitchison and Alidou, 2009; Keogh, 2009; Torres, 2009; Yousif, 2009
elaborate advisory structures exist, but have little concrete impact, with the risk that these arrangements become a proxy for implementation.

- Coordination of policy and action within government and between government and stakeholders is often ineffective – decentralisation to regional and local levels is more apparent than real. Responsibilities – including those for the funding of adult education programmes and activities – are more likely to be delegated than are decision-making powers. This shows that the ‘command and control’ model of organisation and governance remains predominant, undermining local autonomy and flexibility and lowering civil society participation.

Together, these features account for many specific characteristics of policy that affect governance and provision in adult education. Clearly there are important differences between countries and world regions in the way adult education policy is conceptualised and realised. Box 2.3 summarises key points from the Regional Synthesis Reports prepared for CONFINTEA VI.

There are concrete examples of integrated legislation that give equal visibility to initial and continuing education for young people and adults. One of these is Sweden’s Education Act, in which such a holistic approach is reflected at local level where municipalities serve both secondary and adult education needs. Table 2.1 lists the range of legislation and policies adopted since 1997 that countries reported as specifically addressing adult education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Legislation/ Major Policy (Year)</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>Draft law on Adult Education, 2007</td>
<td>Drafted and presented for discussion, but then temporarily eliminated from the list for general discussion, with a suggestion to make amendments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Skilling Australia’s Workforce Act, 2005</td>
<td>Strengthened the funding framework, and linked funding for the States and Territories to a range of conditions and targets for training outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Non-Formal Education Policy, 2006</td>
<td>To introduce a system and national framework for non-formal education (with all the required flexibilities in-built) as supplementary and complementary to formal education; to institute a framework of equivalence for non-formal compared to formal education; and to vocationalise non-formal education, keeping in view literacy levels emerging from non-formal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>Déclaration de Politique Nationale d’Alphabétisation et d’Education des Adultes (DEPOLINA), 2001</td>
<td>Announced a break with the concept of instrumental literacy and is part of a holistic vision of adult education-based development activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>Administrative Resolution 008, 2004</td>
<td>Regulates the process of accreditation of prior learning in literacy as part of the primary education of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>National Policy on Vocational Education and Training, 1997</td>
<td>Laid down the broad framework, within which training activities are carried out. For example, it made recommendations on skills development and training, public institutional planning; employer-based training; and training for both the formal and informal sectors of the economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training Act, 1999</td>
<td>Regulates the vocational training of pupils – its objectives, principles, stages, organisation, and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Non Formal Education Policy, 2006</td>
<td>To promote literacy and alternative forms of education as factors of local development and to support access to lifelong learning opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Legislation/ Major Policy (Year)</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cape Verde</strong></td>
<td>Law No. 34/98, 1998&lt;br&gt;Law No. 38/99, 1999</td>
<td>Approves the Curriculum of Basic Education for Adults&lt;br&gt;Approves the assessment system for learners of adult basic education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chad</strong></td>
<td>Decree No. 414, 2007</td>
<td>Establishes that the Ministry of Education has confirmed its commitment in education and training of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comoros</strong></td>
<td>The Master Plan for Education and Training (PDEF) from 2005 to 2009</td>
<td>Based on objectives defined in the National Plan for Education For All, and composed of seven programmes to promote youth and adult education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Croatia</strong></td>
<td>Adult Education Act, 2007</td>
<td>Specifies different forms of adult education and which bodies may provide these under different conditions; introduces the concepts of vertical mobility, educational study leave, adult education funding and partnership principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eritrea</strong></td>
<td>Draft National Policy on Adult Education (NPAE), 2005</td>
<td>To promote a broad concept of adult education and create awareness of adult education as a diverse multi-sectoral activity; to implement of the right to education for all and to establish inter-sectoral co-ordinating mechanisms for the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and accreditation of adult education activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estonia</strong></td>
<td>Lifelong Learning Strategy, 2005-2008</td>
<td>To integrate adult education sectors (public, private and third sector), specify their different roles in the meeting of social demand and harmonise Estonian adult education with documents from the European Commission and with EU standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finland</strong></td>
<td>Vocational Adult Education Act, 631/1998&lt;br&gt;Liberal Education Act, 632/1998</td>
<td>Regulates competence-based qualifications, including apprenticeship training&lt;br&gt;Regulates adult learning and education at folk high schools, adult education centres, study centres, physical education centres and summer universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Honduras</strong></td>
<td>Revised Law for the Development of Alternative Non-Formal Education, Decree No. 135-2003, 2003</td>
<td>To promote education and training of school-age children outside school, youth and adults, and at higher educational and technical levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kenya</strong></td>
<td>Sessional Paper No. 1 on A Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research, 2005</td>
<td>Recognises adult continuing education as a vehicle for transformation and empowerment of individuals and society, and calls for its integration into a national qualifications network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesotho</strong></td>
<td>Draft National Policy Document on Non-Formal and Adult Education, 1998</td>
<td>Has never been adopted as policy, but is referred to and used for planning purposes. Cited liberally in the chapter on lifelong learning and non-formal education in the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2005-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lithuania</strong></td>
<td>Law on Non-formal Education 1998&lt;br&gt;Law on Vocational Education and Training 1997</td>
<td>Regulates non-formal educational provision and gives legislative guarantees to participants, providers and social partners&lt;br&gt;Regulates basic (formal) and general secondary education and labour market vocational training; currently undergoing revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Madagascar</strong></td>
<td>National Policy on Literacy and Adult Education (PNAAEA), 2003</td>
<td>Formalises procedures to coordinate literacy and adult education and standardises performance criteria, facilitating the enhancement of learner achievements and their reintegration into professional categories of socio-economic sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Malawi</strong></td>
<td>National Adult Literacy Policy, 2006</td>
<td>To guide programme planners and decision-makers in establishing a comprehensive set of programme and services to increase literacy levels by 85% by 2011 and to create greater understanding of adult literacy issues in national development priorities and concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Legislation/ Major Policy (Year)</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>National Policy of Non-Formal Education, 2007</td>
<td>To increase the adult literacy rate at least 50% (40% for women) and allow at least 50% of school-leavers and youth aged 9 to 15 who have never been to school to reach a minimum learning level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>National Strategy for Adult Literacy and Non-Formal Education Programmes</td>
<td>Designed mainly to eradicate illiteracy in the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>National Policy on Adult Learning, 2003</td>
<td>Provides a framework of adult learning, addressing programme development, resources, co-ordination, policy implementation and monitoring; identifies the Government’s role within this framework and recognises the important contribution of the private sector and civil society in the promotion of adult learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Adult Literacy Strategy, 2001</td>
<td>Highlights the need to build capacity and capability in the sector; government agencies assisted by an advisory group in formulating national development approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>National Policy of Non-Formal Education (PNENF), 2008</td>
<td>To consolidate and develop social achievements in literacy and non-formal education; defines the major options, guidelines and policy measures necessary for the development of this sub-sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>Presidential Order, 2007</td>
<td>Decision to implement the literacy campaign “Move On Panama, Yo Si Puedo” developed by the Ministry of Social Development with support from volunteers and civil society organisations at community level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td>Lifelong Education Act, 2007</td>
<td>Revision of the 1999 Act; metropolitan and provincial governments required to establish annual implementation plans within five-year national lifelong education promotion strategies set out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>Seychelles Qualifications Authority Act, 2005</td>
<td>The Seychelles Qualification Authority (SQA) created as the para-statal body responsible for formulating and administering the National Qualifications Framework, and to assure the quality of education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Act of Parliament, 2001</td>
<td>Establishment of the National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards (NCTVA) and establishment of regional polytechnics to diversify human resource development for various vocations and careers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Adult Education Act, 2006</td>
<td>Defines and regulates the provision of adult learning and education (organisation, monitoring and documentation, annual programme cycles, public funding, counselling and examination centres); currently undergoing revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>Education for Living: Policy on technical, vocational education and training, 2005</td>
<td>Comprehensive document, with 22 policy areas aimed at integrating technical, vocational education and training or skill training into the education system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Adult Basic Education and Training Act, 2000</td>
<td>Provides for establishment of public and private adult learning centres, funding for Adult Basic Education and Training provision, the governance of public centres and quality assurance mechanisms for the sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Non-Formal and Informal Education Promotion Act, 2008</td>
<td>Aims to promote and support non-formal and informal education in line with the National Education Act, which designates education as a lifelong process with the participation of all sectors of government, civil society and private enterprise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table points to five trends in policy objectives:
- framework-setting, usually within a lifelong learning perspective (for example, Bangladesh and Namibia);
- promotion of literacy and non-formal education (as in Honduras and Thailand);
- regulation of vocational or adult education (for example, Lithuania and Slovenia);
- creation of specialised agencies (for instance, Seychelles and Sierra Leone); and
- provision for the implementation of specific programmes (as in Comoros and South Africa).

The extent to which countries are locked into widespread poverty, high levels of internal inequality and international debt influences the direction of adult education policy-making. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States, and much of Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, adult education is equated with adult literacy and compensatory or ‘second-chance’ education.

The European Union’s Lisbon Agenda, with its focus on lifelong learning, is a highly influential driver for policy innovation in the field of adult learning and influences ‘neighbourhood countries’ such as the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States). Within the region, there still exist disparities as to how the strategy is implemented (see Box 2.4). Moreover, individual countries’ adult education policies place different emphases on the dual policy aims of economic competitiveness and social cohesion. In some countries (such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America; similarly in Asia’s more developed countries) maintaining economic competitiveness dominates. Other countries (notably Europe’s Nordic countries) underline the ‘public good’ model and are strongly committed to education throughout life as a humanistic endeavour for personal and civic development as well as for human resource development.

Interestingly, countries with more resilient economies in South-East Asia appear to be making a ‘policy jump’ from adult education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Legislation/ Major Policy (Year)</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</td>
<td>Law on Adult Education, 2008</td>
<td>To initiate and maintain a positive and active approach for education throughout life; directly linked with the previous Programme for Adult Education in the context of lifelong learning, which is an integral part of the National Strategy for Development of Education 2005-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credit Recognition Act, 2008</td>
<td>Revision of the 1999 Act; permits direct conferment by the government of Bachelor’s degrees to learners through the Academic Credit Bank System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>National Programme for Adult Education, 2000</td>
<td>Developed from the 1992 national literacy plan to accelerate the pace of literacy and to create an educational system responding to the basic educational needs of the target population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Draft Policy on Adult Learning and Education</td>
<td>Yet to be finalised and approved by responsible government organs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (as the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, AEFLA), 1998</td>
<td>Reforms federal employment, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation programmes to create an integrated, one-stop system of workforce investment and education activities for adults and youth. Entities that carry out activities assisted under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act are mandatory partners in this delivery system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>Literacy and Adult Education Law, 1998</td>
<td>A basic building block for the institutional framework of the literacy and adult education organisation; some implementation issues still to resolve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Lifelong Education Policy, 1998</td>
<td>To mobilise and motivate illiterate and semi-literate adults to acquire the basic skills of reading, writing and calculation using their first language and to foster skills training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Reports prepared for CONFENTEA VI
Lifelong learning objectives are integrated in the most important national strategic documents, such as Romania’s National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) and Bulgaria’s National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013. Both countries’ operational programmes for human resources development and strategies for national employment and for continuing vocational education are informed by lifelong learning.

"However, the countries are facing a number of challenges in the implementation of these strategies, as for example:

- The existence of a historical delay with regard to the provisions of the Lisbon Strategy, followed by the insufficient development of a lifelong learning culture;
- The lack of a systemic and coherent debate involving ministries, public institutions, civil society and businesses in the development, implementation and monitoring of lifelong learning policies;
- The lack of global approaches in lifelong learning policies, which should consider the entire path of an individual learning and training and a unique vision, both pre-school education, compulsory education and initial training, and the continuing adult education and training;
- Lack of correspondence between the priorities of the education policy documents and the financial resources allotted to their attainment;
- Insufficient commitment of the responsible actors in the development and implementation of human resources development policies."

Source: dvv international, 2008: 11

Box 2.4
Challenges in the establishment of legal frameworks for adult education in Bulgaria and Romania

Lifelong learning objectives are integrated in the most important national strategic documents, such as Romania’s National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) and Bulgaria’s National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013. Both countries’ operational programmes for human resources development and strategies for national employment and for continuing vocational education are informed by lifelong learning.

"However, the countries are facing a number of challenges in the implementation of these strategies, as for example:

- The existence of a historical delay with regard to the provisions of the Lisbon Strategy, followed by the insufficient development of a lifelong learning culture;
- The lack of a systemic and coherent debate involving ministries, public institutions, civil society and businesses in the development, implementation and monitoring of lifelong learning policies;
- The lack of global approaches in lifelong learning policies, which should consider the entire path of an individual learning and training and a unique vision, both pre-school education, compulsory education and initial training, and the continuing adult education and training;
- Lack of correspondence between the priorities of the education policy documents and the financial resources allotted to their attainment;
- Insufficient commitment of the responsible actors in the development and implementation of human resources development policies."

Source: dvv international, 2008: 11

as adult literacy and basic skills towards adult education within a lifelong learning policy frame. The Republic of Korea, a particularly noteworthy example, developed a comprehensive policy approach to adult education in the 1980s as part of building a lifelong learning society, currently anchored in the 2007 Lifelong Education Act. Regional and local bodies in the country pass their own laws to support the national Act.

External factors can bring about rapid changes in adult education policies. For example, in the wake of the 1997-8 Asian financial crisis, measures were introduced which entailed the restructuring of labour market polices and employment training systems. The People’s Republic of China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand quickly set up new provision frameworks closely linked to human resources development requirements.

Regional and international organisations exert an increasing influence on educational policy-making. The role that the EU is playing in encouraging Member States to focus on common problems in education and training has been mentioned, as has the differentiated response that countries have developed to similar issues. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), through studies like the International Adult Literacy Survey, also shapes national policy responses to adult education. In its Biennale meetings, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) has been able to provide a platform to discuss the importance of literacy and non-formal education, persuading Ministers of Education to re-examine their policies. The Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos (OEI), through its plan for literacy and basic education for youth and adults, promotes multilateral cooperation in Ibero-America, linking the different actors who promote adult education programmes, taking into account diverse contexts. Through policy dialogue, technical assistance and South-South cooperation, UNESCO has promoted literacy within a framework of lifelong learning. The World Bank is also able to sway educational policies.
These supra-national players support their policy initiatives with significant funding for programmes and activities consonant with their objectives. But these efforts are not necessarily embraced wholeheartedly. Some governments are wary about top-down approaches and insist on developing policies that are responsive to their specific contexts. Ambivalence and tension between national and international levels of policy and action are to be expected. However, the Regional Synthesis Reports for CONFINTEA VI testify to the significance of regional and international organisations and their policy initiatives for stimulating or underplaying support for adult education.

2.2 Coordinating and regulating adult education: some governance issues

Concepts and practices of governance, including educational governance, have risen to the forefront of international discussion and debate in the past decade: the 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report headlines governance as a key factor in overcoming educational inequalities. It describes governance as “institutions, rules and norms through which policies are developed and implemented – and through which accountability is enforced” (UNESCO, 2008a: 128). Governance therefore covers policy decision-making, resource allocation and government accountability. Educational governance is not solely the concern of central government but encompasses every level of the system, from the education ministry to schools and the community. It ensures access to well-funded educational provision with well-qualified, motivated staff and responsiveness to local needs.

Educational governance in principle must be based on universal participation. There is a personal stake in education for all citizens, even when their interests and needs are not being met through existing policy, provision and practice. Furthermore, education is vital to civil society, local and regional communities and social movements; minorities, nations and states; the business world, labour markets and economies. Educational governance has to accommodate many stakeholders and a diverse range of interests. The consequences of bad governance in adult learning and education are all too obvious and include weak provision characterised by inequity, low quality and the involvement of lowly-paid, untrained and unmotivated facilitators.

In the past decade, political and institutional responses in educational governance have generally included two linked processes which are in tension with each other. On the one hand there is a call for greater organisational and financial decentralisation and autonomy. On the other there is a demand for greater regulation and quality monitoring mechanisms steered by centralised public administration and its agencies (see here, for example Altrichter et al, 2007; Husemann and Heikkinen, 2004; Lindblad and Popkewitz, 2001). These developments have been accompanied by the greater involvement of civil society-based groups and associations the mechanisms for which have been public consultation processes, advisory groups and governing councils of various kinds, and the growth of educational project funding programmes available to NGOs. The patterns drawn from the Regional Synthesis Reports indicate the resultant wide variety that currently exists (see Box 2.5).

The National Reports present a diversity of governance arrangements in place. These statements broadly suggest three formal governance patterns:

- departments within education ministries (or their equivalent);
- relatively independent authorities, which may or may not be under the direct formal control of a ministry;
- delegation of responsibility to local agencies.

The location of adult education within national governments

Adult education legislation and policy may be at a very generalised level or aimed at a narrow constituency within time and geographical limits. In practice, adult learning is fashioned by circumstances on the ground. Between these two ends of the policy-practice continuum, a variety of intermediary governance arrangements can exist. The majority of countries reported that more than one Ministry is involved in adult education (see Table 2.2). Each is accountable for particular aspects of adult education or for particular target groups. The Philippines, for example, divides responsibility...
Arab Region
All countries have high-level policy-making bodies (National Councils or similar) chaired by
the relevant Minister (in Egypt by the Prime Minister), which are responsible for programme
development and implementation. Such bodies typically include government, civil society,
universities and the private sector, and have regional and local subsidiary councils or
committees.

Asia-Pacific Region
In most countries, the Ministry of Education is responsible for policy implementation,
sometimes in cooperation with Ministries for health, agriculture, gender issues, social welfare,
human rights and economic development. Ministries may devolve some administrative
responsibilities, but the locus of power still rests at the centre in terms of budgets,
programme design and planning, programme content, structure and learning outcomes.

Europe and North America Region
Some countries approach adult education as a distinct sector within lifelong learning, with
policy and measures supported by strong arrangements that sustain the formal, active
involvement of social partners and civil society.

Latin America and Caribbean Region
Here the implementation gap is wide – policies are usually disconnected from practice,
whereas diversification and decentralisation processes have led to coordination problems.

Sub-Saharan Africa Region
Countries advocate multi-sectoral stakeholder governance, but there is little concrete
evidence of its implementation. Generally, Ministries of education take charge of policies
and programmes, sometimes in cooperation with Ministries for agriculture, health, youth
and sport, women and social development. Ineffective coordination – between Ministries
but also between state agencies and civil society – has a negative impact on the status and
quality of adult learning and education. In addition, while many countries state that they have
a decentralisation policy, what this means in reality, especially in relation to decision-making, is
unclear.

Source: Ahmed, 2009; Aitchison and Alidou, 2009; Keogh, 2009; Torres, 2009; Yousif, 2009

Box 2.5
Governance patterns drawn from Regional Synthesis Reports

between different departments for
general education, vocational education
and training, and higher education – each
of which mounts separate programmes.
This may be explained by the different
concepts inherent in the delivery of adult
education programmes, with adult learning
sometimes being thought of as a good in
itself (for example, a straightforward literacy
programme) and at other times being
conceived of as a support to other agendas
(for example, a programme to promote
better health) as the means rather than the
end itself.

Many governments have established a
department that is explicitly responsible
for adult education (sometimes combining
this with other responsibilities, such as
citizenship education and e-learning, as
has been the case in Austria). Typically,
such offices are located within the
Ministry of Education, but responsibilities
for adult education may be assigned to
other Ministries. In Malaysia, for example,
the Ministry of Women, Family and
Community Development is responsible
for non-formal education, which effectively
covers much adult education and learning
provision in a country with a dispersed rural
population. Inter-ministerial and inter-agency
committees are increasingly established.
Governance by agencies with some degree of autonomy

The past decade has witnessed the proliferation of apparently decentralised governance in the form of publicly-funded agencies that manage and coordinate the implementation of para-state and inter-ministerial policies (see Box 2.6). Such agencies may take responsibility for funding, for quality control and for programme planning and design. These bodies, which couple greater autonomy with greater accountability, should not be seen as isolated from debates about decentralisation (for example, see Llieva, 2007). However, even where such agencies

to coordinate measures and funding allocations (for example, United Republic of Tanzania). They are also likely to ensure the exchange of information and good practice, take on monitoring tasks (for example, through the development of indicators and benchmarks) and engage in forward planning (with respect to staff development, for example, or needs assessment and public campaigns). Such committees also develop communication and exchange channels with sectoral, regional and local stakeholders, in order to make democratic and sustainable governance ‘come alive’ in everyday implementation.

Table 2.2
Countries stating more than one ministry involved in adult education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Arab states</th>
<th>Asia-Pacific</th>
<th>Europe and North America</th>
<th>Latin America and Caribbean</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt, Kuwait, Palestine, Oman, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia</td>
<td>Bhutan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Iran, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Vietnam</td>
<td>Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey</td>
<td>Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Uruguay</td>
<td>Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>28</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>87</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countries responding to question</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Reports submitted</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Reports prepared for CONFINTÉA VI

1 Refers to responses to question 1.1.3. from the Guidelines for the Preparation of National Reports on the Situation of Adult Learning and Education:
• How is adult learning and education organized within the government? What ministry/ies are in charge or involved? Is adult learning and education centralised/decentralised? How?
are designed to involve stakeholders and grassroots groups, unless there is a real devolution of power to other interests this form of apparent decentralisation remains a form of central control.

Decentralised governance arrangements

Governance is a political process and adult education is embedded in social, political and cultural contexts that draw some of their vitality from the motivation to further democracy and human rights. Devolution of governance in adult education is thus a political (and perhaps even economic) imperative. Such devolution may involve a trade-off where the benefits of increased grassroots support require the giving-up of a degree of public responsibility for mainstream provision and practice, whether in school education or in adult education.

Box 2.6
Adult education governance by autonomous agencies

**Bangladesh**
The Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) was established as the National Agency for non-formal education with full authority; a district level structure is developed in each of the 64 districts.

**Croatia**
The Adult Education Council consists of key stakeholders in adult learning and education appointed by the government; the Agency for Adult Education performs administrative duties for the Council.

**India**
The National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) is an independent and autonomous arm of the Central Government; the registered body Zila Saksharta Samiti is the main implementation agency for literacy and continuing education programmes; NGOs are also involved.

**Lebanon**
The National Committee for Literacy and Adult Education (NCLAE) was established by the Council Ministries in 1995: its members come from the public sector, NGOs and various international organisations working in the field of literacy and adult learning and education. It is headed by director of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

**Mongolia**
The National Centre of Non-Formal and Distance Education (NFDE) under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science co-ordinates adult learning and education at national level.

**Nepal**
The Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC) is the main organisation in charge of adult learning and education, but there are five Regional Education Directorate Offices (REDs), 75 District Education Offices (DEOs), Resource Centres (RCs) and Community Learning Centres (CLCs) for its implementation.

**Republic of Korea**
The National Institute for Lifelong Education under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has been in charge of adult learning and education since 2007; metropolitan or provincial Lifelong Learning Councils and Lifelong Learning Centres run various programmes; second-chance schools; in-company universities; distance learning universities; facilities from media organisations and from civic social groups also provide adult education.

**St. Lucia**
There are three public institutions providing adult learning and education, namely the National Enrichment and Learning Unit (NELU), the National Skills Development Centre (NSDC) and the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College which provides post-secondary/tertiary education.

Source: National Reports prepared for CONFINTEA VI
In the National Reports, the majority of countries stated that adult education is decentralised. Devolved powers can lead to greater responsiveness to local needs and circumstances (see Table 2.3). The active involvement of stakeholders in such decentralisation processes has been a concern for many civil society organisations (African Platform for Adult Education, 2008). The decentralisation of responsibility for adult education to organisations at an arm’s length from government itself has not been accompanied automatically by systematic and intensified involvement of other stakeholders in planning, implementing and monitoring adult education policy and practice. Where this has taken place, organised civil society and grassroots interest groups, together with professional associations, have tended to be involved.

Whatever their governance structures, high-income countries increasingly focus on improving effectiveness and efficiency, by seeking ways to involve employers and trades unions in provision and participation issues (not simply in funding issues). Contemporary governance entails more than legislation, ministerial responsibilities and organisational arrangements for implementation; it involves good communication in the public sphere (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003).

Table 2.3
Decentralised organisation of adult learning and education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Arab states</th>
<th>Asia-Pacific</th>
<th>Europe and North America</th>
<th>Latin America and Caribbean</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countries mentioning decentralisation in adult learning and education</td>
<td>Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan</td>
<td>Afghanistan, Australia, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Vietnam</td>
<td>Armenia, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America</td>
<td>Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru</td>
<td>Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Reports submitted</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Reports prepared for CONFINTEA VI

1 Refers to responses to question 1.1.3. from the Guidelines for the Preparation of National Reports on the Situation of Adult Learning and Education:
- How is adult learning and education organized within the government? What ministry/s are in charge or involved? Is adult learning and education centralised/decentralised? How?
Taken globally, the governance of adult education is still under-developed. Few countries have specific legislation that sets out the aims and regulatory principles for the sector. Even fewer establish implementing frameworks that clearly define overall responsibilities for planning, funding and provision. This leads to ‘fuzzy’ governance patterns, which may enable healthy diversity and create space for local innovation, but which make it difficult to pinpoint accountability and designate responsibility. This reduces the sector’s visibility within educational policy and in society at large.

Few, if any, countries have found effective governance solutions for the sector. The Regional Synthesis Reports prepared for CONFINTEA VI record numerous examples of fragmented governance arrangements that stifle efforts to achieve effective and coherent implementation. The Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Synthesis Report notes several countries where failure to ratify adult education policy documents is a serious hindrance (Aitchison and Alidou, 2009). It stops the flow between policy, legislation, regulations and, of course, funding, so that mandates cannot be implemented. Policies can be effective without specific legislative back-up, but it is difficult for effective adult learning and education to take root when policies are absent or only minimally visible. Cursory or superficial inclusion of adult education in broader-based educational policies is no substitute for specific and ratified adult education policies as exemplified by Benin, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia and South Africa.

Strong societal commitment is a prerequisite for providing good governance and clear strategic direction for adult learning and education. Without it, the sector’s resilience and its capacity to develop its potential are diminished. This commitment, in turn, has an impact on the resources allocated to adult education. Coherent links between adult education and its many cognate policy domains have to be forged in order to coordinate and make best use of available resources. This implies the mainstreaming of policies, with supporting infrastructures firmly anchored in lifelong learning frameworks. A more informed citizenry can play a critical role in ensuring that governance reforms (in education and in general) highlight the significance of active participation with respect not only to autonomy but also to accountability – in alliance with Sen’s (1999) ‘capability approach’ to development as freedom.

2.3 Conclusion

The framework for the future lies within the concept of lifelong learning – understood here as an overarching framework that genuinely integrates the specific purposes and scope of adult education within a global frame of reference encompassing the full continuum between basic literacy and professional continuing education, while valuing personal and social development as well as vocational training and human resources development.

A key challenge is to mainstream adult education policy within an integrated lifelong learning policy framework. This is not easy, given the realities, for countries in Africa, the Arab States, Latin America and Asia. It may be that this shift of emphasis to adult learning and education within lifelong learning is, as yet, of little real relevance for the global South but Asian examples have shown that it is possible to make a “policy-jump” to a lifelong learning approach once a certain platform has been achieved. In most countries which have a low Education for All Development Index, adult education is politically fragile, institutionally unstable and highly dependent upon external funding. By itself, the move towards a lifelong learning discourse changes nothing in practice. Adult education in these countries must revise its rationale and perspective if it is to break through the progression barrier between adult literacy and basic skills on the one hand, and further education and qualification on the other. A critical first step is to demonstrate that learning is socially valued, and that public policy is committed to fostering learning cultures.
Governments set policy to the level of detail they judge to be appropriate. Value can be added by pooling resources, knowledge and experience. For example, regional and international collaboration can build a common platform and a common monitoring system for adult education. This can supplement the making and carrying-out of national policy. Europe’s Lisbon Strategy has been instrumental in establishing common objectives and providing a forum for countries to exchange and debate.

Public policy needs to gear itself to establishing legal, funding and governance structures that can better link formal, non-formal and informal adult learning into cohesive systems.

To date, governance arrangements for education and training systems throughout the world have generally been predicated on a compartmental approach to serve different purposes and different target groups. They are characterised by rather chaotic top-down regulation processes which try to bridge between grassroots realities and formal channels and procedures. This tension is especially evident in adult education, because local diversity is so characteristic. There are advantages in this. The key actors in adult education are accustomed to working in the interstices; providers are agile in responding to highly diverse learners’ needs and demands; and partners have an increasing stake in supporting the development of citizens who can begin to contribute actively to the social and economic development of their communities and countries. However, the lack of strong institutional forms of governance remains problematic.

There are still too few opportunities for meaningful public participation in specifying frameworks of provision and funding, quality standards and indicators for monitoring and evaluation. This may explain why the more theoretical literature regards with circumspection the motives for governance reform. Some see reform as a back-door retreat of the state from its responsibilities to citizens and civil society, rather than the provision of ways to re-position and institutionalise decision-making and regulation as channels for responsible coordination between stakeholder networks to serve the public good (Sumner, 2008).

Lifelong learning governance rises above established educational policy-making by demanding more integrated, more accessible, more relevant and more accountable structures and processes (Griffin, 2001). The shift of emphasis towards learning entails the transition from system-controlled to learner-controlled education and training, in which people can gain greater access to open learning environments and networks of communication (Alheit, 2001). This will inevitably exert an impact on educational governance by privileging social learning and self-management systems (Raven and Stephenson, 2001).

Making democratic and sustainable educational governance a reality for adults throughout the world, whatever their starting-points and whatever they hope to achieve for themselves and their families, is a way forward. However, the best governance imaginable can only be effective when people are engaged in learning and have access to educational opportunities. As Chapter 4 will show, patterns of participation in adult learning indicate, above all, that equity and inclusion remain distant goals in all parts of the world. This is now more crucial in view of the global financial crisis, which, at the time of writing, continues to deepen, affecting employment levels and curtailing social benefits. The next chapter discusses how policy and governance play out in terms of the forms and types of adult education provision available.
A global understanding of adult education demands recognition of the full diversity of provision, purpose and content that is likely to be included in any meaningful definition. Adult learning is relevant to personal empowerment, economic well-being, community cohesion and societal development. As a sector, adult education contributes to alleviating poverty and unemployment, skilling the workforce, stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS, preserving and sustaining the environment, raising awareness of human rights, combating racism and xenophobia, supporting democratic values and active citizenship and strengthening gender equity and equality. All this is set against a background of the urgent need to raise levels of adult literacy, basic skills and key competences throughout the world and most acutely in the South.

Adults learn in all kinds of settings provided by a range of actors, from public authorities overseeing formal education and training institutions to companies and employers, trades unions, non-governmental organisations, charitable foundations, church-based associations and cultural groups. Directly or indirectly, provision represents the motivations and interests of different stakeholders. These may be broad-ranging, as in the case of public provision or narrower in scope, as in the case of continuing education and training provided by specific companies and employers.

With a broad array of purposes, adult education programmes range from basic literacy, numeracy and life skills through to advanced professional development for senior executives. They cover personal development and leisure-linked activities through to retraining courses for the long-term unemployed. They can range from consciousness-raising workshops to courses providing or upgrading ICT skills. They may also include capacity development activities meant for government and the NGO community who provide various public services. This variety of adult education provision has inevitably led to persistent debates over what does and does not belong to the sector. What is considered in one context as a valid form of adult education provision may not be in another, and so it is difficult to derive a common basis for comparison purposes or for a global perspective.

The effects of this diversity on policy development were discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter focuses on the range and distribution of provision and providers as reflected in the National Reports prepared for CONFINTEA VI. It offers a typology for development in adult education provision, looking at current trends and the possible impact of the changing balance between public and private provision.

### 3.1 The broad range of adult education provision

#### Types of adult education provision

The National Reports amply illustrate the variety of adult education provision. Globally, basic education (mainly adult literacy programmes) remains the most dominant form of adult education, with 127 countries (82%) declaring this as one of their programmes. This is closely followed by vocational and work-related education (117 countries, or 76%). Life-skills and knowledge generation activities are also a significant form of provision for many countries (see Table 3.1). Regional differences in patterns of provision can also be observed: basic education is the principal form in sub-Saharan Africa (93%), the Arab
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1</th>
<th>Type of adult education provision, as recorded in National Reports, by region¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab states</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total National Reports</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic/general competencies (i.e. literacy)</strong></td>
<td>Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage ¹</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocational/technical &amp; income-generating/on-the-job training</strong></td>
<td>Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage ¹</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life skills, Post-literacy, Health issues</strong></td>
<td>Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage ¹</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge generation, innovation (i.e. ICTs, second languages)</strong></td>
<td>Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage ¹</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human rights education, civic education</strong></td>
<td>Kuwait, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria, Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage ¹</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liberal/Personal education (i.e. artistic, cultural)</strong></td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage ¹</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuing education</strong></td>
<td>Bahrain, Kuwait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage ¹</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second chance education</strong></td>
<td>N/A*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage ¹</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher training</strong></td>
<td>Yemen (unclear if for adults)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage ¹</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary education</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage ¹</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Percentages in the Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Lucia, St. Vincent &amp; the Grenadines, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkin Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, St. Lucia, Suriname, Uruguay</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, St. Lucia, St. Vincent &amp; the Grenadines, Suriname</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba, St. Lucia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia, Venezuela</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Reports prepared for CONFINTEA VI

Note: * Percentage of National Reports submitted in the specific region

* No answer
States (84%) and much of Latin America and the Caribbean (96%); vocational and work-related educational activities tend to dominate in Asia (83%) and Europe (89%).

It is not surprising that adult education provision in the South is predominantly centred on literacy programmes, given that this is where the majority of the 774 million without basic reading and writing skills live. In sub-Saharan Africa, literacy programmes are delivered in different ways: (1) reading and writing campaigns with strong political backing, usually centrally-controlled; (2) functional literacy programmes that seek typically to link literacy with livelihood or skills training; (3) basic education, equivalence programmes and/or formal primary school; (4) innovative participatory programmes provided by NGOs (for example, REFLECT – Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques); and, more recently, (5) family literacy programmes that provide parent-child or inter-generational literacy support (Aitchison and Alidou, 2009: 27-28).

Adult illiteracy and low levels of adult literacy are not problems limited to low-income countries (see Box 3.1), as shown so clearly by international surveys such as IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey, OECD and Statistics Canada, 1995) and ALL (Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, OECD and Statistics Canada, 2005) and UNESCO-OREALC’s (2008) survey in seven Latin American nations. Many countries of the North have chosen to address literacy issues by providing adult literacy or basic skills programmes. Such initiatives respond to the economic consequences of poor

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**Box 3.1** Literacy programmes – a key area of provision

**Bolivia**

The national literacy programme “Yes I Can” has been in place since 2006, aiming to eradicate functional illiteracy in the country. Central to the programme are bilingual literacy courses in Castilian and in native languages such as Aymara, Quechua and Guarani.

**Cuba**

The literacy programme “Yo Si Puedo” (Yes I can) consists of the development and implementation of a method for learning literacy, a system of teaching and learning that is based on the use of radio or television, a system for the training of those involved in the programme, and a model of assessing learning and social impact.

**Germany**

The www.ich-will-schreiben-lernen.de platform offers internet-based learning modules for self-study courses in reading, writing, mathematics and English. The anonymous nature of this course means that individuals are more inclined to participate; the fact that learners are able to take the course at any place, at any time and at their own pace are additional key benefits.

**Ghana**

The Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation promotes mother-tongue literacy in Northern Region and Western Region rural communities. The World Vision Ghana Rural Water Project (GRWP) is a special project in this context, aiming to foster the long-term sustainability of water and sanitation programmes and adult literacy as a part of this effort, reaching almost 6,000 local people who have learned to read and write as part of the water and sanitation training programme.

**India**

Zila Saksharta Samiti (ZSS) runs the ‘Each One Teach Two’ programme, in which one 9th or 11th grade school student volunteer works with two local adults needing literacy education. Students receive training beforehand, for which they receive credit and certificates of recognition.
Iran
The Reading with Family Project aims to promote self-directed learning and self-reliance in reading, with back-up support from instructors as observers and guides. The idea is to bring reading into the social sphere of the family, so that all members learn and benefit together.

Jordan
The “District without Illiteracy Project” is for men and women who are over 15 years old who live in rural districts. The project is not only designed to eliminate illiteracy but also to improve citizens’ perceptions of scientific, cultural and social aspects through the use of innovative teaching methodologies.

Kenya
Adult literacy facilitators are encouraged to work with community groups, in order to infuse literacy learning as an integral component of the groups’ income-generating activities, thus lending literacy a clear purpose and an immediate application.

Mozambique
Complementary youth and adult literacy programmes focus their content on HIV-AIDS, malaria and cholera prevention, ‘green medicine’ and environmental issues, including exploration and sustainable use of natural resources and community rights.

Namibia
The Family Literacy Programme supports children’s educational progress through their parents, targeting families in disadvantaged communities. The programme equips parents of 1st-grade children with the knowledge and skills needed to support their children’s learning at home, focusing on the transition between pre-primary education and primary school. Parents thus become their children’s first teacher. The programme’s outcomes are evaluated with standardised instruments and monitored by district and regional coordinators.

Norway
The Family Learning initiative aims to improve future prospects, quality of life and motivation for learning for the whole family, by building on and strengthening families’ existing competences and resources. The concept has been used in connection with Norwegian language courses for adult newcomers to the country for some years, with relevant content (for example, information about local community services) shared in everyday family and community contexts.

Serbia
Co-funded by the Serbian government and the Roma Education Fund, basic adult education programmes for Roma communities offer both basic general education and initial vocational training leading to a first recognised qualification.

Slovakia
The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family has emphasised the need for a “new literacy” and has developed programmes linking literacy with workplace skills.

Uganda
In Bugiri District the NGO Literacy and Basic Education (LABE) has been running Family Basic Education (FABE) since 2000; by 2005, it was operational in 18 schools, reaching at least 1,500 families. This district is one of the poorest in Uganda, with well-below average primary school achievement and one of the poorest literacy rates in the country – especially amongst women.

United States of America
Family literacy programmes address the family as a whole, providing English language and literacy instruction for adults and children. Typically, such programmes include information and learning about parenting, child development and child literacy.

Source: National Reports prepared for CONFINTREA VI
Box 3.2  
Examples of vocational education and training initiatives

**Austria**
At the AMS’s Career Guidance Centres (BerufsInfoZentren, BIZ) interested individuals have at their disposal a large selection of free information media about occupations, employment options, vocational education and training (VET) and continuing education and training (CET) paths. The AMS offers state-of-the-art mediatheques at some 60 sites across Austria. There is free access to brochures, information folders, video films and PCs providing information about occupations, VET, CET, the labour market and job opportunities.

**Botswana**
A significant development for Botswana in the area of adult vocational education and training has been the establishment of the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA). BOTA has introduced a system of accrediting vocational programmes both within and outside the mainstreams of provision. BOTA has established the National Vocational Qualifications Framework that serves as a guide to various providers.

**Kuwait**
The work of the Ibn Al-Haitham Centre for In-Service Training is based on the premise that there is a single route for human development of Kuwaiti Society: training of all social groups in various training institutes and through special courses. The Centre seeks to raise the levels of the skills of working citizens to the highest level of progress achieved in their various professions.

**St. Lucia**
The new adult education programme, NELP, is considered innovative. Since its creation it has served to afford adults who were not literate in St. Lucia a second chance in obtaining basic literary skills as well as technical/vocational or enrichment skills. These are adults who otherwise would not be able to pursue any studies via any of the existing adult education providers. A high proportion of learners are enrolled in classes for the Caribbean Certificate Examination as well as in information technology and other technical areas.

**Uzbekistan**
The Mobile Training Team (MTT) in vocational education was initiated with the support of UNESCO in 2004. Its objectives are to disseminate new learning materials nationwide and to develop professional skills, to provide updated retraining facilities for educators, and to establish close collaboration networks with potential partners. MTT contributes to community empowerment by organising training seminars on new educational technologies and methodologies, retraining courses in priority areas, and virtual libraries on various subjects in education.

Source: National Reports prepared for CONFINT EA VI
The private sector is more likely to be involved in continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and workplace learning than in other forms of provision. This trend, confirmed in recent National Reports, is in line with observations emerging from CONFINTEA V in 1997 as well as those mentioned in the Synthesis Report of the CONFINTEA V Review Meeting of 2003 (UIE, 2003).

In a number of countries, tripartite alliances between the state, civil society and enterprises have become commonplace; these public-private partnerships (PPPs) have taken on an increasingly important role as public education budgets have failed to meet the rising demand for education and qualification, not least in general and vocational adult learning.

National Reports show that secondary schools and colleges are also involved in providing basic education as part of second-chance opportunities for adults. In many cases, further and higher education institutions provide continuing education – traditionally through ‘extra-mural studies’ departments, and more and more through courses carrying specific recognised diplomas and certificates with an increasingly vocational orientation. These patterns are especially marked in Europe and North America.

An ever-more common phenomenon is that of young adults who move in and out of education and training at different life stages, and who combine learning with work and family responsibilities. Providers are increasingly responding to these trends by developing IT-based open and distance learning. Higher education institutions like the National University of Malaysia have recently experienced a rapid growth in professional distance education programmes. The Korean National Open University (KNOU) has set up a state-of-the-art delivery infrastructure that can respond with high flexibility to the diversity of students’ circumstances and learning preferences (see Box 3.3).

Literacy resulting from social disadvantage and ineffective schooling. The mode of delivery in these contexts also varies, with the emergence of more ICT-based offerings. For example, Germany has developed an e-learning-based literacy support system to provide for flexible acquisition of literacy skills. Norway has established a website for ‘fun’ literacy training called ‘read and write’. In Ireland a ‘read and write’ TV-series was developed as part of its literacy strategy.

As finding work and remaining employed are key preoccupations in our societies, it is logical that vocational education and training, income-generating-related education programmes and other work-related learning opportunities figure as the second most dominant type of provision. Skills formation for work is indeed a prerequisite in our world with its fast-changing demands for different competences. Upgrading qualifications and acquiring a diverse set of know-hows is said to be a must in highly competitive job markets (see Box 3.2).

Improving other life skills (e.g. better health) is likewise necessary for individuals to be able to cope with their increasingly complex environments. The introduction of new ICTs has meant an endless generation of information and knowledge that people need to deal with. Educational programmes that equip adults to handle new technologies – permeating almost all areas of our life – are therefore responding to such a pressing need.

**Types of adult education providers**

Who provides adult education programmes also varies by region (see Table 3.2). While government remains the primary provider in much of the world, other stakeholders are associated with particular forms of adult education in different regions. By and large, basic skills and literacy programmes for adults are provided through the public sector and the efforts of NGOs. Several Arab States exemplify this trend: 1,200 Sudanese and 600 Egyptian organisations today contribute to national literacy and adult education initiatives.
Austria
Austria has a well-established variety of adult learning and education programmes for personal and professional development purposes, offered by many providers, including universities.

Estonia
Estonia’s adult education system requires higher education institutions to integrate ‘pure’ with ‘applied’ knowledge and to link these with business and capacity-building.

Malaysia
Many countries of the South have begun augmenting further education colleges and universities to include centres for professional and vocational education and competence development, as in Malaysia.

Poland
In Poland the future prospect of a rapidly-ageing society has prompted the development of Universities of the Third Age for older adults who are no longer fully engaged in the labour force.


Table 3.2
Stakeholder involvement in adult education provision by region, as recorded in National Reports and based on multiple responses (percentage of countries) 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of provision</th>
<th>Public Entity</th>
<th>Global Rate</th>
<th>Arab states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arab states</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>Europe and North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic education/ general competencies (i.e. literacy)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational (technical, income-related)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life skills, post-literacy, health issues</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge generation, innovation (i.e ICTs, second languages)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights education, civic education</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal/ personal education (i.e. artistic, cultural)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Box 3.3
University-based adult education programmes

Austria
Austria has a well-established variety of adult learning and education programmes for personal and professional development purposes, offered by many providers, including universities.

Estonia
Estonia’s adult education system requires higher education institutions to integrate ‘pure’ with ‘applied’ knowledge and to link these with business and capacity-building.

Malaysia
Many countries of the South have begun augmenting further education colleges and universities to include centres for professional and vocational education and competence development, as in Malaysia.

Poland
In Poland the future prospect of a rapidly-ageing society has prompted the development of Universities of the Third Age for older adults who are no longer fully engaged in the labour force.

Workplace learning, entrepreneurial and corporate education constitute forms of adult education provision, whose importance grows as the global economy becomes more knowledge-oriented. Many companies are increasing their investments in employee education and training as they recognise that corporate success largely depends on how well employees build their professional capacity to adjust to rapid and ongoing change. Larger firms tend to spend considerably more than smaller ones on training per worker, although resources tend to be concentrated on those at higher levels within organisations.

Meanwhile community learning centres have been set up to provide flexible programmes for adults. Common in Asia, these centres usually include reading spaces and computer facilities, an example of providing a literate environment at community level (see Box 3.4).

Organised learning across national boundaries has gained ground, spearheaded and benchmarked by multi-national global corporations. The concept of competence development, where learning outcomes can be measured and tracked, is central to this trend. Education and training at one site is almost synchronously shared and exchanged with other parts of the globe. Motivated by these developments, global education and training companies have begun selling their education and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Governmental Organisation / Civil Society Organisation</th>
<th>Global Rate</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Global Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>Europe and North America</td>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 2: Based on frequency count of responses to Question 2.1.2: Please list and describe briefly the adult learning and education programmes in your country the following items a) Different types of providers (governmental, non-governmental, corporative/private, incl. institutions of higher education) of adult learning and education. b) Areas of learning they address.

Source: National Reports prepared for CONFINTEA VI
Box 3.4

Community learning centres – examples of provision at the community level

UNESCO APPEAL (Asia-Pacific Programme for Education for All) defines CLCs as “local institutions outside the formal education system for villages or urban areas usually set up and managed by local people to provide various learning opportunities for community development and improvement of people’s quality of life.” Through active community participation CLCs are adapted to the needs of all people in the community. The CLC is often located in a simple building. Its programmes and functions are flexible. The main beneficiaries of a CLC are people with few opportunities for education, especially pre-school children, out-of-school children, women, youth and the elderly. CLCs are seen as a model for community development and lifelong learning. They operate in the following countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. CLCs adopt different characteristics in each country. Partners include governments, ministries, national and international NGOs, UN Agencies (such as UNICEF and UNDP) and the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU).

(APPEAL and ACCU websites)

consultation services across nations. E-learning over the web is an important development with the potential to open up learning opportunities.

While the involvement of formal institutions and enterprises in adult education is increasing, non-traditional education providers are the norm in adult education. Non-governmental organisations, which are minimally involved in formal education institutions, are key providers of adult education programmes in many countries, especially in the South. Frequently replacing government provision, the offerings of NGOs range from basic literacy to vocational education to awareness-raising in health, women’s rights and gender equality. Funded in most cases by international NGOs, they are more flexible and able to reach isolated areas.

More recently, providers have focused on capacity-building and development activities aimed at government and civil society actors to improve the management and implementation of ongoing programmes. It is estimated that $20 billion is spent annually on activities and products to enhance the capacities of developing countries. Coming mostly from multilateral and bilateral donors, this amount constitutes approximately 40% of development assistance (World Bank, 2009).

3.2 An international typology for understanding adult education

A range of contextual factors helps account for variations in adult education provision across and within countries. It is possible to gain insights into what kinds of adult education are characteristic for countries, classified according to their position on the Education for All Development Index (see Box 3.5). Their positions are based on scores recorded in the EFA 2009 Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2008a). Countries with low EDI scores (under 0.80) tend to be located in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States region. Medium-level EDI countries score between 0.80 and 0.94; they are fairly evenly distributed across South East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Arab States. High EDI scores of at least 0.95 apply to countries in Europe and North America together with parts of Latin America, East Asia and the Pacific Rim (Appendix Figure 1).

Figure 3.1 offers a template for understanding how these factors come together, suggesting an international typology of adult education provision. As is to be expected, such a typology points to broad tendencies rather than definite positions of countries.
The EFA Development Index (EDI) is a composite scale based on proxy measures for four of the six EFA Goals (selected on the basis of data availability):

- Universal primary education
- Adult literacy
- Quality of education
- Gender

One indicator is used as a proxy measure for each of the four EFA Goals, and each EDI component is assigned equal weight in the overall index in accordance with the principle of considering each Goal as being of equal importance.

The EDI value for a particular country is thus the arithmetic mean of the observed values for each component. Since these components are all expressed as percentages, the EDI value can vary from 0 to 100% or, when expressed as a ratio, from 0 to 1. The higher the EDI value, the closer the country is to achieving Education For All as a whole.

Source: UNESCO, 2009: 244

Box 3.5

Education for All Development Index (EDI) initiatives

“The EFA Development Index (EDI) is a composite scale based on proxy measures for four of the six EFA Goals (selected on the basis of data availability):

- Universal primary education
- Adult literacy
- Quality of education
- Gender

One indicator is used as a proxy measure for each of the four EFA Goals, and each EDI component is assigned equal weight in the overall index in accordance with the principle of considering each Goal as being of equal importance.

The EDI value for a particular country is thus the arithmetic mean of the observed values for each component. Since these components are all expressed as percentages, the EDI value can vary from 0 to 100% or, when expressed as a ratio, from 0 to 1. The higher the EDI value, the closer the country is to achieving Education For All as a whole.”

Source: UNESCO, 2009: 244

The typology suggests that profiles of adult education provision are dynamic and tend to change in relation to social and economic development. Countries with low EDI scores are most likely to concentrate their provision on adult literacy programmes while countries with medium EDI scores focus more on human resource development programmes. Countries with high EDI scores tend to provide a more comprehensive array of options including general adult education, community education, basic skills and literacy for adults, ‘second-chance’ education to achieve secondary level qualifications and certificates, university continuing education, continuing vocational education and training and company-based training, including programmes that are integrated into the workplace and on-the-job training.

Put differently, as countries become more developed, the provision of adult education expands to cover a greater range of content, purposes and programmes. In this accumulative process, existing adult education frameworks are not discarded, but supplemented by new ones. When the scale and extent of provision reaches a certain level of complexity, new ways of ordering and understanding the aims and contribution of the sector become necessary. This could be one important reason for the current development of national qualification frameworks, which attempt to position and relate different forms and levels of adult education and training to one another. European countries are particularly active in this regard, specifying commensurate relationships between formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes in terms of competences high on educational policy agendas. Elsewhere in the world, similar schemes are also being considered (for example, Australia, Malaysia, Namibia, New Zealand, the Seychelles and South Africa).

In general, private sector funding of adult education has expanded in the past decade, both absolutely (to respond more precisely to employer and company needs) and relatively in the light of public spending restrictions (Stevenson, 1999; Whitty and Power, 2000). In more affluent countries, private investment in adult education is rather extensive; in poorer, low EDI countries, private entities invest very little. Countries with traditionally weak public funding have experienced large-scale private
### Figure 3.1
An international typology of adult education provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Groupings</th>
<th>Category I (Low EDI countries)</th>
<th>Category II (Medium EDI countries)</th>
<th>Category III (High EDI countries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab states</td>
<td>Asia South and West</td>
<td>Europe and North America</td>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab states</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Key issues in adult education
- **Category I (Low EDI countries)**
  - Sustainable literacy and sustainable livelihoods; poverty reduction and HIV prevention; women’s education and education for indigenous groups; empowerment for social participation
- **Category II (Medium EDI countries)**
  - Community development, human resources development and continuing vocational education and training, social and economic integration
- **Category III (High EDI countries)**
  - Human resources development, personal and social development, social and vocational integration of new migrants, re-training for older and low-qualified workers, early childhood education

#### Adult education defined in terms of
- **Adult literacy**
- **Human resources development**
- **Lifelong learning framework**

#### Major providers
- **Category I (Low EDI countries)**
  - From international donors through to local NGOs in public adult learning and education organisations, community centres and higher education
- **Category II (Medium EDI countries)**
  - Private and public continuing vocational education and training organisations, community learning centres and via local associations
- **Category III (High EDI countries)**
  - Higher education institutions, further, adult and community colleges and centres, public and private/corporate continuing vocational education and training organisations, commercial training companies, civil society and social partners

#### Private: public balance
- **Category I (Low EDI countries)**
  - Public and international donors
- **Category II (Medium EDI countries)**
  - Emerging private market
- **Category III (High EDI countries)**
  - Public and private, with (quasi-) marketisation

#### Adult education and lifelong learning
- **Category I (Low EDI countries)**
  - Adult education lacking a lifelong learning perspective
- **Category II (Medium EDI countries)**
  - Adult education towards lifelong learning
- **Category III (High EDI countries)**
  - Adult education with clear lifelong learning perspective
sector shaping of provision in the past 15 years (as in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia).

The privatisation or commercialisation of certain types of programmes results in a dramatically-changed provision profile in adult education. The impetus for these trends is a widespread belief that privately-funded provision is more flexible to market demand, and that publicly-financed provision fails to match the workplace requirement for competencies. The strengthening of this notion has resulted in for-profit provision increasing its share relative to publicly-funded programmes (Drache, 2001; Meyer and Boyd, 2001; Stevenson, 1999; Whitty and Power, 2000; Williams, 2007).

Thus in many countries a commercial learning market has emerged and gained acceptance. In light of declining public financing for adult education, such a market operates under several assumptions: (1) responsibility for training is re-located from the state to the employer or to employees themselves; (2) adult education programmes are increasingly outsourced to national and trans-national education and training companies; and (3) there is pressure for the results of learning tend to be more recognised, validated and transformed into some sort of qualification or, metaphorically speaking, learning currencies, which may be exchanged for higher-social status or job positions, enabling individuals to recover the invested value. For many, the increasing for-profit provision of adult education has resulted from an increasingly insecure job market. Changes in economic climate threaten job security. This, in turn, elevates the value of academic or vocational qualifications in the eyes of employers, who use higher and higher levels of recognised qualifications to filter and select from the ever-growing pool of job applicants.

In sub-Saharan Africa and Asia the trend in adult education provision has been the growing involvement of non-governmental organisations. Mostly externally-funded, they are less bound by government monitoring. Few have a mandate to deliver programmes at the national level and, given their budget constraints, their work is mainly confined either to local programmes or specific target groups. The National Reports corroborate this pattern, which was already observed in CONFINTEA V and the Synthesis Report of the CONFINTEA V Review Meeting in 2003 (UIE, 2003) and which appears to be increasingly entrenched as the outsourcing mechanism.

The delegation of such operations to private adult education providers, including non-governmental organisations, has been developing in many contexts, without necessarily reducing national public budgets for adult education. Often monitoring and evaluation activities are also contracted outside government. In a few countries in Africa, the outsourcing (also known as faire-faire) of literacy classes is gaining ground (see Box 3.6). In this case, NGOs are the service providers, delivering a national curriculum with government funds. As with many subcontracting endeavours, quality assurance is a major issue.

As previously argued, patterns of adult education provision respond to social and economic changes. The corollaries (and consequences) of cultural and economic globalisation, together with the transition to knowledge societies – which impacts world regions and countries in both similar and differing ways – have implications for the structuring of all forms of education and training, including adult education. Governments slowly give up their direct involvement in adult education and responsibility is transferred to others: the private sector, NGOs and/or individuals. Alongside this development there is a notable increase in international and regional policy-making in education and training provision.
3.3 Conclusion

The development of market-driven adult education provision significantly changes the adult learning landscape, as does the growing presence of civil society organisations. The fluctuation and instability of public funds for adult education further underscores the sensitivity and vulnerability of this sector. With an unstable legal and financial framework, adult education provision is extremely susceptible to even minor economic or political change.

Except for the Nordic countries and those with established lifelong learning systems (as in the Republic of Korea) adult education provision in most countries is increasingly taking on the following characteristics:

- public provision is restricted to a minimum purpose at the lowest level;
- any provision beyond ‘minimum’ public supply is given over to the private sector, commercial providers or NGOs whose provision is subject to the laws of supply and demand;
- provision thus becomes short-term, dispensable and contingent on the availability of resources; and
- a weakened rationale for an elaborate and stable governance structure for the provision of adult learning and education.

As adult education provision becomes increasingly diversified and decentralised, there is an even greater need for co-ordination to secure resourcing, policy impact and public support. The quantity and quality of the provision of adult learning opportunities are, of course, determined by the overall social and economic environment but the priority given to this activity is a matter of political will. Public funding for adult education is heavily influenced by political ideology and the distribution of wealth in society. The social democratic political formations of, for instance, Germany and the Scandinavian countries encourage strong public involvement in politics, an involvement which is positively interconnected with democratic and voluntary participation in learning.

As the number and scope of private providers grow, the issue of regulation over the ‘invisible hand of the learning market’ demands attention. In some countries, the increasingly commercialised learning
market and its new rules seriously threaten equity and balanced development in adult education provision and participation. Given the decline of public involvement in adult education, a critical challenge revolves around how to prevent fast-growing profit-driven providers from dominating provision. There is a real need for government to maintain an interest in equity issues for economic reasons and for maintaining social cohesion.

The active participation of civil society organisations is one way to mitigate emergent imbalances. There is enough evidence to show that the programmes of these not-for-profit organisations yield positive results. Yet because of their mandate and resources, their reach and sustainability is limited (BALID, 2009).

In addition to the balance of public-private provision, a key concern is the scope and coverage of adult education programmes. Even though programmatic variety is evident in many countries, the issue of who benefits from existing provision needs to be addressed. Rural and indigenous populations, migrants, people with special learning needs and prison inmates typically have restricted access to programmes, thereby maintaining or even deepening inequalities rather than reducing them.

As the next chapter will show, the majority of those excluded from adult learning opportunities often belong to already-marginalised sections of the population. A profit-driven framework for adult education provision will inevitably reinforce their exclusion.
PARTICIPATION AND EQUITY IN ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education provides a means to address the development challenges of the 21st century. It enables people to acquire knowledge, skills and values which allow them to improve the quality of their present and future lives. It helps people to discover what resources they need, identify new possibilities to acquire them and, most importantly, to use the resources at their disposal to fulfil their aspirations. In short, access to, and participation in, relevant and appropriate adult education are fundamental to personal, economic and societal development.

Equity was a key issue of the CONFINTEA V deliberations. It must certainly be central to any new vision of adult learning and education. As previous chapters underscore, equitable access and participation are clear expressions of sustainable educational inclusion and social justice. People of all ages have the right to basic education, which is a prerequisite for further learning.

In reality, however, overall participation rates in adult education in most countries are low, and there are very significant inequalities of access and participation both within and between nations. This chapter first reviews patterns of participation in adult education across groups of countries and sets out the main reasons for non-participation. It then specifies major obstacles to raising participation levels and concludes by proposing the directions in which adult learning and education policy must move if these obstacles are to be overcome.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Low overall rates of participation

Describing and analysing international adult education participation patterns are fraught with difficulties, given the paucity of comparative statistical data related to adult learning and education. This is acutely the case for the countries of the South. Nevertheless, of the 154 National Reports submitted in preparation for CONFINTEA VI, 29 cited participation rates in adult education while 66 presented participation rates in literacy programmes (see Table 4.1). This represents an overall increase when compared with the data compiled for CONFINTEA V. Nevertheless, the quality and comparability of available data from the 2008 National Reports, especially from developing countries, are problematic. In far too many cases, data on adult education lack historical reference points and are insufficiently comprehensive in their coverage.

In many cases countries only provide enrolment data in government-led programmes; data on participation in NGO programmes are typically sparse or non-existent. In other cases, the available information do not reflect a broad understanding of adult learning and education such as, for example, the inclusion of participation in employer-provided and/or -funded training. Thus statistics on adult education for most countries of the South must be viewed with caution, since reported figures may under-estimate actual participation levels.

It is only for high-income countries, and a select set of developing nations, that fairly robust and comparable data have been available since the mid-1990s. They cover participation in adult education and its provision. They also include information on the characteristics of adult participants and
### Table 4.1
Information on participation in adult education, by type of programme and sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions/number of countries with reports</th>
<th>Arab states</th>
<th>Asia-Pacific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment rates in highschools and/or universities</td>
<td>Iraq, Kuwait, Oman</td>
<td>Bhutan, China, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mongolia, New Zealand, Palau, Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment rates in vocational education and training</td>
<td>Kuwait, Libya, Palestine, Yemen</td>
<td>Bhutan, China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation rates in literacy programmes</td>
<td>Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen</td>
<td>Afghanistan, China, India, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation rates in adult learning and education</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Australia, Palau, Republic of Korea, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation rates in specific adult education programmes</td>
<td>Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Yemen</td>
<td>Bhutan, Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Reports prepared for CONFITEA VI
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Europe and North America</th>
<th>Latin America and Caribbean</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Botswana, Cape Verde, Namibia, Sao Tome &amp; Principe, Seychelles, United Republic of Tanzania</td>
<td>154</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria, Belgium (Flemish), Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Peru, St. Lucia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria, Belgium (Flemish), Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Ireland, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Peru, St. Lucia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (French), Canada, France, Ireland, Slovenia, United States of America</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, St. Lucia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (Flemish), Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent &amp; the Grenadines</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria, Belgium (Flemish), Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United States of America</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, St. Lucia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zimbabwe</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
can suggest explanations for the observed variations in participation. This section therefore relies heavily on the comparable information available for many countries of the North (mainly OECD countries), but also includes additional, though often non-comparable, programme-level data for some countries of the South.

Overall, while there is some improvement in participation rates in adult education since CONFINTEA V, in most countries they remain unacceptably low. The proportion of adults who have not completed primary schooling or its equivalent is evidence of a large unmet demand for adult basic education. Appendix Table 2 illustrates this unmet challenge for large segments of the population aged 25 and older. At least 18% of the world’s adults have not completed primary schooling or ever been to school. This rate reaches 30% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 48% in the Arab States, 50% in sub-Saharan Africa and 53% in South and West Asia. Given that for many of the poorest countries in the world, no data are available at all, it is certain that were these countries to be included in the estimates given in Appendix Table 2, average rates of adults not completing primary schooling would be even higher.

The picture is mixed for some countries in Europe and North America, where adult education surveys are able to track patterns of participation. In Finland, for example, surveys in 1980, 1990, 1995 and 2000 concluded that there was a doubling of the participation rate over 20 years. Three national household education surveys undertaken in the United States of America in 1995, 1999 and 2001 indicate a growing rate of participation in adult education from 40% to 45% and 46% respectively. The first Europe-wide adult education survey, covering 29 countries, carried out between 2005 and 2006, reveals a wide range of divergence from the European average of 35.7%, with Sweden having the highest participation rate at 73.4% and Hungary having the lowest at 9.0% (see Table 4.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2</th>
<th>Participation by adults in formal or non-formal education and training, by country, gender and age, 2007 (percentages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom</td>
<td>EU average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Countries with available comparable data on adult education activity can be divided into four distinct groups based on participation levels (see Box 4.1). This classification is based on data in Appendix Table 3 showing the proportion of adults aged 16 to 65 (excluding regular full-time students aged 16 to 24) who participated in any organised form of education or training within a 12-month reference period. Very few countries have participation rates at or above 50%, except for a number of European Nordic countries (Group 1). At the other end of the scale, several southern and eastern European countries – and Chile – fall into a group with the lowest participation levels. A study conducted in Brazil suggests a participation rate there of 16%.

In general, adult education participation rates are positively correlated with a country’s level of economic development as measured by per capita GDP: on average, the more prosperous the country, the higher the participation rate. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 cross-tabulate data to show how per capita GDP relates to the rate of participation in adult education and to the functional adult literacy rate. In both figures, the relationship is positive. However, there are interesting country variations. For example, participation rates in the Nordic countries are significantly higher than countries with similar levels of per capita GDP such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. While New Zealand, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Portugal have similar income levels, participation rates are considerably higher in the first two than in the latter two countries.

Differences between income level and participation rate in adult education tend to be wider in countries of the South, especially among low-income countries.

(Data for Brazil are available from a survey carried out by two NGOs which found that in 2007, 16% had taken a non-formal education course in the last 12 months, 31% had done so previously to this, and 52% had never done so. The results confirm an earlier survey from 2001, so this would place Brazil in the group of countries with participation levels of under 20% (see Box 4.1).

(Brazil National Report prepared for CONFINTEA VI)

Box 4.1

Country groupings by participation in organised forms of adult education in the previous year, population aged 16-65

Group 1: Participation rates close to or exceeding 50%
This Group comprises the Nordic countries, including Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

Group 2: Participation rates between 35% and 50%
This Group includes countries of Anglo-Saxon origin: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. A few of the smaller Central and Northern European countries, including Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland, as well as the Caribbean archipelago of Bermuda, are also among this group.

Group 3: Participation rates between 20% and 35%
This Group features the remainder of Northern European countries including Belgium (Flanders) and Germany as well as Ireland. Also among this Group are some Eastern European countries, namely Czech Republic and Slovenia, and some Southern European countries including France, Italy and Spain.

Group 4: Participation rates consistently below 20%
This Group includes the remaining Southern European countries, namely Greece and Portugal, as well as some additional Eastern European countries, Hungary and Poland, and the only South American country with comparable data, Chile.

See also Desjardins et al., 2006: 36 and Rubenson and Desjardins, 2009: 197.)
Figure 4.1
Relationship between per capita GDP and rate of participation in adult education

Figure 4.2
Relationship between per capita GDP and functional literacy rate

Functional literacy rate, defined as in International Adult Literacy Survey
In some CONFINTSEA VI National Reports, the evidence suggests that these differences may have increased in recent years.

Large differences in adult education participation between countries at different development stages are to be expected. However, variation between countries at the same development stage suggests that participation is not solely a function of income level (per capita GDP), but a consequence of other factors, perhaps particularly the impact of public policy. Several factors emerge from a reading of the National Reports:

- The degree to which public policies are supportive of adult education
- The extent to which governance and provision structures foster and promote adult participation in education and learning opportunities at work
- How much communities attach social value to adult learning and education
- The level of political commitment to diverse learning cultures and regard for learning as a means to improve social cohesion.

These factors help explain why some countries are more able than others at comparable per capita income levels to attain higher participation levels and relatively lower levels of inequity in access. Addressing equity issues is therefore paramount. One explanation for the success of adult education in the Nordic countries (Group 1) is that, for various historical, social and cultural reasons, these countries have established public policies that promote adult education, foster favourable structural conditions, target barriers to participation, and ensure that disadvantaged groups have equal opportunity to participate in adult education. Existing research reveals that differences among nations are not necessarily due to the existence of barriers to participation but rather to the conditions that allow persons and groups to overcome such barriers.

### 4.2 Inequity in participation

Within countries levels of participation vary according to socio-economic, demographic and regional factors, which reveal structural deficiencies in access to adult education.

Lack of comparable data limits the analysis of the characteristics of adult participants internationally. Apart from countries in Europe and North America, there is extremely limited information on adult education participation levels broken down by age, income, ethnicity, language and educational background.

Figures obtained from the countries of the North (see Appendix Table 3) show markedly lower rates for older workers and senior citizens, adults with low levels of education and low levels of skills, those working in low-skill jobs and the unemployed, those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, and immigrants, migrants and ethnic minorities. These patterns are consistent across countries, but the extent of the disparities between such social groups varies from country to country (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000; 2005). As previously mentioned, inequalities are substantially less pronounced in the Nordic countries (Group 1).

In the United States of America, the data from the national household education survey show differences in participation vis-à-vis key demographic variables. As in Europe, participation rates are higher in younger cohorts. Educational attainment and household income are positively related to participation in adult education. Race and ethnicity are also important factors in adult education participation (see Table 4.3).

Patterns of participation for women in Europe and North America are not as straightforward, with some countries experiencing lower rates than for males and others showing higher rates of participation, as the data displayed earlier in Table 4.2 illustrate. In general, gender disparities in participation rates and achievement are much greater in the countries of the South than of the North. They are especially prevalent in the Arab States, Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
## Table 4.3
Formal adult education participation rates, by selected demographic characteristics and type of educational activity, USA, 2004-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Number of adults (thousands)</th>
<th>Any formal adult education</th>
<th>ESL classes</th>
<th>Basic skills/GED classes</th>
<th>Part-time college degree program (1)</th>
<th>Part-time vocational degree/ diploma program (2)</th>
<th>Apprenticeship (1)</th>
<th>Work-related courses</th>
<th>Personal-interest courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 24 years</td>
<td>25,104</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34 years</td>
<td>38,784</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 years</td>
<td>42,890</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years</td>
<td>41,840</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64 years</td>
<td>29,068</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years or older</td>
<td>33,922</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>101,596</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>110,011</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race / ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>146,614</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>23,467</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>26,101</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>7,080</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>8,346</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest education level completed</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a high school diploma / equivalent</td>
<td>31,018</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma / equivalent</td>
<td>64,334</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some college/vocational/associate's degree</td>
<td>58,545</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>37,244</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>#</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional education or degree</td>
<td>20,466</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td><strong>Household income</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>$20,000 or less</td>
<td>34,670</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001 to $35,000</td>
<td>35,839</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,001 to $50,000</td>
<td>33,376</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>$50,001 to $75,000</td>
<td>47,114</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,001 or more</td>
<td>60,607</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
<td>106,389</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part-time</td>
<td>27,090</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed and looking for work</td>
<td>9,941</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in the labour force</td>
<td>68,187</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional / managerial</td>
<td>48,847</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales / service / clerical</td>
<td>66,218</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and labour</td>
<td>37,585</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>211,607</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: O’Donnell, 2006
The information gleaned from CONFINTEA VI National Reports suggests that there are large and systematic disparities in adult education participation between urban and rural populations, particularly in most countries of the South. The International Adult Literacy Survey data (see Appendix Table 3) indicate that the urban-rural gap in participation is wider than the gender gap in most high- and middle-income countries.

Older adults over the age of 45 also tend to be at a disadvantage when it comes to adult education participation. Until recently many countries had rarely targeted the older age groups in policies and programmes although now this group is a key target in high-income ageing societies. In low- and lower-middle income countries most government programmes give priority to younger adults. In some instances, programmes set upper age limits for access, typically age 35 or 40. As the Latin America-Caribbean Regional Synthesis Report (Torres, 2009) highlights, in Brazil and Mexico – the most populated countries in Latin America – over half of those over 50 years old either have low levels of education or have never been to school.

For the large majority of the countries included in Appendix Table 3, adults from migrant and minority backgrounds are at a greater disadvantage with respect to participation. This is true in the most prosperous countries but even more so in middle-income countries. A similar picture emerges for language status groups: people whose first language differs from the country’s official language(s) are typically unfavoured. Participation is likely to be even lower if, for example, dimensions such as disability compound marginalisation due to gender, age and race.

Disadvantaging factors are cumulative so that, for example, older women living in rural areas are least likely to participate in adult education of any kind, particularly if they belong to a minority ethnic group. The needs of such social groups are immense and complex, and are clearly not being met by current provision and policy.

Rural areas with large indigenous populations (for example, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru) have the lowest overall educational participation rates for people of all ages. Indigenous groups in the Latin American region thus remain largely invisible in policy and governance frameworks. Tribal, ethnic and religious minorities as well as indigenous peoples living in the Asia-Pacific region tend to be very poor, unemployed and in poor health. Few participate in any form of education and often lack access to basic public services. As a result adult literacy rates are extremely low, especially in poorer countries.

4.3 Multiple and structural causes for low and inequitable access to adult learning and education

Unless consciously redressed through equity-oriented policies, formal educational systems tend to reinforce social inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993). As Rubenson (2006) concludes, patterns of inequality in adult education mirror the distribution of social power and resources, and more precisely exemplify the degree to which justice, rights, responsibilities and entitlements prevail in a particular country. The Asia-Pacific Regional Synthesis Report (Ahmed, 2009) indicates a variety of economic, political, social and structural barriers that constrain women, the poor, older adults, ethnic minorities and indigenous groups from participating in adult education. Unequal participation rates have multifaceted causes, ranging from those located at the level of the individual learner to those linked to institutional and cultural contexts. As far as more developed economies are concerned the following typology is useful. It distinguishes among three types of barriers that generate inequities in access and participation: institutional, situational and dispositional (Cross, 1981).

Institutional barriers include institutional practices and procedures that discourage or prevent participation, such as a lack of provision or opportunity (at the right time or location), high user fees, or entry qualifications. These have an impact on adults of all ages, but especially the poor and least educated.
Situational barriers arise from an individual’s life situation at a given point in the family life-cycle (for example, care for children or parents) and working life for example, sufficient time or resources for study). Family-related barriers tend to be most intense in early to mid-adulthood and particularly affect women. Place of residence and factors related to linguistic and ethnic minority status can also be situational in nature. Institutional and situational barriers are often inter-related.

Dispositional barriers refer to psychological factors that may impede an individual’s decision to participate (for example, perception of reward or usefulness of participation, self-perception and other attitudes). These barriers are particularly prevalent among poor, weakly literate or elderly populations. Such attitudes can often be rooted in ambivalent memories of initial education and training, but also by judgements that adult education has little relevance for improving one’s life and job prospects. Although dispositional barriers are socio-psychological in nature, they too are interwoven with institutional and situational barriers and interact with them.

Box 4.2  
Impediments to participation in learning  

Analyses from the Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS) show that:

- “Canadian adults are more inclined to participate for job or career-related purposes than for personal interest.
- Participation in adult education is mainly instrumental. For example, even at age 55-64, job or career-related motives are still slightly stronger than personal interest.
- Women are slightly less likely than men to participate for job or career reasons, but they are twice as likely to enrol out of personal interest.
- Canadian adults that report job or career-related reasons are foremost looking to upgrade their skills for a current job. However, approximately one in two indicate the importance of study in order to find another job. Some of those upgrading for current, different or future jobs are also looking at possibilities for promotion.
- The follow-up question to those who participated for personal reasons reveals a quite complex picture. The two dominant motives – upgrading skills and personal development – often seem to go hand in hand.
- Institutional barriers are mentioned slightly more often than situational barriers.
- Among working Canadians, being too busy at work was the dominant reason for not starting a course. Only a small group saw lack of employer support as a barrier.
- Family responsibility was a substantially greater barrier among women than among men.
- High costs are reported as a major barrier particularly among young and low-income adults.
- The analysis of the profiles of the respondents who expressed ‘needed’ or ‘wanted’ training but did not participate suggests that a substantial segment of the workforce is working under conditions that do not stimulate their interest in participating in organised learning activities.”

Source: Rubenson, 2001: 34
Table 4.4
Proportion of population overcoming barriers to participation, countries grouped by adult education participation rate, multiple sources, 1994-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 (close to or &gt; 50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>39,414</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>34,111</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>37,174</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>53,334</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>36,365</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2 (35-50% range)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>41,234</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>38,155</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bermuda</td>
<td>34,882</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>35,729</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>78,985</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>37,960</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>26,110</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>39,963</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>45</td>
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Notes:
1. International Adult Literacy Survey 1994, 1996, 1998 (Columns 2-3); Eurobarometer 2003 (Columns 4-6); World Bank data on GDP and population (column 1). Also see Rubenson and Desjardins (2009: 193 and 203-204) for an expanded table of sub-categories of situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers.
2. IALS functional literacy rate is defined as the percent of adults aged 16 to 65 who score at proficiency level 3 or higher on the prose literacy scale as measured in the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS).
3. Data collected on barriers in the Eurobarometer Survey (2003) are grouped as follows.

Situational barriers: "My job commitments take up too much energy; My employer would not support me; My family commitments take up too much energy; My family would not support me; I would need some equipment that I do not have (computer, etc.)."*

Institutional barriers: "I have not the necessary qualifications to take up the studies / training course I would like to; There are no courses that suit my needs; There are no courses available nearby; I could not get to them; I would not want to go back to something that is like school (double constraint)."*

Dispositional barriers: "I have never been good at studying; I would not like people to know about it in case I didn’t do well; I think I am too old to learn; I would not want to go back to something that is like school; I do not know what I could do that would be interesting or useful; I would have to give up some or all of my free time or leisure activities; I have never wanted to do any studies or training."*

The available data on who participates reveals a consistent pattern across a wide range of countries and regions: those who have acquired more education tend to get more and those who do not, find it difficult to receive any at all. However, enabling participation can break this cycle, leading to an upward spiral of achievement for those becoming involved in education as adults.

Following Gray’s (1956) analysis, Figure 4.3 below illustrates how this polarising tendency (the so-called ‘Matthew effect’) operates as initial formal education, adult education and literacy practices in work, social and cultural life become mutually-reinforcing. Literacy is a foundational skill which is a prerequisite for continuous learning in our increasingly written environment. In modern society, functional literacy represents a fundamental capability that individuals need to convert resources in ways that enable them to achieve their goals. Functional literacy enables adults to engage in a wide range of literacy and learning practices – textual, visual and digital – at work, home and in the community (see OECD and Statistics Canada, 1995; 2000; 2005; UNESCO-OREALC, 2007).

It is important not to see participation in learning as separate from other aspects of life. The nature of work environments and the social and cultural practices embedded in daily life are equally important in securing personal development. In fact, as Figure 4.3 illustrates, systematic learning opportunities are at the centre of a spiral. Workplaces rich in literacy practices and conducive to learning reinforce the upward development of knowledge and competence. By extension, embedding literacy and learning practices in everyday work practices not only fosters functional literacy but also shapes opportunity and life chances (Desjardins, 2004; Reder, 2009). The same can be said about social and cultural practices. Diverse and nurturing learning experiences raise awareness of complex social processes and interactions.

Figure 4.3
The upward spiralling effect of learning, literacy and literacy practices

(Adapted from Gray, 1956: 24)
(Pring, 1999), creating a greater interest in participating actively in social life and contributing to change.

Given the chance to learn, people have the potential for continued growth. In contrast, few or limited opportunities can lead to stagnation, decline, entrapment and isolation. This applies to communities as well as to individuals. Opportunities to learn are socially, culturally and economically bounded, and are thus distributed via complex societal mechanisms which are both explicit and implicit. In most societies today, awarding recognised educational qualifications which are acquired through basic, post-basic and/or continuing adult education is a very common way to structure life chances. It is therefore important to understand how qualification systems function and, more generally, the extent to which systems that validate prior learning and experience (via non-formal and informal learning) are equally accessible to all. Werquin (2007) pointed out that the Matthew effect applies to the validation of prior learning too: individuals who already have recognised qualifications are more likely to obtain further validation of their knowledge and skills.

4.4 Increasing participation rates and addressing inequity

This chapter has documented low levels and social inequalities in access to, and participation in, adult education – both between and within countries and world regions. Disadvantaged adults, especially those with multiple disadvantages, are least likely to participate in adult education. They tend not to perceive the benefits to be derived from participation, and they believe that little is to be gained personally from such investments. In addition they are more likely to find themselves in living and working environments that are not conducive to learning. The potential of adult education to help realise social and economic development and sustainable well-being has yet to be realised in most countries.

Using targeted policies to tackle barriers to participation

Policies are needed to address the double challenge of low participation and high inequality in adult education – in particular by reducing structural barriers to participation and combating individual scepticism about the benefits of adult learning. Such policies need to address institutional, situational and dispositional barriers in integrated ways. Table 4.4 earlier identified, for countries with available data, the significance of these barriers in depressing participation and distinguished between countries that are more or less successful in overcoming these obstacles. Learning from good practice is vital to progress in this area.

In the last decade, many countries have acknowledged the need for targeted policies to address inequalities in participation in adult learning. Much targeting focuses on the specific barriers that face adults in accessing education and training. Such initiatives can release time for participation in adult learning, remove monetary constraints and reduce institutional barriers. In practice, changing course formats, increasing distance and flexible learning options, offering monetary incentives and developing flexibility around entrance requirements have all been useful.

Measures can be implemented through direct targeting, compensating for market failures and for increased reliance on markets, mobilising contributions from all stakeholders through appropriate incentives (especially for NGOs and civil society organisations) and developing social and legal infrastructures for building and sustaining learning cultures.

There is a need for strong public equity policies which emphasise adult learning as a tool. These require the involvement of civil society organisations since the capacity for flexibility and vitality of such practitioners has been shown to be successful in targeting disadvantaged and rural populations.

Situational constraints on participation in adult learning and education can also be addressed by targeted policies. Policy options include improving access to health and social services, including childcare.
OECD, 2006; establishing measures to release time and subsidise participation in adult education, especially for disadvantaged groups; developing support for single-parent and child allowances to overcome family-related barriers. In Chad, for example, UNICEF established day-care facilities at community centres of adult education. Work-life balance issues – namely, flexible working hours, educational leave schemes and employer co-financing models – fall into a similar category for action. Active labour market measures that combine re-training and employment subsidies are also relevant elements of comprehensive adult education policies.

Establishing mechanisms to foster personal interest and motivation can help to break through dispositional barriers, especially if targeted among disadvantaged groups. While potentially costly, these measures are probably crucial for the poorest countries, where stimulating demand is essential to secure the levels and kinds of literacy needed to keep pace with cultural and economic modernisation. Also important are policies that generate the production and distribution of diverse print media for new readers, by forging partnerships with publishers and newspaper producers. Flexible programmes run by NGOs or local community organisations are an important means for attracting ‘new’ adult learners. Employers, unions and community organisations also have an important role to play in promoting literacy development in everyday working, social and cultural practices. Dispositional barriers can be weakened by mass awareness-raising and outreach campaigns, especially in conjunction with a mix of other strategies as, for example, in Gambia (see Box 4.3).

The need for targeted policies does not entail a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution for a given target group. There is value in meeting heterogeneous needs through diverse means. The range of policies found in the Nordic countries exemplifies how countries can address the diverse needs of their populations. This helps account for the relatively high participation levels among older adults (over 45) in this sub-region.

### Box 4.3
**Measures to mobilise adult learners in Gambia**

In Gambia strategies used by different providers in mobilising adult learners to participate include:

- Income-generating programmes and provision of micro-credit facilities to beneficiaries
- Skills training
- Home visits to inactive participants
- Linking access to loans with regular attendance
- Community sensitisation
- Involving (male) opinion leaders in planning literacy projects
- Providing grants
- Training of literacy participants to serve as development agents (nurse attendants, facilitators to work in their own communities, and so on)
- Prize-giving ceremonies
- Use of resource persons
- Employment opportunities

Source: Gambia National Report, 2008: 25

Lack of funds is but one element which clearly restricts participation in adult education. If family circumstances allow little time away from employment and work-related activities, then adults from poorer households will continue to be excluded from educational opportunities, unless learning can be linked with income-generating activities. Among others, measures to improve working conditions and pay, to waive fees and provide free facilities such as childcare can, and should, be considered in order to prevent income being an insurmountable barrier to adult education.

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**Developing programmes focusing on specific groups**

Alongside generalised policies there is a need to address the specific problems and needs of particular groups within countries. This kind of targeting is apparent from many National Reports. A notable tendency in low- and lower-middle income countries is the targeting of women and young people/young adults. However, only in a few countries are indigenous groups, rural areas and the elderly targeted, even though these are commonly among the most excluded from provision.
Box 4.4

Improving equity: examples of measures to improve participation in adult education

Afghanistan’s Constitution obliges the state to devise and implement effective programmes for balancing and promoting education for women, improving the education of nomad groups and eliminating illiteracy.

Eritrea’s adult literacy programmes target youth and adults aged 15-45 of both sexes who did not benefit from formal education in their childhood and early youth.

Lesotho seeks to reach herders, domestic workers, senior citizens, those living with disabilities, out-of-school youth, adults who have never to school and vulnerable communities touched by poverty, rural isolation and HIV/AIDS.

Madagascar’s literacy programmes target out-of-school children and young people, women, prisoners, military personnel and elected officials.

Malawi in particular wants to reach illiterate adults of both sexes, elderly people, those who are poor, unemployed people aged 15 and older; in addition, its programmes target orphans, displaced people, people living with AIDS and disabled people.

Mongolia prioritises (1) out-of-school children, youths, adults, those who have left school early and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and (2) children and adults who want to study via extension programmes and other alternative pathways.

Pakistan sets first priority on reducing illiteracy and in particular for rural people, the poor and disadvantaged, ethnic minorities, nomadic groups and tribal populations, refugees, those living with disabilities, girls and women, street children and child workers, tithed agricultural workers and domestic workers. Limited resources have led Pakistan to prioritise the following target groups: out-of-school youth and those who have left school early aged 10-14; the young illiterate aged 14-15 years of both sexes; illiterate adults aged 25-45, especially women.

The Philippines see distance learning as an alternative delivery mode that reaches out to learners – including children and young people – in underserved, high-risk and disadvantaged areas, especially those affected by conflict.

Thailand’s adult education has developed discrete provision to serve the following target groups: (1) 6-14-year-olds who are not in school, (2) 15-59-year-olds in general and (3) those aged 60 and older. Special target groups with special financial support include the disabled, street children, the hill tribes and minority ethnic groups.

Zambia targets vulnerable groups who are most likely to be illiterate: women, out-of-school youth and unemployed adults, particularly in rural areas.

Source: National Reports prepared for CONFINTIAE VI

Box 4.4 notes selected examples of specific target groups in countries of the South. These typically include women, out-of-school youth, street children, unemployed youth, indigenous groups, rural residents and, increasingly in recent years, disabled, migrant and refugee populations, as well as nomadic groups and prison inmates. Many Asia-Pacific countries have undertaken innovative programmes to encourage the participation of tribal, ethnic and religious minorities, not least through first-language adult literacy and basic education programmes. The aims and priorities shown in Box 4.4 are ambitious; actual implementation continues to lag far behind policy intentions (see Chapter 2).
Targeted initiatives exist in many countries, and examples of good practice can be identified (see Box 4.5). Closing the gender gap in literacy programmes is an important focus. Many sub-Saharan African countries now compile gender-specific participation data to better design projects and programmes specifically for women. They involve ministry departments responsible for women’s affairs more closely in implementing educational policies and, on paper at least, their governments and administrations subscribe to the principle of equal opportunities for women and men.

Active policies to bridge urban-rural participation disparities do appear to have positive impact (see Box 4.6). The use of traditional and modern technologies can be instrumental for stimulating demand and reaching people in rural areas. Radio has been an effective tool for decades, but now audio-visual media present viable options. The E-Mexico initiative is a leader in Latin America and the Caribbean with respect to using IT tools. Programme or community tele-centres or info-centres are especially important in promoting post-literacy programmes and sustaining functional literacy (as in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru). In Eritrea radio programmes are broadcast in four local languages to support literacy, post-literacy, agricultural and health programmes as well as targeting teachers.

Language issues are paramount when designing more inclusive adult education initiatives. Effective programmes enable adults to overcome language barriers by using appropriate languages as a medium of instruction (see Box 4.7). In Spain, the National Plan for the Social Integration of Immigrants provides Spanish language classes for adult immigrants; organises awareness campaigns and fosters cultural tolerance; and trains intercultural mediators and facilitators at regional and local levels (Keogh 2009: 26). In some European Union countries special programmes target the social and vocational integration of their

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**Box 4.5**

*Women’s Literacy and Empowerment Programme, Sindh Education Foundation, Pakistan*

The Women’s Literacy and Empowerment Programme (WLEP) works towards providing disadvantaged women with educational and self-development opportunities and contributes to their empowerment. It operates through 40 Women’s Literacy and Empowerment Centres (WLECs) which ensure provision of learning facilities. Teachers are hired from within the community and are provided with both training and ongoing pedagogical support by the WLEP team. Regular meetings with community members ensure their participation, involvement and ownership. Awareness-raising sessions on health, nutrition, early childhood development, cleanliness and hygiene are conducted with the learners, as well as with the community at large. To organise women and harmonise efforts for programme sustainability, women’s organisations have been established in each centre.

*Source: Pakistan National Report, 2008: 96*

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**Box 4.6**

*Education at distance centres in rural areas, Poland*

This project is designed to create about 1,150 centres throughout the country, located in rural areas only. They will contribute to reducing the disparity between villages and cities. The centres appear mainly in localities where, due to demographic changes, small schools are closed or threatened by closure. The centres are provided with internet-enabled computer equipment with educational software. The project also provides support from competent instructors, in the form of both remote consultations and short-term, direct instruction. For inhabitants of small localities, the centres offer non-formal education and an opportunity to improve qualifications. Thus, the centres can contribute to promoting the concept of learning throughout life, by increasing access to all levels of education, from post-gymnasium to the continuing education of adults.

*Source: Poland National Report, 2008: 30*
scattered Roma populations (see Box 4.8). Increases in life expectancy are prompting many governments to view age as a dimension of unequal participation – especially in the rapidly ‘ageing societies’ of Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. In Canada, the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers is a federal-provincial/territorial cost-shared initiative providing support to unemployed older workers in communities affected by significant downsizing or closures (Keogh, 2009). Important initiatives are emerging elsewhere: for example, the ‘Help Age Ghana’, project is designed to encourage the participation of older adults in education.

### Box 4.7
**Addressing language**

**Ulpan for Ethiopian migrants, Israel**

In Israel a special programme uses migrants’ native language. The Ulpan for Ethiopian Immigrants introduced a novel approach to second language instruction, offering basic educational instruction in Amharic, with Ethiopian-born teachers. Hebrew language and literacy are taught by a veteran Israeli teacher, assisted by an Ethiopian translator. The approach has met with significant success and is widely used in ulpan classes for Ethiopian immigrants. The ‘Open Door to Employment’ Programme for Ethiopian immigrants, which provides elementary learning and prepares learners to enter the labour market, is another success story.

*Source: Israel National Report, 2008: 12*

**The Karen Po project, Thailand**

This tribal group has its own spoken language, but no written form. The project, therefore, tried to match the sounds of Po language to Thai and develop an alternative alphabet. This method is used as the principle measure for teaching Thai to other tribal groups, and has been used to produce supplementary reading materials to promote bilingual learning as well as the management of informal education programmes for adults.

*Source: Thailand National Report, 2008: 68*

### Box 4.8
**“Second Chance” Project, Montenegro**

The “Second Chance – Literacy and Professional Development for Social Integration” project is intended for illiterate settled Roma people older than 15 in two towns (Podgorica and Nikšil), which have the largest numbers of Roma.

It is based on the national programme of elementary functional literacy, which in addition to elementary ability to read, write and calculate, involves mastering minimum knowledge and skills necessary for successful and quality implementation of various activities in work, family and social environments.

Upon completion of the programme, learners have a chance to enrol in the professional development programme for occupations which are in demand on the labour market. Completion of the IT literacy programme and driving courses improves their competencies and employment opportunities and social integration.

*Source: Montenegro National Report, 2008: 34*
Establishing learning communities

While learning is inherently an individual activity, it takes place in sub-cultures that reflect different ways of life. Community education, learning cities, learning festivals and other collective efforts that extend individual learning into the realm of community and societal learning can contribute substantially to the promotion of adult learning and education. For example, Saudi Arabia’s ‘illiteracy-free society’ programmes are models of good practice with a number of innovative features. Learning cities and regions in Europe and Asia or ‘Education Cities’ in Southern Europe and Latin America make for a new learning ecology in which the entire city actively participates as a provider of adult learning opportunities and activities.

4.5 Conclusion

The information received from National Reports and Regional Synthesis Reports on the issues of participation and equity has revealed the intransigence of the problems facing those who believe that adult learning provides a critical tool in the fight against poverty and exclusion. It is not enough merely to persuade governments and policy-makers of the vital role that adult learning plays in improving life chances and social justice, although this is a critical first stage. An equally momentous task is enabling those who would profit most from adult learning programmes to believe in themselves and see how adult learning offers a key to economic, personal and societal development. The case for adult education has to be directed at both

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**Box 4.9**

**Adult learners’ festivals**

Since the early 1990s, literacy celebrations, adult learners’ weeks and lifelong learning festivals have been mounted at local, national and/or regional levels worldwide to mobilise for adult learning and non-formal education. These promotional campaigns have created visibility and support for adult and lifelong learning.

At CONFINTEA V, delegates committed themselves to promoting the “development of a United Nations Week of Adult Learning”. UNESCO, on the initiative of a coalition of several UNESCO member states (notably the United Kingdom, Jamaica, Australia and South Africa), took up the issue, adopting a resolution in November 1999 launching International Adult Learners’ Week, which would “enrich International Literacy Day and strengthen its links to the larger adult learning movement to which it contributes”.

On behalf of UNESCO, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning coordinates International Adult Learners Week, linking national campaigns which are currently carried out in approximately 45 countries around the world. Addressing policy-makers, providers, cultural institutions, adult educators and adult learners alike, they have also helped to build cooperation, networks and synergies, and have provided arenas for adult learners to articulate their aspirations and to emerge increasingly as partners in policy dialogue.
funders and policy-makers and to potential participants. This requires adult educators to target multiple audiences as they wrestle with the issues involved. In order to move forward it is important to gain ground in a number of key areas.

First, and as a basis for action, more data on participation is needed for middle- and low-income countries. It is difficult to argue without facts and figures and the levers and insights that comparative data provides. The lack of information from the South leads to the risk that inappropriate solutions from higher-income countries may suggest, and lead to wasted efforts just where funding is lowest and efficacy most necessary. In data collection the need is for simple data accounts that can be easily collected rather than diverting vital resources to a bureaucratic struggle for sophistication. However, even in high-income countries there is scope for improvement in what is available: complex issues of definition and scope continue to muddy the water and undermine arguments for needed resources.

A striking pattern emerges from the National Reports concerning the intransigence of many of the participation and equity issues in adult education. In essence, those who have least education continue to get least. This is the “wicked issue” that adult education policy must attack. It is clear that generalised policy will not redress the balance, although a commitment to universal access must be maintained. Substantial resources, however, must be concentrated on those who have least. Improving the participation of disadvantaged groups must form the heart of any adult education policy. Policies here must take account not merely of the need for provision but also for the huge task of motivation and attitudinal change.

Lastly, and turning to the development of practice, the roles of government and other players – both from the private sector and from civil society – will need to be clearly defined and understood if resources are to be used effectively. Government can combat institutional barriers by giving sufficient resources to make a difference. The private sector can be persuaded to enhance learning in workplaces. However, practice with excluded groups needs the kind of flexibility that NGOs offer and the ways into communities that are their special skill. If targeting is to succeed, resources need to be available to these players (with appropriate controls and accountability) so that their skills are used to ensure the availability of cost-effective and quality provision to the most marginalised.

Ensuring access to, and participation in, adult education goes beyond increases in the quantity of participants. It is also about striving to improve and assure quality, to which the next chapter turns.