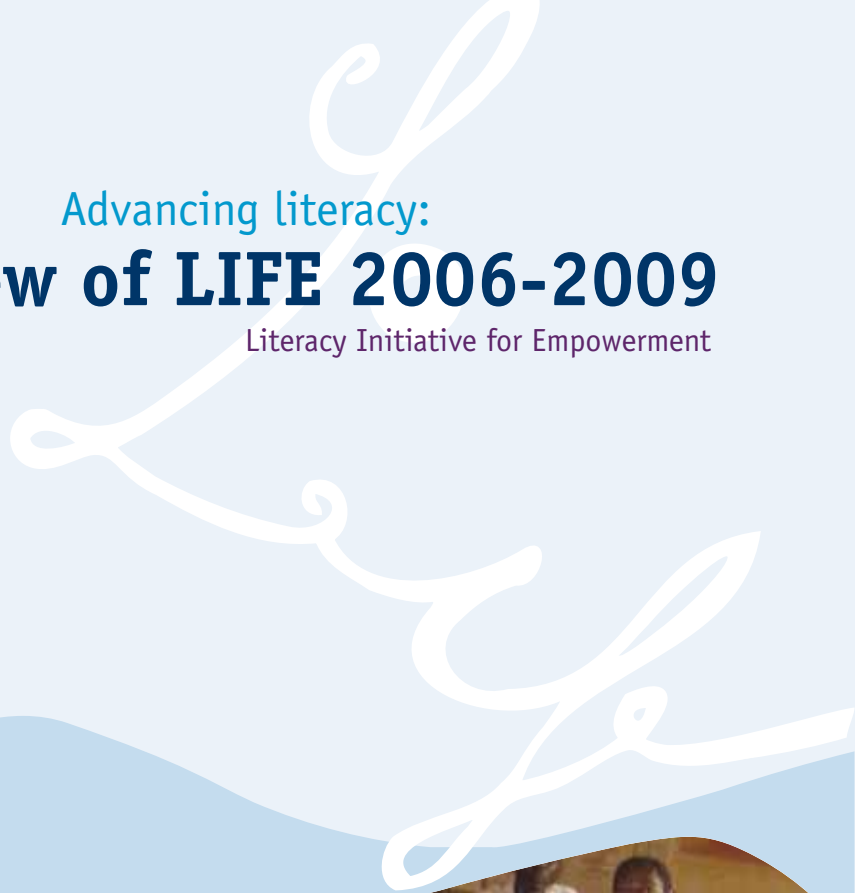


Advancing literacy:  
**A review of LIFE 2006-2009**

Literacy Initiative for Empowerment

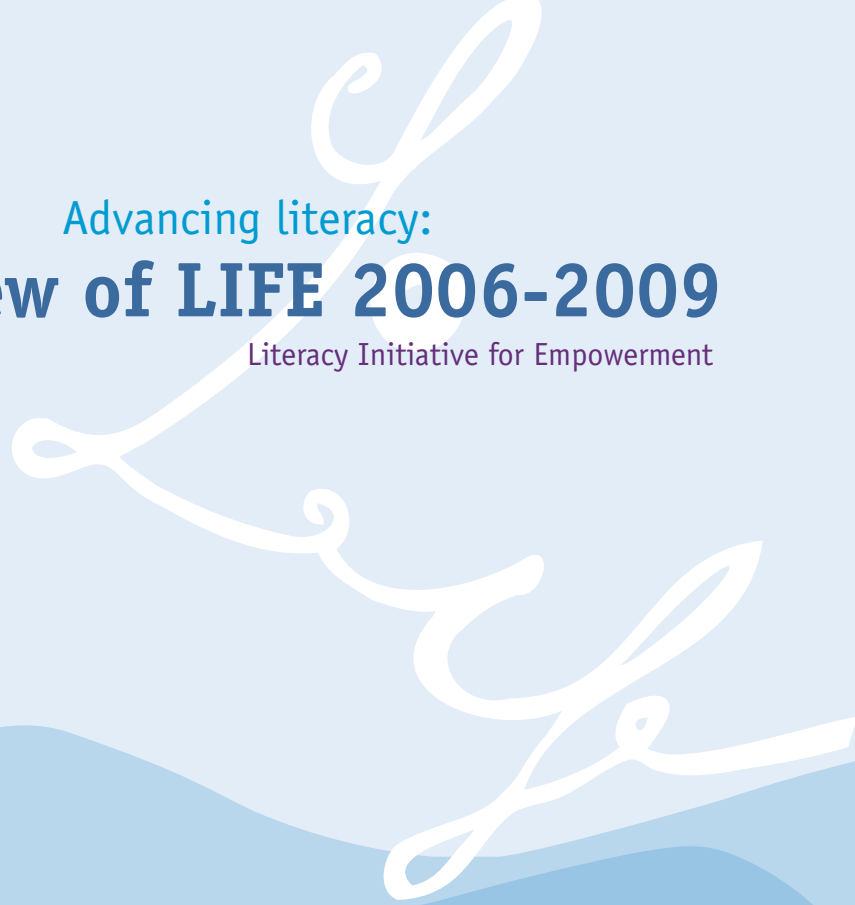


UNESCO Institute  
for Lifelong Learning



Advancing literacy:  
**A review of LIFE 2006-2009**

Literacy Initiative for Empowerment



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Institute  
for Lifelong Learning

© UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2009  
Feldbrunnenstraße 58  
20148 Hamburg  
Germany

ISBN 978-92-820-1168-3

Author: Ulrike Hanemann  
Design: Christiane Marwecki, cmgrafix.com

Printed in Germany by Girzig + Gottschalk GmbH

The authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this publication and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and represent no commitment on the part of the Organization.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

# Table of Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2. The story so far: landmarks and highlights of LIFE</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 Launching LIFE: first experiences	15
2.2 Coordination and facilitation: the backbone of LIFE	16
2.3 Refining the strategy: making LIFE operational for concrete action	17
2.4 Regional LIFE Meetings: creating and sustaining a momentum for literacy	18
2.5 A major challenge: getting LIFE started at the country level	20
2.6 Mechanisms and tools in support of LIFE	21
<b>3 Monitoring progress and assessing the achievements of LIFE</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 UNLD Mid-decade review: LIFE reported as one of the highlights	23
3.2 Evaluation of UNESCO's Strategic Programme Objectives: LIFE is proving an effective and efficient mechanism	24
3.3 Monitoring progress in terms of the four objectives and expected results of LIFE	25
<b>4. Success stories</b>	<b>35</b>
4.1 LIFE and development	35
4.2 Building partnerships and national ownership	38
4.3 Raising the profile of literacy through advocacy and communication	41
4.4 Mobilising additional funds and resources	43
4.5 Making the principle of solidarity work through South-South cooperation	45
<b>5. Challenges and lessons learned</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>6. Strategies for the way forward</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Annex 1: Countries participating in LIFE</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Annex 2: LIFE logframe</b>	<b>63</b>

# Foreword

by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura,  
Director-General of UNESCO

Literacy is an essential component of the right to education. Yet more than a sixth of the world's adult population can not read or write. Progress towards goal 4 of the Education for All (EFA) movement – raising adult literacy levels by 50 percent by 2015 – has been slow and uneven. The 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report predicts that on current trends over 700 million adults will still be illiterate by 2015. It is unacceptable that, in many countries, more than half of the adult population is still excluded from the benefits of literacy, reducing their ability to participate in development and decision-making processes.

Recognizing the magnitude of the literacy challenge, UNESCO launched the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE – 2006-2015). LIFE is one of UNESCO's three flagship initiatives dedicated to advancing the EFA agenda. It is also a key operational mechanism for achieving the goals of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD – 2003-2012). The LIFE initiative targets 35 countries that are home to 85 per cent of the world's population without literacy competencies. It is built on a foundation of genuine commitment and provides a new vision and course of action. Now that the initiative has been in place for three years, it is time to take stock, assess its achievements, identify lessons learnt and move forward.

UNESCO prepared the present Review of LIFE 2006-2009 with the following aims in mind: a) to assess the overall performance of LIFE and evaluate the results of its implementation at country level; b) to make a case for literacy; c) to share experiences and lessons learnt with interested stakeholders; and d) to contribute elements that will enhance discussions on how to advance the LIFE strategy and plan the way forward.

LIFE has achieved tangible results over the past three years. The policies and programmes developed within the framework of this initiative are contributing to improving the lives of millions of learners throughout the world. The analysis of LIFE processes at country level and the multiple lessons learnt from different approaches will help LIFE countries – and others – to formulate or revise their literacy policies and strategies in a way that is consistent with national development goals and strengthens the role of literacy and other key competencies in development efforts. This publication showcases a few of the numerous examples of how national policies have managed to respond better to needs on the ground and promote literacy learning among target populations. The gains that LIFE has achieved so far would not have been possible without the commitment and dedicated work of all the stakeholders involved: governments, civil society organizations, private providers, development partners – both bilateral and multilateral – and the international community as a whole. This network of collaborative efforts reflects the true spirit of LIFE.

The implementation of LIFE was, of course, confronted with a number of challenges related to the need to: a) develop a common understanding of what the initiative entails; b) create and maintain a momentum of awareness, commitment and urgency to address the literacy challenge; c) continuously mobilize and secure adequate resources to fuel the initiative and to make a visible impact; d) make interventions sustainable by anchoring them within national policies and institutions; and e) respond effectively to the increased demand for technical and financial support that LIFE has aroused through its advocacy events and demonstrable success stories.

One overriding challenge has been the need to improve the quality of literacy provision. Hence, LIFE strategies have focused on developing capacities at all levels in each of the target countries. To ensure that the personnel in charge of delivering good quality literacy learning programmes is suitably equipped to perform their duties, LIFE strategies have started by strengthening the capacities of senior and middle-level staff from governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations, and subsequently multiplying these efforts through cascade approaches.

At the same time, LIFE has gone beyond the borders of participating countries to enable them to access other national experiences, thereby expanding people's know-how, horizons and vision. It has also served to overcome traditional patterns of literacy promotion (i.e. the "more of the same" mode) by framing the literacy issue in the broader perspective of lifelong learning and sustainable development, and by sharing knowledge on innovative approaches to literacy.

In order to make real headway with EFA goal 4, LIFE will need to be supported and carried forward by strong partners. UNESCO will, of course, continue to fulfil its mandate by coordinating this priority initiative. However, achieving real progress will require the contribution of all parties involved – from LIFE country governments, civil society and the private sector, to bilateral and multilateral education development partners, other United Nations organizations and the international community as a whole. As a framework for collaborative action, LIFE has proven to be an effective means of moving forward to meet our moral obligation to serve all those who are still waiting to enjoy their right to literacy.

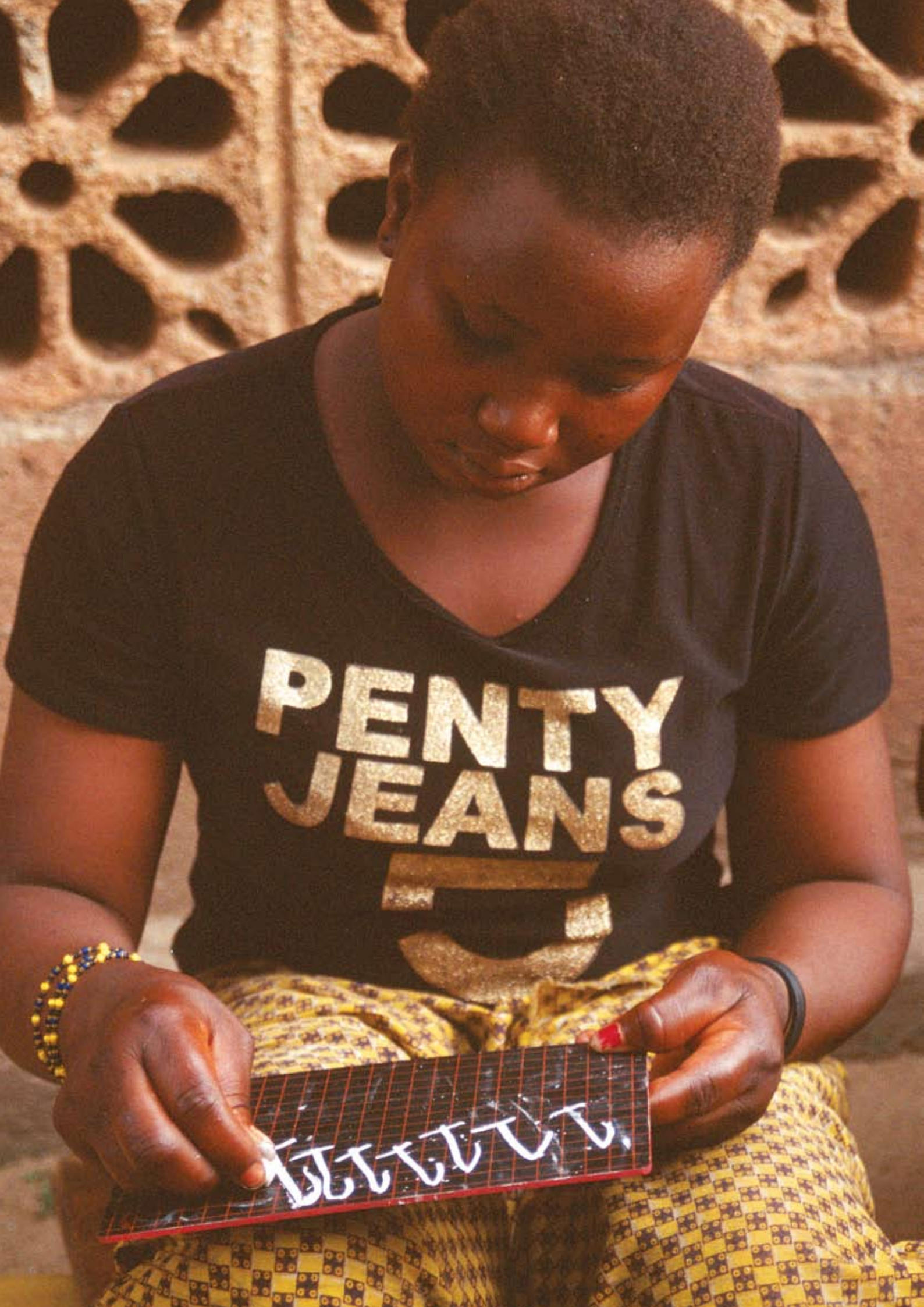
Since its inception, LIFE has evolved into a genuine movement for literacy and empowerment. We are now better equipped and more committed than ever to facing up to the immense challenges ahead and achieving our goal of empowering all people through literacy.

LIFE is one of the landmark programmes of my mandate, and I would like to thank all those who are providing resources and dedicating their efforts and creativity to bring it to success.



Koïchiro Matsuura,  
Director-General of UNESCO





PENTY  
JEANS

Handwritten text on a grid board, possibly representing a sequence of numbers or symbols.



# Executive Summary

When it became clear that existing literacy efforts would not be enough to enable some countries to reach EFA Goal 4 (a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy), UNESCO launched the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE, 2006-2015). 35 countries with literacy rates below 50 percent and/or a population of more than 10 million youth and adults without literacy competencies were invited to participate.

LIFE country governments, civil society, the private sector and development partners are expected to take a key role in its implementation. UNESCO's role, meanwhile, is to facilitate these country-led processes and provide or help to mobilise the support needed. After three years of implementing LIFE, there is sufficient evidence that it has indeed proven an effective framework for the acceleration of literacy efforts in many countries and that it is helping to transform a great many people's lives.

The chronicle of LIFE is marked by experiences that indicate a huge diversity of starting points and highlight the need to tailor strategic responses to suit the specificities of each country. Creating and sustaining a momentum for literacy is one of LIFE's strategic aims. Operationalising the initiative for concrete action and getting it started at the country level has been one of its major challenges. The LIFE implementation strategy – a learning process in itself for all stakeholders involved – had to start from existing policies and practices and adjust to the various situations in flexible ways.

The backbone of such country-led processes has been the facilitation provided by a network of LIFE focal points at each UNESCO Field Office and Regional Bureau, supported by other Divisions and Institutes, and coordinated by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). A wide range of advocacy, research

and clearing-house activities have been undertaken to support the implementation of LIFE. During this process, powerful South-South and North-South-South cooperation mechanisms have been established and a resource pack and online tools have been created in order to make relevant information on effective practices widely available.

Monitoring and evaluation have been built into LIFE implementation at all levels to generate evidence that allows UIL to guide the initiative. As the key operational mechanism of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), the 2008 UNLD Mid-Decade Review referred to LIFE as one of the decade's highlights. Furthermore, the 2009 external evaluation of UNESCO's Education Sector Strategic Programme Objectives saw LIFE as an effective and efficient mechanism which has made truly remarkable achievements.







*Skills training for youth in Indonesia (left) and learning to take accurate measurements in Afghanistan (right).*

This review assesses the progress of the LIFE implementation process in relation to the initiative's four strategic objectives: 1) advocacy and communication to make literacy a priority on the agenda of different stakeholders and create a momentum for jointly accelerating literacy efforts; 2) capacity-building for the development of policies for sustainable and empowering literacy; 3) capacity-building for the delivery of empowering literacy programmes of good quality; and 4) sharing knowledge and inspiring innovations to continuously improve literacy policies and practices. Numerous examples point to a renewed commitment to literacy, reflected in increased budgetary allocations, the mobilisation of new learners, stronger capacities among the policy-makers and literacy providers, the piloting and dissemination of innovative approaches to literacy, and in the flourishing of partnerships and South-South cooperations that have evolved.

LIFE has developed into a framework for sharing experiences and capitalising on these to improve literacy policies and practices. There are many success stories directly attributable to LIFE, some comprising inspiring innovations, which have and will continue to map the way forward as they are analysed, disseminated and adjusted to different contexts.

By zooming in on concrete examples of such success stories, we learn 1) how literacy can be embedded in broader development strategies; 2) how partnerships and national ownership can be strengthened to mobilise and sustain support for literacy; 3) how successful advocacy and communication activities can contribute to raising the profile of literacy; 4) how additional funds and budgetary allocations can be mobilised for literacy and adult education; and 5) how the principle of solidarity is activated through South-South cooperation as a means of achieving progress towards the goal of literacy for all.

In many countries, literacy is given a low priority by governments and donors alike. LIFE has addressed this issue with the aim of reversing this trend in 35 countries by advocating and working for change. Over the past three years, the implementation of



LIFE has faced a range of challenges, one being the mobilisation of sufficient resources to accelerate the increase of literacy rates.

While much work remains to be done in order to tap into LIFE's full potential and convening power, and to more resolutely address important issues such as gender and the specific learning needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, the initiative's first years offer us many important lessons that can be applied in subsequent years. Success factors included political will; the ability to adjust to specific situations; flexible approaches that streamline into existing policies and agendas; country ownership; and enhanced partnership models at all levels.

Altogether, LIFE has further enhanced UNESCO's comparative advantage in efforts to achieve literacy for all within the frameworks of UNLD, EFA and the MDGs. As the lessons learned indicate, we can only move forward if continued and concerted efforts are made to develop long-term and cross-sectoral policies for sustainable literacy that embed literacy in national development frameworks and allow literacy skills to be developed as a continuum alongside other life skills and key competencies.

Furthermore, we must increase our efforts to build a long-term commitment and ensure that the sustainability of literacy and NFE can be assured at different levels. There is also an urgent need for more and better-quality financing for literacy and NFE programmes – and this investment must prioritise the poor and disadvantaged. Both due to and in spite of the ongoing economic crisis, donors need to be convinced that aid allocations to literacy and adult learning and education must be increased.

The relevance of LIFE has been demonstrated and is widely appreciated. The initiative, which embraces a new vision for accelerating progress in literacy, will continue to act as a catalyst to enhance commitment, strengthen capacities, forge strong partnerships and enable mutual learning in order to make a real and tangible difference to the lives of millions of learners.



33 craies blanches et  
14 craies bleues.  
Combien de craies possède  
t-il?



$$23 + 14$$



# 1

## Introduction

UNESCO, in its normative function, considers literacy as both a right in itself and an instrument for achieving other rights. It is key to enhancing human capabilities, with wide-ranging benefits for all. Further literacy is a prerequisite for most forms of learning. Hence, it is a foundation for lifelong learning. It is not only crucial for economic, social, political and cultural participation and development, especially in today's emerging knowledge and learning societies; it also enhances people's sense of self-worth and efficiency, which in turn equips them to conduct healthy, productive and meaningful lives. Thus, literacy matters because it makes an important difference to people's lives!

However, as Member States' progress in achieving the six EFA goals was monitored, it became clear that illiteracy continued to receive minimal political attention and that existing efforts in a number of countries would not be enough to reach Goal 4<sup>a</sup>. For this reason, UNESCO launched the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE 2006-2015) in the context of the 33<sup>rd</sup> General Conference in October 2005 as one of the three core Education for All (EFA) initiatives<sup>b</sup> prioritised by the UNESCO Education Sector. As the organisation responsible for the overall coordination of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD 2003-2012), UNESCO created LIFE as a ten-year framework of collaborative action for enhancing and advancing national literacy efforts. In other words, LIFE was conceived as a key operational mechanism for achieving the ambitious goals of the UNLD and as a contribution to the achievement of EFA (in particular



<sup>a</sup> 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.

<sup>b</sup> The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), the Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA) and the Education Sector response to HIV and AIDS (EDUCAIDS).



Goal 3<sup>c</sup>, Goal 4 and Goal 5<sup>d</sup>) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

LIFE focuses on the 35 countries facing the most major literacy challenges: those with literacy rates below 50% and/or a population of more than 10 million youth and adults without literacy competencies. 85% of the world's non-literate population – the majority of them women – lives in these countries, of which 18 are in Africa, 9 in Asia and the Pacific, 6 in the Arab Region and 2 in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>e</sup>. LIFE's principle goal, therefore, is to empower people who have inadequate literacy skills and competencies, especially rural women and girls. According to the Vision and Strategy Paper<sup>f</sup>, the overall objectives of LIFE are:

- To reinforce the national and international commitment to literacy through advocacy and communication.
- To support the articulation of policies for sustainable literacy within sector-wide and national development frameworks.

- To strengthen national capacities for programme design, management and implementation.
- To enhance countries' innovative initiatives and practices in providing literacy learning opportunities.

Consequently, the strategic areas for action focus on advocacy and communication, policy and strong national capacities for sustainable literacy and innovation. Related activities include both upstream functions, such as political motivation and policy design, and downstream activities, such as capacity development for the implementation of good quality programmes and technical assistance for piloting innovative approaches to literacy.

Three key players are expected to implement the LIFE initiative: 1) the LIFE country governments, 2) civil society and the private sector, and 3) development partners, including the United Nations organisations. UNESCO's role is to: a) facilitate, at the country level, processes of collaborative action designed to reinforce national and international commitments to literacy (advocacy); b) strengthen and develop national capacities for the articulation of sustainable and gender responsive policies and programme delivery (capacity development); and c) enhance countries' innovative initiatives and practices in providing literacy learning opportunities of good quality (innovation). Gender and the prevention of HIV and AIDS are cross-cutting issues. Beneficiaries are those unable to access formal education, particularly out-of-school children, adolescents, youth and adults with no or insufficient literacy skills. The emphasis is placed squarely on disadvantaged groups, especially populations living below the poverty line and in rural areas.

It is now four years since LIFE was officially launched by UNESCO, and it is time to take stock by assessing its achievements to date, learning from processes at the national and international levels, identifying key challenges and effective practices, and discussing strategies for moving forward. This will facilitate the achievement of the strategic programme objectives 1 and 2 of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy 2008-2013 (34 C/4)<sup>g</sup> as well as the expected results for the Education Sector in the 2010-2011 biennium. One of the three biennial sectoral priority areas for 2010-

g UNESCO: Medium-Term Strategy 2008-2013, p.16-19 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001499/149999e.pdf>).



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

d 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.

e See table in Annex 1.

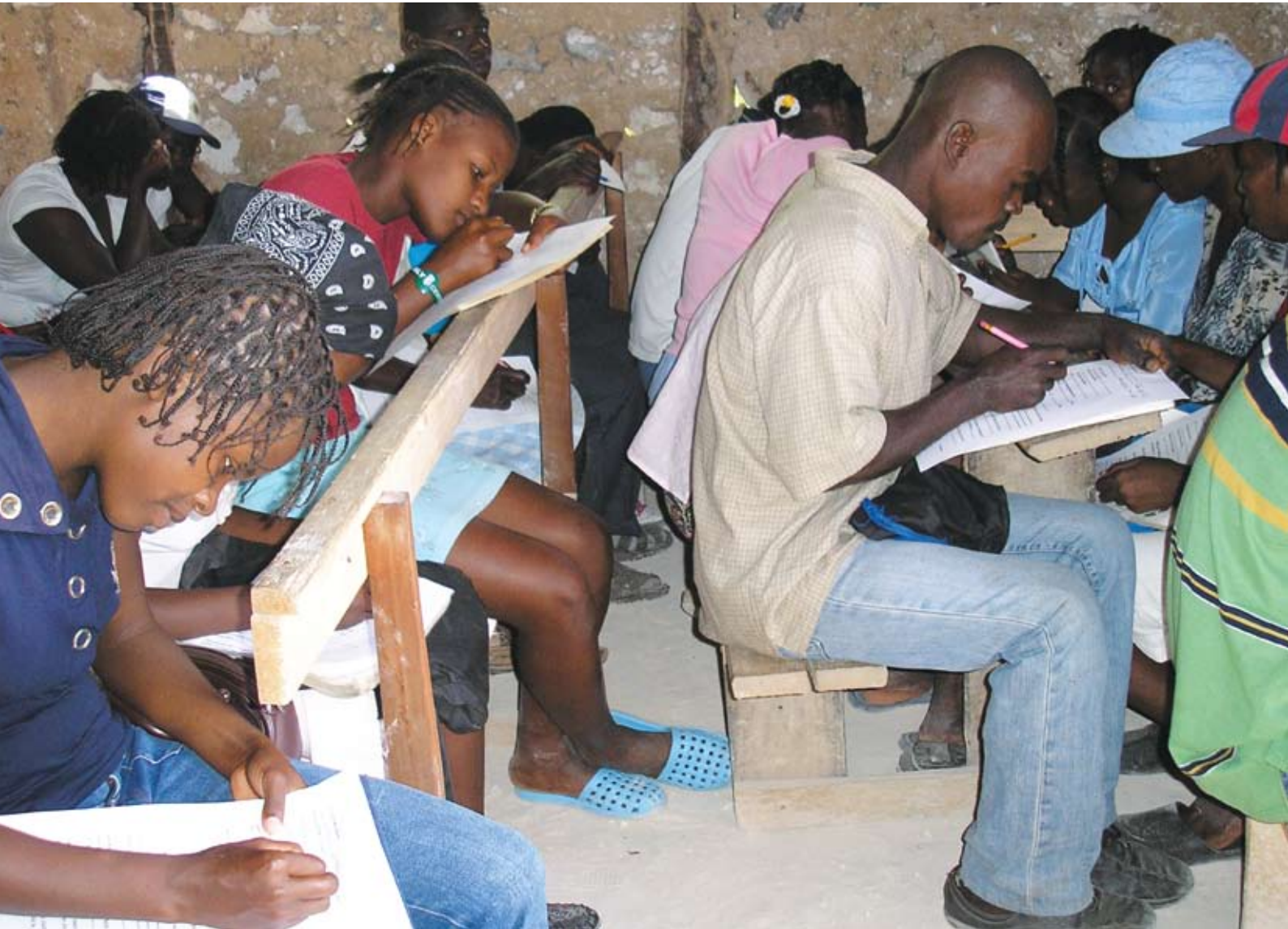
f LIFE 2006-2015: Vision and Strategy Paper, 3rd edition, UIL, September 2007.

2011 (35 C/5)<sup>h</sup> will be literacy, and special support will be provided to those countries least likely to achieve EFA. At the same time, the African Region will continue to be prioritised, as will gender parity. The LIFE framework will promote gender sensitivity through the development of gender-responsive literacy policies and programmes. Through LIFE, South-South and triangular North-South-South cooperation and partnerships will continue to be facilitated through regional and cross-regional capacity-building activities, in particular within the framework of the E-9 Initiative.

In view of the internationally agreed commitments and the strategic objectives that UNESCO will pursue over the coming years, LIFE continues to play a significant role. During the first years of its implementation, it has proven to be an effective framework for the acceleration of literacy efforts, and has demonstrated that it is, indeed, able to make a real difference to people’s lives.



<sup>h</sup> UNESCO: Draft Resolutions 2010-2011, 35 C/5 Volume 1.





# Expectations:

- Understand the implementation mechanisms of LIFE and evaluation
- Reinforce / Strengthen communication techniques
- Develop partnerships among participants
- Sharing of experiences
- Get the necessary info for training of literacy fac.
- Come up w/ effective imp. strategies of the workshop core

## 2

# The story so far: landmarks and highlights of LIFE

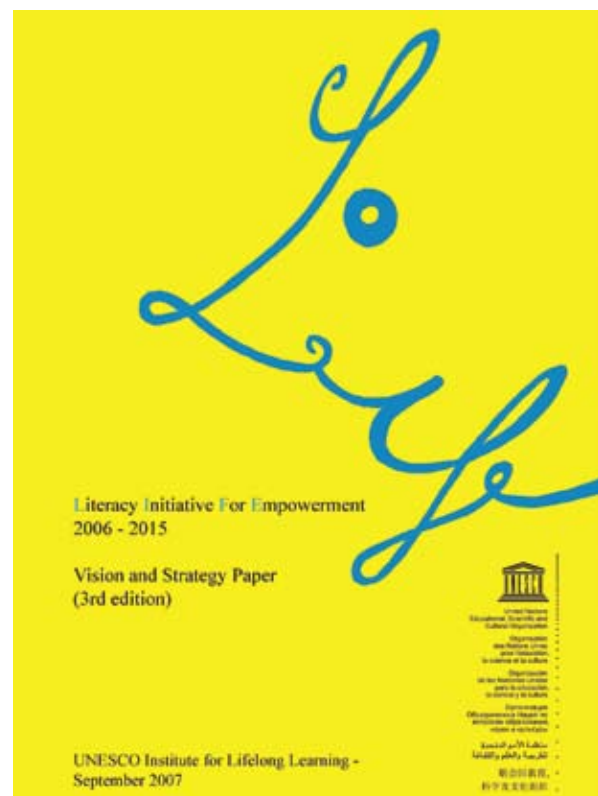
In 2005, before LIFE was officially launched – first at the international and then at the regional and country levels – a *Vision and Strategy Paper* was adopted. In keeping with the spirit of cooperation and partnership that characterises LIFE, a number of international partners were invited to support the development of this document. UNESCO's support for the 35 LIFE countries<sup>1</sup> was planned in three progressive phases. The first began in 2006 with 11 countries. The second started in 2008 and involved 13 countries. The third and final phase was due to commence in 2010 and address the remaining 11 countries. However, at the beginning of 2008, a strategic decision was made to invite all LIFE countries to start their processes immediately rather than wait for their respective phases and seed grant allocations.

### 2.1 Launching LIFE: first experiences

In March 2006, LIFE kicked off with three regional consultation, coordination and planning meetings in Islamabad, Pakistan, Sana'a, Yemen and Niamey, Niger. Whereas the meetings for the Asia and Pacific and Arab Regions involved LIFE countries from all three implementation phases, only the four first-round countries<sup>2</sup> were invited to attend the meeting for the African Region. No regional meeting took place for Brazil and Haiti, the two LIFE countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As well as launching LIFE, the main objectives of these meetings were: 1) to agree on a LIFE Regional

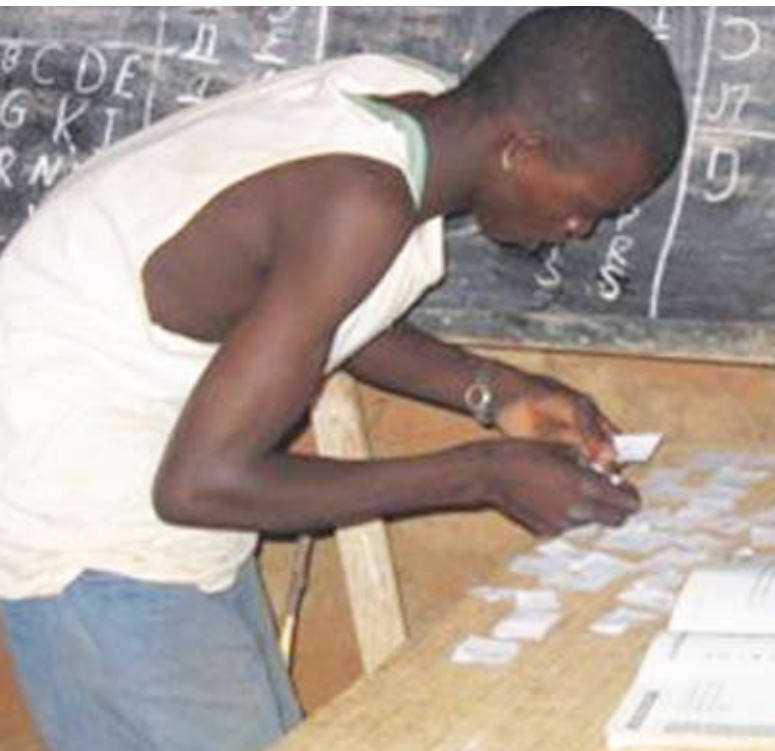
Follow-up Strategy and Support Mechanism for the implementation of LIFE; and 2) to develop a framework for a needs assessment and LIFE Country Paper. In order to develop the background and baseline information, UNESCO Field Offices were asked to submit LIFE country profiles. Participants at the meetings, most of them directors of governmental literacy and non-formal education units, were invited to conduct needs assessment studies, for which UNESCO provided some financial and technical support, and to prepare, on the basis of the strategic gaps identified, a LIFE Country Action Plan. National operational teams were to carry out the LIFE needs assessment under the guidance of a LIFE steering committee and with support from UNESCO specialists.



1 Initially, only 34 countries were included in LIFE (see UNESCO/ Basic Education Division – Education Sector – October 2005. LIFE Vision and Strategy Paper. p. 39). Responding to a request made by the Sudanese Authorities, Sudan was subsequently invited to join LIFE in May 2006.

2 Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.





However, it quickly became clear that effective LIFE processes at the country level could only develop if the LIFE framework was tailored to suit the specific context of the participating countries and promoted in flexible ways. Since each LIFE country started from a different situation, it was logical that LIFE processes would take a unique shape and dynamic in each case. This required flexible and tailor-made responses on the part of UNESCO.

## 2.2 Coordination and facilitation: the backbone of LIFE

In mid-2006, as part of UNESCO's Education Sector Reform, the overall coordination of LIFE was transferred from the Organisation's Literacy Section at Headquarters to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). UIL, as UNESCO's specialist institute for adult literacy, non-formal education and adult learning within a lifelong learning perspective, designed a two-pronged LIFE strategy encompassing: 1) macro-coordination (an enabling process of continuous consultation and negotiation with all stakeholders); and 2) technical assistance (in response to the specific demands of LIFE countries).

UNESCO field and cluster offices in (or responsible for) LIFE countries have been and continue to be at the forefront for facilitating LIFE processes and helping countries to strengthen existing policies and programmes. UNESCO focal points – usually UNESCO education officers – have been requested to coordinate LIFE-related activities together with a national focal point for LIFE, appointed by the Minister of Education and usually the director of the entity in charge of non-formal education and/or literacy.

The regional LIFE focal points at each UNESCO Regional Bureau – in Bangkok, Beirut, Dakar and Santiago de Chile – have played a similarly vital role by organising technical support in response to requests from LIFE countries, preferably within a South-South cooperation scheme.

UNESCO's specialist institutes<sup>3</sup>, related divisions at Headquarters<sup>4</sup> and the EFA Global Monitoring Team form a further crucial layer of the LIFE support structure. The Unit responsible for coordinating the UNLD at Headquarters complements the LIFE support mechanism by mobilising international and multilateral partners for LIFE as the "key strategic framework for the implementation of the United Nations Literacy Decade"<sup>5</sup>. In addition, UIL has mobilised its literacy networks of international and national agencies, governments, university/research institutions and NGOs, particularly in participating LIFE and neighbouring countries.

In November 2006, back to back with an international seminar on innovative pedagogical approaches to literacy, UIL invited the four regional focal points to a coordination meeting to discuss and agree what direction the LIFE strategy should take and what key activities should be planned for the biennium 2007/2008. Feedback requested and provided by the field offices at the end of 2006 indicated, among other things, a clear need for adequate support from UIL, other institutes and Regional Bureaus, as well as a need to share information, define the steps to be taken after the formulation of country action plans, and to generate accurate data. Some of the lessons learned were that:

<sup>3</sup> For example, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), the International Bureau of Education (IBE) and the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Coordination of UN-Priorities, Basic Education, Country Planning and Field Support, etc.

<sup>5</sup> UIL, 2007, p.11.

- a) flexible approaches that streamline into national agendas work best;
- b) an adequate understanding of LIFE and the quality of the processes may be hampered by a lack of technical support and substantial inputs from “outside” (it is not easy to think “out of the box”);
- c) there was uneven participation from civil society as well as from the private sector;
- d) UNESCO is generally accepted as an independent “broker” capable of bringing new partners together; and
- e) laying solid foundations (e.g. strong ownership and partnerships) during the first steps of the LIFE process helps to achieve their sustainability.

The strategic areas of action envisaged for 2007/2008 included:

- a) setting up LIFE processes at the country level;
- b) regional literacy conferences and inter-regional and cross-country exchanges;
- c) the implementation of literacy projects within the extra-budgetary funded Capacity-building for EFA Programme (CapEFA Programme)<sup>6</sup> and LIFE country action plans; and
- d) advocacy, communication, partnership building, research and monitoring & evaluation.

### 2.3 Refining the strategy: making LIFE operational for concrete action

Though it was made very clear from the outset – even in the UNESCO Director-General’s foreword to the LIFE *Vision and Strategy Paper* – that LIFE operations would be country-led, respond to country-specific needs and priorities, and build on existing national best practices, many partners did not fully understand the orientation and modus operandi of LIFE. It was often interpreted too narrowly, as a project funded and implemented by UNESCO Field Offices in an isolated way. Consequently, the *Vision and Strategy Paper* was revised in 2007 in consultation with key partners in order to make it more explicit<sup>7</sup>.

The revised document made it very clear that LIFE is a strategic framework which is country-led and country-specific and embedded in national policies and strategies. In addition, LIFE as a support mechanism requires that UNESCO provide the overall framework of coordination, technical support services and resource mobilisation. Instead of being a stand-alone or separate new programme, LIFE builds on countries’ existing literacy experiences, increasing their scope, giving them a new sense of urgency and preferably framing them within a sector-wide and multiple partnership approach. This 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the LIFE *Vision and Strategy Paper* is now available in English, French, Arabic and Bangladeshi<sup>8</sup>, and has been broadly disseminated in LIFE countries.

Other concrete outcomes of the 2007 participatory process of refining and operationalising the LIFE strategy include Guidelines for Situation Analyses, a Framework for the Monitoring and Evaluation of LIFE at the Country Level<sup>9</sup> and UIL’s Strategy for Implementing LIFE. Learning from experience, the strategic orientation of the LIFE framework at country level has been further revised to allow LIFE to:

1. give prominence within literacy initiatives, campaigns and programmes, to the achievement of the global agendas of EFA, the MDGs, the UNLD and DESD as a means of mainstreaming literacy;
2. act as a national platform for enhancing and accelerating literacy efforts, bringing together the key actors in national and local government, NGOs, CSOs, the private sector and the community as a whole. In addition, new partners should be brought “on board” and encouraged to take up the literacy challenge in their domains of action; and
3. function as a mechanism for strengthening South-South cooperation through the promotion of networking and twinning arrangements with countries that have higher literacy rates or have implemented innovative approaches that have proven to be effective within the framework of the UNLD. E-9 countries are encouraged to play a special role in this context.

In the course of implementing, monitoring and refining the LIFE strategy, it also became clear that it does not make sense for the 11 third-phase countries

<sup>6</sup> These extra-budgetary funds come mainly from North European countries, such as Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. September 2007. *Vision and Strategy Paper* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> In addition, the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition is also available in Portuguese and Spanish.

<sup>9</sup> This document was discussed and ratified in a workshop with stakeholders from LIFE countries and experts that took place at UIL in July 2007.

to wait until 2010 before joining the initiative. At the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008, in the context of the regional LIFE meetings (see 2.4), all 35 LIFE countries were invited to “immediately set to work in order to extend, accelerate and improve their literacy strategies”<sup>10</sup>. This key message has helped introduce a new dynamic to LIFE, while at the same time challenging all stakeholders involved to sustain the momentum for literacy.

## 2.4 Regional LIFE Meetings: creating and sustaining a momentum for literacy

In December 2007 and January 2008, a series of three Regional Meetings of LIFE countries from the Arab Region (Marrakech, Morocco), Asia and the Pacific (Dhaka, Bangladesh), Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean (Maputo, Mozambique) was organised with the participation of the national and UNESCO LIFE focal points. These produced the following outcomes<sup>11</sup>:

- a) A common understanding of LIFE as a strategic framework.
- b) An overview of the progress and challenges related to literacy and LIFE through the analysis of country reports.
- c) A sharing of experiences (“lessons learned”) from literacy and LIFE-related activities.
- d) A discussion of, agreement upon and dissemination of strategies for situation analyses, monitoring, evaluation and other support mechanisms for LIFE implementation at the national level.
- e) An increased awareness on the part of participants regarding the importance of developing and implementing effective advocacy and communication strategies.
- f) A broader understanding of sector-wide and innovative approaches to the formulation of literacy and NFE policies and strategies.
- g) Concrete ideas about networking and South-South cooperation in the field of literacy and NFE.



*Participants at the Regional Meetings of LIFE countries from the Africa Region (above) and from the Asia and Pacific Region in January 2008 (below).*

These three meetings were attended by more than 125 directors of literacy and NFE, LIFE national focal points, civil society representatives and UNESCO education specialists from the LIFE countries, in order to plan their LIFE activities in line with the revised LIFE strategy and discuss the new tools for implementing, monitoring and evaluating LIFE. The meetings were also used to develop a common understanding, share experiences and deepen South-South cooperation. The concept of LIFE as a UNESCO support mechanism that strengthens national processes and capacities to improve literacy policies and programmes was explained. It was made clear that LIFE is neither a programme nor a project, much less a fund. Furthermore, the concept of empowerment as a central component of LIFE was further elaborated. Attention was drawn to the full potential of broader partnerships and civil society involvement.

<sup>10</sup> UIL (2008) Maputo Strategic Platform for LIFE, leaflet

<sup>11</sup> See: UIL (2008) Regional Meeting of Asia and Pacific LIFE Countries, 21-24 January 2008, Dhaka, Bangladesh; UIL (2008) Regional Meeting of African LIFE Countries, 29 to 31 January 2008, Maputo; UIL (2008) Regional Meeting of Arab LIFE Countries, 3-6 December 2007, Marrakech.



Presentations and discussions on surveys of literacy, assessing literacy skills, monitoring and evaluating literacy programmes, and developing NFE-MIS mechanisms were also of great interest during these meetings. Moving from self-declared and dichotomous information on (il)literacy to a direct assessment of different skills levels, such as that undertaken by UNESCO's Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP)<sup>12</sup>, raised policy-makers' interest in obtaining more accurate data that would allow them to plan and manage literacy and NFE provision in a more targeted and effective manner.

A major outcome for Africa was the "Maputo Strategic Platform for LIFE"<sup>13</sup>, a comprehensive and forward-looking key document adopted by the participants of the Regional Meeting of African LIFE countries. All 35 LIFE countries were invited to take immediate action to address their literacy challenges. The Platform specifies the responsibilities of key stakeholders and what action they should take, i.e. what needs to be done and by whom (governments, civil society and the private sector, development partners and the United Nations, in particular UNESCO) in order to speed up the implementation of this initiative, which is described as "a must for Africa". Further, it makes a strong call for the integration of literacy in the African Union with the adoption and implementation of an African Charter for Literacy and Languages in cooperation with the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) and the UNESCO Africa Department.



12 UNESCO-UIS, *The Next Generation of Literacy Statistics: Implementing the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP)*, Technical Paper no. 1, Montreal, 2009.

13 UIL, *Maputo Strategic Platform for LIFE*, 2008, leaflet.

For the Asia and Pacific Region, the LIFE review and planning meeting focused in particular on the need for evidence-based advocacy to influence political commitment and mobilise the required resources. The meeting centred on the sharing of experiences from Bangladesh and Pakistan because both of these countries were currently benefiting from an extra-budgetary funded literacy project as part of UNESCO's CapEFA Programme. Participants reported that the different capacity-building activities had already had a visible impact, and resulted in closer partnerships between government and civil society. The meeting also showed that there are many examples of effective practice and innovative approaches to literacy within the participating countries and the region as a whole. The remaining challenge was to embed these into national literacy policies and deliver related programmes at scale.

For the Arab States, the major issues were networking and South-South cooperation across the countries of the region. Egypt and Morocco, the two countries benefiting from extra-budgetary funded literacy projects, reported that related activities had succeeded in further developing capacities for boosting literacy efforts. In the case of Morocco, where literacy provisions are implemented in a decentralised way through an umbrella association of local NGOs, the literacy project had also resulted in a closer partnership between government and civil society. Some countries, such as Morocco and Sudan, had initiated negotiations with universities to mobilise students to teach literacy in rural areas.



*Blind learners in Morocco learning to read Braille.*





The meetings provided an excellent opportunity to monitor how LIFE implementation was progressing in each country<sup>14</sup> and to learn from experiences. Country teams drafted work or action plans for 2008-2009, for which UNESCO was asked to help mobilise technical and financial support. It became clear that progress would be dependent on a well-designed support strategy and strong partners capable of helping to implement LIFE successfully.

**2.5 A major challenge: getting LIFE started at the country level**

Operationalising LIFE at the country level is both UNESCO's guiding strategy and its greatest challenge. Preparatory work to set up LIFE processes at country level has included country profiles, needs assessment or situation analyses, launch and validation workshops, advocacy events, the formulation of action plans, and the establishment of coordination structures and partnership mechanisms. High levels of coordination and flexible responses were required to set up LIFE processes at the country level. Experience has demonstrated that LIFE can only be successful if it is shared and carried by many partners.

In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Egypt, Eritrea, Haiti, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen, needs assessments, situation analyses or in-depth studies were presented, discussed and validated during national seminars, colloquia or conferences with full stakeholder involvement to produce recommendations for national action plans. Similar processes are underway in Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Gambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran and Iraq. These high-profile media events provide a much-needed boost to kick start major literacy activities, bringing traditional partners together, recruiting new partners and activating a strong sense of shared commitment. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, many stakeholders and partners were involved in consultations and discussions to develop a national needs assessment document. Two studies on literacy and language served as a basis for the LIFE launch workshops in Sudan and Southern Sudan.

Bangladesh, Nigeria and Pakistan have set up LIFE steering committees with representation from key stakeholders - from government and civil society - active in the field of literacy. In other countries, such as Benin, Burkina Faso and Mozambique, national task forces have been established as coordinating structures at the national level. They oversee the implementation of national programmes, mobilise

<sup>14</sup> Most of the participating LIFE focal points had prepared a short report and/or presentation on the implementation of LIFE in their countries.

public awareness of the existing literacy challenges, and develop operational working structures to advance literacy efforts at all levels. In Papua New Guinea, the National Literacy Taskforce has taken the lead in LIFE. It is a multi-stakeholder, technical advisory group led by the Department of Education, whose membership includes the National Research Institute, the University of Papua New Guinea, relevant government departments and key civil society and faith-based organisations working in literacy and NFE. In Senegal, the Ministry of Education has set up a Steering Committee and a Scientific Committee in the framework of the extra-budgetary funded LIFE project, which have contributed to the continuity and sustainability of interventions in the field of literacy.

## 2.6 Mechanisms and tools in support of LIFE

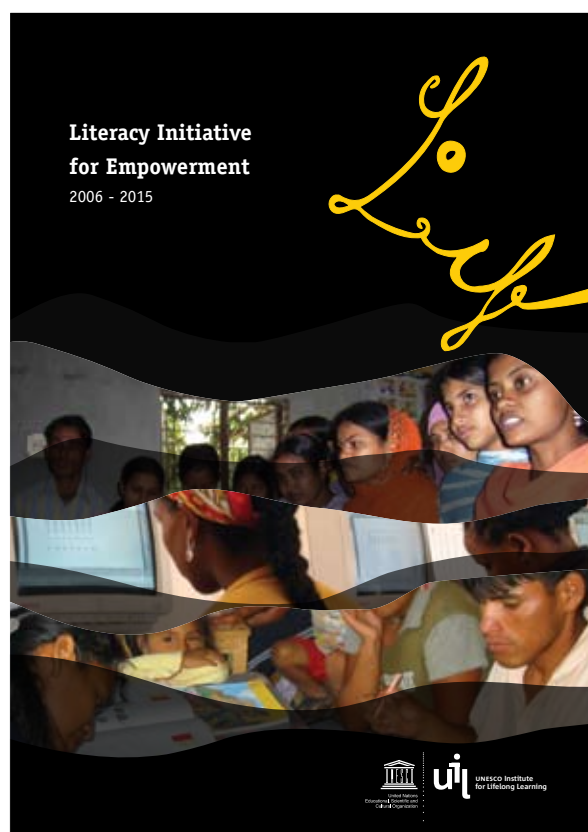
Since 2006, a wide range of advocacy, research and clearing-house activities have been undertaken to support the implementation of LIFE. Through an enabling and facilitating process of continuous consultation and communication with all stakeholders, UIL has created a coordination network and structure. UIL, UNESCO field offices and Regional Bureaus are working together to support LIFE processes at the country level. The promotion of South-South and North-South-South cooperation was part of the LIFE coordination process; its aim was to make effective use of existing capacities and create synergies with other initiatives whenever possible.

Advocacy and communication are part of UIL's overall coordination activities, whose objectives are to generate commitment and adequate resources for the implementation of improved national literacy policies and strategies. In 2008 and 2009, the regional conferences in preparation for CONFINTEA VI have constituted a framework for coordinating and advancing the LIFE initiative.

In support of advocacy, communication and capacity development activities in LIFE countries, UIL has produced a *LIFE Resource Pack* which includes a number of research reports, flyers and publications on effective practice in print and electronic forms. These materials have been distributed to key stakeholders, in particular the national and UNESCO LIFE focal points. They were also made accessible to the general public through UIL's website<sup>15</sup> and the online platform, LIFELine.

LIFELine (<http://lifeline.unesco.org>) was designed as an interactive, online information platform that would facilitate exchange among key stakeholders from the 35 LIFE countries, provide news from LIFE countries and offer a collection of LIFE documents for download. A Beta version of LIFELine was launched in September 2008. Key stakeholders from LIFE countries are now able to communicate directly with each other by means of an electronic mailing list which is sent to around 250 subscribers. Together with the Literacy Portal, LIFELine constitutes a key mechanism for reaching a broader audience to advocate for literacy within a lifelong learning perspective.

As a clearing-house for literacy and NFE and in line with its mandate to provide innovative and up-to-date evidence and information on effective literacy policies and programmes that may inform and help to improve existing and future policies, strategies and practice, UIL has started to build an online Database of Effective Literacy Policies and Practices for Capacity Development (<http://www.unesco.org/uil/litbase/>). The database centres on evidence-based, policy-driven and action-oriented research and was launched in early 2009. Both LIFELine and the literacy database support country-led processes, capacity development initiatives and training activities, particularly in the framework of LIFE and the UNLD.



15 <http://www.unesco.org/uil/en/nescio/life/LIFEResourceTable.htm>.







# 3

## Monitoring progress and assessing the achievements of LIFE

UIL's coordination responsibility includes carrying out an effective monitoring and evaluation of the LIFE process through a built-in mechanism of data generation, mainly by participating in meetings, seminars and training workshops and by maintaining continuous communication with LIFE focal points and other key stakeholders in LIFE countries. Regular monitoring has allowed UIL to provide direction to the initiative, to identify and anticipate potential problems and difficulties, to identify areas of cooperation among countries (South-South cooperation) and to compile and disseminate effective policies, practices and innovations to LIFE and other countries.

The results that LIFE has achieved became apparent in the context of the mid-decade review of the UNLD undertaken in 2008, and a year later, when an external evaluation team assessed the progress of UNESCO's Strategic Programme Objectives for the Education Sector<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, UIL's ongoing monitoring of progress has shown that LIFE has already made a discernible impact in creating and sustaining a momentum for literacy in many countries. Here are some examples:

- A new commitment to literacy has been demonstrated by the creation of special entities and task forces, as well as by increased budgetary allocations by governments such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Mali and Senegal.

- New learners have been mobilised to join literacy classes; innovative methodologies, approaches to and delivery modes of literacy are being discussed, piloted or adopted; and, in Bangladesh, Egypt, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan and Senegal, hundreds of senior and middle-level literacy managers have been trained to integrate innovative approaches, improve effectiveness and raise the profile of their literacy activities.
- National advocacy events have increased awareness of the literacy challenge in a number of LIFE countries, such as Bangladesh, Egypt, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal, and have galvanised political will among educational authorities.
- National Literacy and NFE Policies or Strategies, related action or work plans and/or project proposals have been improved, developed or are in the process of being developed in most countries, and many of these policy documents have already been validated by stakeholders in national meetings.

A major mid-term evaluation of LIFE is planned for 2011, which will provide another opportunity to take stock of the progress it has made, as well as to analyse and share the lessons learned and refine the framework for strategic action.

### 3.1 UNLD Mid-decade review: LIFE reported as one of the highlights

In 2008, with the support of a UN Literacy Decade Expert Group, UNESCO undertook a review of the first half of the Literacy Decade. According to the medium-term report on the implementation of the international Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade presented by UNESCO to the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly<sup>17</sup>,

16 Strategic Programme Objective 1: Leading education for all (EFA) by ensuring global coordination and providing assistance to Member States to achieve the EFA goals and education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) based on the Global Action Plan (GAP).

Strategic Programme Objective 2: Fostering literacy and quality education for all at all levels and through both formal and non-formal lifelong learning, with particular emphasis on Africa, gender equality, youth, LDCs, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as well as the most vulnerable segments of society, including indigenous peoples, and education for sustainable development.

17 United Nations General Assembly A/63/172.



### 3.2 Evaluation of UNESCO's Strategic Programme Objectives: LIFE is proving an effective and efficient mechanism

An external evaluation, conducted during the first semester of 2009 to assess progress in achieving the expected outcomes of Strategic Programme Objectives 1 and 2 in the framework of the 34 C/5 biennial sector priorities for UNESCO's Education Sector, included a review of LIFE as "UNESCO's principal implementation mechanism for the UNLD" and "the most visible implementation mechanism for UNLD within the UN system"<sup>22</sup>. The overall findings of the evaluation team, "which broadly align with the conclusions of the UNLD Mid Decade Review, are that LIFE is proving an effective mechanism for planning, capacity development, partnership-building and, to a lesser extent, the mobilization of new funds for literacy"<sup>23</sup>. With regard to the overall coordination of LIFE, the evaluation team concluded that "given the extremely limited financial and human resources available to the Institute, the achievements of UIL in coordinating LIFE have been remarkable"<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, the evaluators emphasise the importance of UIL applying the lessons learned from the first years of coordinating LIFE in subsequent years.

The following key achievements were summarised:

- National and international commitments to literacy have been reinforced.
- Broad-based partnerships in support of literacy have been developed and strengthened, including through South-South cooperation.
- LIFE has proven an effective and efficient mechanism for planning and coordination both at the country level and within UNESCO.
- Capacity-building supports the development of literacy policies and programme delivery<sup>25</sup>.

Some progress was noted with regard to the mobilisation of new funds for literacy within the framework of LIFE, although the evaluation team also concluded that there is still much work to be done. The low priority that donors give to literacy was identified as "the most significant constraining factor in LIFE's operating environment"<sup>26</sup>. Other factors hampering the implementation of LIFE

LIFE is one of the highlights of the first half of the Decade: "LIFE is already an effective catalyst for planning, capacity development, partnership-building and the mobilization of new funds for literacy"<sup>18</sup>. The strong response to LIFE that many national governments have shown by taking the lead in the development of literacy policies illustrates the commitment of many countries to literacy<sup>19</sup>. LIFE has made "a positive impact on the policy-making environment"<sup>20</sup>. Literacy now occupies a higher position on national agendas. LIFE has also helped to access funds from bilateral and multilateral agencies in a number of countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Mauritania, Niger and Papua New Guinea) and "support a major literacy drive"<sup>21</sup>. As one of UNESCO's EFA flagships and the most direct programmatic response to the Decade, LIFE will continue to shape the literacy agenda in LIFE countries and beyond during the next five years of the UNLD.

18 Ibid, p.6.  
 19 Ibid., p.11.  
 20 Ibid., p.12.  
 21 Ibid., p.18.

22 Martin Jenkins, Evaluation of UNESCO Strategic Programme Objectives 1 and 2, Draft Report 6 July 2009, p.44.  
 23 Ibid., p.47.  
 24 Ibid., p.52.  
 25 Ibid., pp 47-50.  
 26 Ibid., p.51.

included misconceptions and a lack of understanding on the part of national LIFE country partners and some UNESCO field personnel, who do not always feel equipped to perform their role as LIFE focal points. The related recommendations thus pointed to the need to develop a “refreshed” fundraising strategy for LIFE within the broader framework of UNLD and to strengthen internal capacity in priority areas such as literacy<sup>27</sup>.

### 3.3 Monitoring progress in terms of the four objectives and expected results of LIFE<sup>28</sup>

Since its inception, LIFE and its implementation have undergone a continuous process of monitoring and evaluation<sup>29</sup>. Progress was assessed in relation to the four strategic objectives of LIFE:

***LIFE Strategic Objective 1:  
Advocacy and communication to make literacy a priority on the agenda of different stakeholders and create a momentum for jointly accelerating literacy efforts***

There is plenty of evidence that political will and commitment at the highest level is critical for increasing the profile of literacy and NFE and raising its status on the agenda of the various stakeholders involved. This commitment has, of course, to be concretised through an increase in resource allocation for literacy. LIFE has provided a framework for a broad range of advocacy and communication activities at the international, regional and national levels to generate commitment and mobilise adequate resources for the implementation of renewed and improved literacy policies and strategies.

In 2007 and 2008, UNESCO, as leader and coordinator of the UNLD and the initiator of LIFE, organised six regional conferences in support of global literacy<sup>30</sup>.



Each of these conferences has succeeded in building a strong momentum for literacy, mobilising political will at the government level, and establishing a set of specific recommendations. The starting point for this major advocacy campaign in support of literacy worldwide was the White House Conference on Global Literacy, which was hosted by the Honorary Ambassador for the UNLD, Ms Laura Bush, which took place in New York on 18 September 2006. Two years later, in September 2008, a second White House Symposium for advancing global literacy was organised to assess the positive outcomes of the six Conferences in Support of Global Literacy. One of the major results of this event was Ms Bush’s announcement of the establishment of a UNLD Fund for Advancing Global Literacy, which, in the framework of LIFE, will mainly support capacity development for literacy in LIFE countries.

The recommendations adopted at the African Regional Conference in Support of Global Literacy<sup>31</sup> – attended by over 500 participants, including the President of Mali, a number of African First Ladies, ministers of education and finance, representatives of development partners, civil society organisations, professionals, private-sector providers, the media and publishers – were summarised in “The Bamako Call to Action”<sup>32</sup>. All stakeholders were called upon to take urgent action and work together to improve literacy rates by increasing budget allocations for literacy and non-formal education programmes, improving the training and status of facilitators and managers, continuing the ministerial policy dialogue, disseminating effective practices and demanding quality.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.78/79.

<sup>28</sup> See Logical Framework for LIFE in UIL, Sept. 2007, pp.41-44 and The Monitoring and Evaluation of LIFE at the Country Level (UIL, 2007, unpublished).

<sup>29</sup> See UIL, LIFE Progress Report July 2007 (unpublished).

<sup>30</sup> For the Arab Region in Doha, Qatar, in March 2007; for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific in Beijing, China, 30 July to 1 August 2007, for Africa in Bamako, Mali, in September 2007, for South, South-West and Central Asia in New Delhi, India, in November 2007; for East and Central Europe and the Caucasus in Baku, Azerbaijan, in May 2008, and for Latin America and the Caribbean in Mexico City in September 2008.

<sup>31</sup> “Renewing Literacy to Face African and International Challenges”, 10-12 September 2007, Bamako, Mali.

<sup>32</sup> This Call was endorsed by a resolution submitted by Mali to the 34th General Conference in October 2007, in which Member States of the Africa region were encouraged to implement its recommendations and which invited the Director-General of UNESCO to provide support and develop benchmarks to monitor progress.





A follow-up programme to the Bamako Conference is in place, initiated and steered by the President and the First Lady of Mali respectively. It is based on the recommendations and commitments made during the conference in September 2007. Civil society took the lead in advocating for literacy in February 2007, when an international high-level workshop on adult literacy, held in Abuja, Nigeria, adopted a Call for Action which included a more focused line of advocacy and stronger partnerships for literacy.

The key role played by literacy has been underscored by highly visible country-level LIFE launch events, such as national conferences, seminars, ceremonies and workshops. These events were often combined with a presentation and discussion of the results of a country needs assessment or situation analysis, e.g. in Haiti, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen. In Burkina Faso, LIFE was launched in the framework of a national forum on literacy and adult education that took place in December 2008 with the aim of achieving the MDGs through a series of strategies designed to accelerate literacy and non-formal education. As a result of the national forum, Burkina Faso has launched a fresh literacy initiative (PRONAA 2015) to further accelerate its efforts to reach the goals established before 2015.



*First Ladies and other participants at the Bamako Conference in September 2007.*



Following the launch of LIFE in Egypt, which included a brain-storming session (May 2006), a national workshop and conference were organised and attended by literacy and NFE managers from all governorates (May 2007). Examples of effective practices from Egypt and around the world served as inspiring inputs to discuss a creative vision for literacy and adult learning in Egypt.

In Bangladesh, 25 NGO managers were trained on the planning and implementation of advocacy campaigns in the framework of the CapEFA Literacy Project. In addition, once 600 volunteers had been trained, they organised advocacy campaigns for around 6,000 rural illiterate women and adolescent girls. National and regional workshops on advocacy were held to build expertise in advocacy among policy-makers, development partners, and members of civil society, and to enhance commitment to and partnerships for literacy. Around 250 policy-makers and key stakeholders became involved in this major effort to create champions for literacy.



Around 30 decision-makers from Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Senegal met for a Lifelong Learning Policy Dialogue held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in February 2008, to discuss strategies for integrating the principle of lifelong learning into LIFE and developing literacy and NFE policies in the context of LIFE in West Africa.

At the end of October 2009, the LIFE and E-9 focal points for the nine most populated developing countries – Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico<sup>33</sup>, Nigeria and Pakistan – will meet in Beijing, China, to discuss effective policies and approaches to literacy and adult learning in rural areas. Since the LIFE framework facilitates the building of partnerships, in particular through South-South cooperation, it is expected that the E-9 countries will strengthen their role as the “locomotive” of LIFE through this seminar, organised by UIL in partnership with INRULED, and subsequent events, namely CONFINTEA VI in Belém, Brazil, in December 2009, and the 8<sup>th</sup> E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2010.



All of these regional and national advocacy events have significantly raised LIFE’s profile in and beyond the 35 selected countries. Countries that have

33 Mexico is the only E-9 country that is not classified as a LIFE country.



expressed their interest to join the initiative (such as Cameroon, Ghana, Honduras, Kenya, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia) will undoubtedly benefit from the experience, knowledge and resources generated in the framework of LIFE, as well as from the networks, online platforms and South-South-North exchanges it has established.

Examples of the numerous tools and resources that have been developed to advocate for literacy in the framework of LIFE include:

- a LIFE website (<http://www.senalphaenf.org/>) set up by the Ministry of Education of **Senegal**, together with UNESCO-BREDA, which documents the progress and results of the CapEFA Literacy Project;
- an advocacy documentary developed by UNESCO-BREDA that presents the literacy situation in **Sub-Saharan Africa** with a special focus on African LIFE countries ([mms://telesto.unesco.org/vod/literacy\\_for\\_life\\_en.wmv](mms://telesto.unesco.org/vod/literacy_for_life_en.wmv));
- a LIFE **Pakistan** website (<http://www.paklife.net/>) established by UNESCO Islamabad to share information and materials on literacy and NFE in Pakistan (including around 340 learning materials and key documents on UNLD and LIFE); and
- a kit containing advocacy materials on gender mainstreaming in literacy programmes prepared by UNESCO Islamabad in the framework of the CapEFA Literacy Project (including, among other things, a guide to develop gender responsive literacy programmes and a brochure providing basic information and definitions on literacy and gender in **Pakistan**).

- The First Lady of **Niger** is heading a major drive for literacy in her country by establishing the MAGAMA Foundation that will implement a literacy programme with technical and financial support from several partners, including UNESCO.
- In **Benin** and **Burkina Faso**, governments have argued strongly for and secured some literacy funding from the EFA Fast Track Initiative.
- **Haiti** has renewed and updated its overall literacy strategy. Furthermore, literacy is now an integral part of its National Strategy in Support of EFA, the road map developed by the Ministry of Education in 2007 to drive the recovery of the educational system. As a result of advocacy within the framework of LIFE, Haiti has managed to increase the number of partners active in literacy: from being practically the only provider of literacy, the national literacy authority (SEA) has seen its bilateral and NGO partners increase to 9 by 2009.



The following outcomes can be attributed directly to advocacy carried out within the LIFE framework:

- In **Senegal**, a Ministry for Literacy and Local Languages has been established and the literacy and non-formal education budget has been increased threefold.
- Following the recommendations of the Bamako Literacy Conference, the **Benin** and **Malian** Governments have decided to create special literacy ministries with increased budgets. In Mali, the First Lady is personally involved as a strong advocate for literacy.
- In **Burkina Faso**, the First Lady has established a task force and set in motion arrangements to mobilise funds for literacy and NFE.





**LIFE Strategic Objective 2:  
Capacity-building for the development of  
policies for sustainable and empowering  
literacy**

LIFE has contributed to the development of capacities for the design and articulation of policies and strategies. 18 LIFE countries<sup>34</sup> have received financial and technical support to carry out needs assessments or situation analyses that will serve as a basis for strategic planning. This has resulted in the renewal or improvement of literacy policies and strategies in a number of countries. In contrast to the widespread neglect of literacy, seven countries<sup>35</sup> that piloted the UNESCO National Education Support Strategy (UNESS) through related UNESCO field or cluster offices have emphasised LIFE and literacy in their respective work plans for 2008-2009.

34 Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Egypt, Eritrea, Haiti, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Senegal and Yemen.

35 Bangladesh, Egypt, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan and Senegal.

Six of the first-round LIFE countries – Bangladesh<sup>36</sup>, Egypt<sup>37</sup>, Morocco<sup>38</sup>, Niger<sup>39</sup>, Pakistan<sup>40</sup> and Senegal<sup>41</sup> – have been implementing major activities to enhance national capacities to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate literacy policies, and to mobilise and coordinate partners to ensure that plans are brought to scale. These literacy projects, which were possible thanks to extra-budgetary grants from UNESCO’s “Capacity-building for EFA Programme 2006-2008” totalling nearly US\$1 million, are working to integrate literacy and NFE policies into sector-wide education frameworks and to link these policies to broader development strategies.

National advocacy events have helped to increased awareness of the literacy challenge in Bangladesh, Egypt, Morocco and Senegal, and have galvanised the political will of the respective education authorities. In all cases, the literacy projects have improved coordination among stakeholders.

36 Strengthening capacity of GO/NGO managers and policymakers for planning, monitoring and evaluation (US\$ 953,575).

37 Capacity-building to enhance policy development, institutional change and programme delivery in literacy and NFE (US\$ 869,400).

38 Literacy for the empowerment of women, capacity-building for sustainable development (US\$995,351).

39 Appui à l’élaboration d’une politique nationale de l’ENF et renforcement des capacités institutionnelles de formulation et mise en œuvre de la politique nationale de l’alphabétisation et de l’ENF au Niger (US\$739,463).

40 Capacity-building for improving the quality and scope of literacy programmes (US\$980,000).

41 Renforcer les capacités des personnels d’alphabétisation et d’éducation non formelle qualifiante (US\$950,400).

The promotion of the LIFE vision and strategy in Senegal has contributed to gradually making literacy and NFE an integral part of its national policy, programme and budget. Ethiopia has revised and launched the National Adult Education Strategy with the ambitious target of reaching 5.2 million illiterate youth and adults by 2011 through systematic collaborative efforts between the various relevant government organs and civil society. Within the framework of the CapEFA Literacy Project, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Mozambique has received technical assistance to review its Literacy and Adult Education Sub-sector Strategy 2009-2015. Through the LIFE Coordination Working Group, technical support has been provided to the Afghan Ministry of Education to formulate an Education Law and to its newly established High Commission for Literacy. In 2009, a National Literacy Action Plan (NLAP) was developed for Afghanistan.

In Nepal, a 10-Year Literacy/NFE Policy and Programme Framework has been developed and approved by the Non-Formal Education Council. It is now being operationalised as a concrete strategy informed by the national situation analysis and further research into realities on the ground. At the end of 2008, a National Literacy Campaign was announced, for which the government of Nepal is expecting support through the LIFE framework. The Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development has developed a National Strategy Framework for Adult Education, in which a restructured National Literacy Mission will play a central role and which was launched on 8 September, 2009. The main focus will be on female literacy in rural areas and an increased budget<sup>42</sup> has been made available to reach the target of making 300 women literate in each *gram panchayat*<sup>43</sup>.

Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Gambia and Democratic Republic of Congo have developed proposals to conduct situation analyses that will subsequently be discussed and validated by national stakeholders and constitute the basis for improved policies. LIFE countries such as Djibouti, Guinea and

Papua New Guinea have planned or started major review and consultation processes in order to update and improve their national literacy and NFE policies and strategies. In China, UNESCO has put a team together to undertake a country-wide analysis of the literacy situation based on existing national data. This will be complemented by in-depth studies in one or two provinces which will help to gain a more realistic picture of the size of the literacy challenge in rural areas and feed into improved policies at national and local levels.

***LIFE Strategic Objective 3:  
Capacity-building for the delivery of  
empowering literacy programmes of good  
quality***

In the framework of LIFE, numerous activities have been undertaken to strengthen national capacities for improved programme design, management and implementation. Large numbers of senior and middle-level literacy managers, as well as specialists in the field of literacy and adult education from different LIFE countries, have benefited from training and capacity-building events such as the International Seminar on Pedagogical Approaches to Literacy (November 2006, Hamburg), the Sub-regional Meeting of LIFE Teams from Mali, Niger and Senegal on Literacy for Empowerment (March 2007, Bamako), the Workshop on Capacity-Building for Literacy and NFE in Africa on Training of Trainers (July 2007, Dakar), the North-South Exchange on Family Literacy (November 2007, Hamburg), the Regional Capacity-Building Workshop for Trainers of Literacy Facilitators (February 2008, Niamey) and the Regional Workshop on Accurate Measurement of Literacy Acquisition (June 2008, Marrakech)

The strengthening of national capacity for high-quality programme delivery in the framework of the six literacy projects entailed training managers and facilitators, designing learner-centred and gender-sensitive programmes, and creating literate environments. Countries were also assisted in designing monitoring and evaluation frameworks and tools for mapping and collecting data on existing capacities for the delivery of literacy and NFE programmes (NFE-MIS), as well as in assessing different literacy levels.

<sup>42</sup> While the total budgetary allocation for the last three Five-Year Plans for the National Literacy Mission was Rs. 2862.95 crore, the outlay for the 11<sup>th</sup> plan (2007-2012) was much higher, at Rs. 6000/-crore (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 21 August, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> *Gram panchayats* are local governments at the village or small-town level in India. As of 2002, there were about 265,000 *gram panchayats* in India.





Thanks to these extra-budgetary funded projects in the six first-round LIFE countries, LIFE has made a visible impact. For example, hundreds of senior and middle-level literacy managers in Bangladesh, Egypt, Senegal and Pakistan have been trained to adapt and integrate innovative approaches into their literacy activities. Capacities for raising the profile of community learning centres have been developed in Bangladesh. In Egypt, Morocco and Pakistan, the community learning model has been adapted to the country context and piloted as a means of paving the way for integrated, multi-sectoral approaches to literacy that are embedded in local development agency. In Haiti, innovative practices have successfully been incorporated into literacy programmes provided by different partners on the ground, such as the development of ad-hoc learning materials and the establishment of supervision and support mechanisms to ensure the quality of the learning processes.



In Senegal and Pakistan, national curriculum frameworks for literacy and NFE have been developed or improved to allow for equivalencies between formal and non-formal education in the future. A peer review workshop was held using a participatory approach, inviting literacy specialists from the sub-region to critically analyse, improve and validate the







of reading and learning that establishes environments supportive of literacy is another important focus and such cultures have been successfully promoted, for example, in Bangladesh, Morocco, Pakistan and Senegal.

**LIFE Strategic Objective 4:**  
*Sharing knowledge and inspiring innovations to continuously improve literacy policies and practices*

Senegalese curriculum. In Bangladesh, Pakistan and Morocco, a project harnessing modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a means of increasing national delivery capacity was piloted successfully.

In addition to the extra-budgetary-funded literacy projects, a series of international and regional workshops was conducted, in which participants from LIFE countries were helped to concretise their implementation strategies and strengthen their capacities for identifying, analysing and promoting innovative pedagogical approaches to literacy. As a result of these activities, capacities were enhanced for the design, implementation and management of good-quality literacy programmes, as well as for curriculum and material development, the training of trainers, assessment and monitoring and evaluation as in-built components of literacy and NFE programmes.

LIFE has also succeeded in reinforcing links with important development issues by promoting approaches that integrate life skills, income generating activities, HIV prevention and conflict resolution. In India, for example, a LIFE kit containing five training modules has been jointly developed by UNESCO New Delhi and the National Institute of Open Schooling. The modules address literacy in combination with life skills themes such as health, HIV and AIDS prevention, nutrition and hygiene, parenting and family life, economic empowerment and citizenship. In Morocco, training for income-generating activities was integrated into literacy and post-literacy programmes for rural women.

LIFE also addresses the issue of gender equality, the use of mother tongue and local languages for literacy instruction, and the use of applied and appropriate technologies, including ICTs. The creation of a culture

The generation and sharing of knowledge – in and beyond the participating LIFE countries – is one of the added values that UNESCO can bring to LIFE to ensure high standards of services in specialist areas. In this regard, LIFE benefits from and contributes to UNESCO's function as a "laboratory of ideas", "clearing-house" and "catalyst for international collaboration". By building on existing experiences, and by identifying, analysing and sharing new information, knowledge, effective practices and innovative approaches to accelerate literacy efforts, it can make a palpable difference for millions of learners around the world.

The main findings and recommendations from in-depth studies on literacy policies and strategies, cost and financing, innovative approaches and content areas, the use of ICTs and media, benchmarking, and monitoring & evaluation, among others, were presented and discussed at international, regional and national conferences, seminars and workshops, and subsequently made available in print and electronic forms.

For example, in Bangladesh and Senegal, regional experience-sharing and peer review workshops were held in August 2008 to meet with colleagues from other LIFE countries and discuss the findings of evaluations carried out at the end of the 2006-2008 project cycle. During the Regional Experience-Sharing Workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh, participants from Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Nepal and Pakistan examined the experiences of governmental participation in the implementation of LIFE. In the case of the review meeting in Senegal, multi-country teams of experts specialising in curriculum and training from Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Niger were invited to identify lessons learned by carrying out a peer review of the materials developed and the outcomes of training obtained in the context

of the Senegalese literacy project. The longer-term aim of this exercise was to initiate a regional peer review process that will help to strengthen existing capacities.

Many LIFE countries are keen to develop more accurate instruments that will enable them to measure literacy learning achievements in differentiated ways, evaluate literacy programmes on a regular basis and thus plan resource allocations for literacy more efficiently. The Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), developed by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, was piloted in Morocco. Experiences were shared in a workshop that took place in the context of the National Seminar to celebrate International Literacy Day in Morocco (October 2008), which was attended by participants from Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen.

The major achievement to date has been the national Moroccan LAMP team's success in acquiring the capacities needed to conduct surveys of literacy levels and become an active player in South-South cooperation in this field. However, it was also recognised that the involvement of an excessive number of actors had hampered coordination and slowed down the pace of implementation. Strengthening national capacities proved to be a long and costly process, although team members assessed it as profitable. The different perspectives of the actors involved made the task more difficult to complete due to the resulting communication problems<sup>44</sup>.

In another workshop within the same context, Moroccan specialists shared their experiences of developing the NFE-MIS component of the literacy project. One important lesson learned was that the implementation process became weighed down by including too many items in the system. The language of the user interface was seen as a "handicap" that impeded its use by the general staff; data entry was slowed down due to technical problems which had a negative impact on the timely launching of the system. Despite the difficulties encountered, however, NFE-MIS has, on the whole, allowed Morocco to align itself with new monitoring and evaluation technologies. Morocco is also one of the few countries

that have combined planning and analysis with programme management<sup>45</sup>. Through experience-sharing and peer review workshops, UNESCO is helping countries to benefit from lessons learned by others about what works in terms of literacy provision and acquisition.

One of the main aims of LIFeline is to promote exchange between LIFE focal points and other key stakeholders from the different LIFE countries. LIFeline is currently designed to provide four things: a stable platform, discussion forums for exchange, a document management system and e-mail notifications. In addition, the database on effective policies and practice in literacy and NFE from around the world developed by UIL provides innovative and state-of-the-art evidence and information that helps countries and providers to improve their literacy policies and practices on an ongoing basis. It is through these channels and platforms that inspiring innovations are disseminated, analysed and can be adapted to specific contexts.



44 UNESCO Rabat/ Département de l'Alphabétisation et de l'Éducation Non Formelle, Fiche technique, Atelier No 2 : Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), Rabat, 13 octobre 2008.

45 UNESCO Rabat/ Département de l'Alphabétisation et de l'Éducation Non Formelle, Fiche technique, Atelier No 3 : Système d'information pour la gestion des programmes d'alphabétisation et d'éducation non formelle (SIM-ENF), Rabat, 13 octobre 2008.



Jate Jaabi

13

9

...  
kesu kora  
5 se ben furaba tigij b'itogole  
se kiboloda manajilaka  
da itaga jekora



# 4

## Success stories

LIFE as a platform for collaborative action and a mechanism for strengthening South-South cooperation to accelerate literacy efforts has also been a framework for the sharing of experiences and effective practices. There are many examples of success stories directly attributable to LIFE, some comprising inspiring innovations, which may be taken up and adjusted to different contexts.

### 4.1. LIFE and development

The LIFE framework recognises that literacy plays a key role in development and poverty reduction. Therefore, LIFE promotes integrated approaches that link literacy with sustainable livelihoods, life skills, health and nutrition, including HIV and AIDS prevention and parenting, among others. These approaches include mobilising communities, developing intergenerational approaches to learning, strengthening literate environments, capitalising on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and promoting the use of mother tongues in bi- and multilingual contexts. Gender, as an issue that cuts across the LIFE strategy as a whole, is addressed by promoting gender-sensitive literacy policies and programmes.

The following offers some successful examples of countries that have situated literacy provision within a wider developmental and cultural context:

- In **Egypt**, a pilot training programme on the use of ICTs in literacy was implemented in the context of the CapEFA Literacy Project in January 2009. The training workshop targeted 40 illiterate women from disadvantaged areas. After five days of intensive training during which they used a special computer programme developed to aid literacy learning, the participants were able to start writing short stories about themselves.
- The Community Learning Centre (CLC) model – one of several literacy activities within the CapEFA Programme – has been piloted as an approach that promotes ownership on the part of the targeted communities and mobilises communities to support and seek out literacy and learning. This was particularly the case in **Egypt, Morocco and Pakistan**, where community-based learning centres were piloted with technical support from APPEAL/ UNESCO Bangkok and the Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) Bangladesh. In the case of Pakistan, a kit with advocacy materials on the CLC approach has been developed and disseminated to providers of literacy programmes.
- In **Iran**, the establishment of Community Learning Centres has developed into a key LIFE strategy. These centres focus on delivering literacy, life-skills and post-literacy programmes.
- The CapEFA project in **Senegal** aimed to support the implementation of national literacy strategies and skills training for excluded women and girls active in the agro-food industry. Relevant and gender-sensitive training modules were developed. The project benefited 300 women and 80 adolescent girls in five regions. The focus was on developing women’s competencies and thereby boosting their income. On the basis of this pilot experience, the national curriculum framework was modified to focus on skills training.
- Financial assistance was provided by UNESCO Accra to the Women and Development Association (WADA) in **Sierra Leone**’s Bassa and Bagruwa Chiefdoms to train rural women in income-generating skills and the establishment of self-help groups at the village level.



- Through LIFE, the **Indonesian** Ministry of Education is working to increase the number of literates and empower them economically, socio-culturally and environmentally with life skills in the framework of Education for Sustainable Development. A range of different literacy programmes is being implemented, with a special focus on 142 districts with illiteracy rates above 5 percent, as well as on indigenous communities and women.



- The **Nigerian** version of the Poverty Reduction Strategy places a strong emphasis on the centrality of adult literacy to the achievement of the major goals of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The Nigerian Literacy by Radio Programme, implemented in the framework of LIFE, is another indication of the way in which the literacy issue is being addressed within an all-embracing strategy to fast-track the process for achieving EFA and MDGs in the country.
- In **Morocco**, the national literacy and NFE policy has been integrated into a broader development perspective by linking it with the National Human Development Initiative.





## BOX No. 1

### Literacy and skills training for women in Morocco

The post-literacy and economic integration of women in Ouarzazate and Zagora Provinces was a key component of the CapEFA literacy project in **Morocco**. 4,500 female participants received training from local NGOs, with the aim of increasing women's involvement in society and aiding the development of income-generating activities for newly-literate women in rural areas. The project implementation started with studies on the socio-economic situation of the women in the project sites and the local economic opportunities available to them. As a result of their involvement in the initiative, around 300 women succeeded in setting up their own micro-credit projects and generating an income. These two pilot projects now serve as a model that the National Literacy Department will apply to other skills training programmes that link post-literacy with income-generating activities. The remaining interventions of the CapEFA project were geared towards improving the quality of literacy programmes and learning achievements; these again have benefited women in particular, as annual evaluations conducted by the National Literacy Department indicate that 85% of literacy learners in Morocco are female.

*Source:*

*UNESCO Rabat Cluster, Final Report, Capacity Building for EFA Programme 2006-2008, 14 November 2008*

## BOX No. 2

### Community Learning Centres in Bangladesh

In **Bangladesh**, the CapEFA Project included the organisation of literacy and skills training for 2,190 illiterate girls and women in rural areas through 40 Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and 5 Community Resource Centres (CRCs). Following the baseline survey, economically viable trades (mat making, embroidery, tailoring, nursery, poultry, cattle rearing, etc.) were selected in consultation with the learners. Along with literacy/skills training, the learners have also been trained in gender awareness, reproductive health, environment, and human rights.

The creation of literate environments that catered for the needs of illiterate women entailed the organisation of 50 reading-writing competitions in which 1,500 neo-literates participated; 150 of the most successful participants were awarded prizes for their achievements. Furthermore, 12 sets of learner-generated materials and 10 supplementary reading books have been developed and published. 16 village libraries have been established to provide free access to information and promote literacy by offering community members – especially adolescent girls and women – relevant and attractive supplementary reading materials. The CapEFA Project in Bangladesh has also established 25 new CLCs and strengthened 15 existing CLCs. 5 CRCs have been equipped with furniture, reading materials and ICT facilities.

*Source:*

*UNESCO Dhaka, Final Report Capacity Building for EFA Programme 2006-2008, 14 November 2008*

## 4.2 Building partnerships and national ownership

Building strong teams, partnerships and coordination mechanisms is one of the LIFE framework's strategic tasks, and is designed to mobilise and sustain support for literacy. It is imperative that key stakeholders – government, civil society, the private sector, bilateral and multilateral agencies, including UN agencies (LIFE is fully in line with the 'UN Delivering as One' strategy), and development partners – come together to develop coherent and articulated strategies, preferably in the context of a sector-wide and cross-sectoral approach. The literacy challenge in LIFE countries is too big and complex to be shouldered only by one or a few stakeholders, and resources are so scarce that literacy must continuously compete with other priorities. Hence, in several countries, rather than adopting a piecemeal approach to the literacy challenge, LIFE has focused on promoting partnerships and collaborations.

The following provides an overview of some successful examples of coordinated partnership approaches to literacy:

- In **Bangladesh**, an inter-ministerial committee was set up to strengthen coordination among government departments offering NFE. In this way opportunities for cross-sectoral coordination were created. Partnerships were developed further by establishing links with NGOs which are organised under a strong umbrella network (CAMPE).
- In **Haiti**, the National Secretary for Literacy (SEA), the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation (AECI)<sup>46</sup> and UNESCO joined forces to implement a LIFE Project of Basic Education and Vocational Training for Youth and Adults. In addition, the National Institute of Professional Training, in cooperation with the Argentinian Government, provided financial support to train newly literate youth and adults in agricultural production. These partnerships have been key to ensuring the reinforcement of literacy skills combined with vocational training and skills development relevant to learners' labour environment.



- In **Madagascar**, cooperation within the UN system and between various national stakeholders has contributed to 1) a strong literacy component in the national poverty reduction strategy plan; and 2) the further incorporation of literacy into the key policies of the Ministry of Education. The position of literacy in Madagascar's national EFA plan has moved forward considerably. This illustrates the advantages of concerted and holistic efforts by multiple stakeholders.
- In **Mozambique**, UNESCO has facilitated the launch of a Literacy Movement in September 2006, headed by the country's First Lady and the Ministry of Education and Culture. One of the key aims of the Movement is to mobilise resources and forge strategic partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders. The *Movimento Alfa* has been particularly successful in working with governors' wives to create decentralised structures through local governments.
- In **Niger**, a thematic week on EFA has been initiated with the support of the Office of the First Lady (MAGAMA) and will take place on a yearly basis to raise local communities' awareness of the advantages of being literate. Multi- and bilateral partners (such as ADB, WB, and UNDP) have been mobilised in order to increase financial contributions to literacy.
- In **Papua New Guinea**, the National Literacy Taskforce, a multi-stakeholder forum chaired by the Department of Education, has taken the lead in coordinating the implementation of the "Accelerating National Efforts in PNG to Achieve EFA through LIFE" CapEFA Project 2009-2010.

<sup>46</sup> The Spanish Government has made US\$679,590 available for the implementation of a literacy programme after the official launch of LIFE in Haiti.



### BOX No. 3

#### LIFE Coordination Working Group in Afghanistan

Until the end of 2006, literacy efforts in post-conflict **Afghanistan** had been intermittent and fragmented. Key international players in the field of literacy and NFE carried out their activities in an uncoordinated and isolated manner and there was a desperate need for collaboration and cooperation that would achieve national coverage. In 2007, the Minister of Education decided to adopt LIFE as a national framework to achieve the goals of the National Education Strategic Plan and to facilitate better coordination between the Afghan Government and its development partners. Since then, one of LIFE's major achievements has been to establish a coordination mechanism that brings together national and international key partners that had previously worked independently of each other. A longer process of consultation was initiated with the establishment of the LIFE Coordination Working Group in October 2007 co-chaired by the Deputy Minister in charge of the Ministry of Education's Literacy Department and UNESCO.

To date, monthly meetings have taken place to coordinate national literacy work. The group's major activities include: providing guidance and feedback for the LIFE Situation Assessment; formulating and implementing a major LIFE Project ("Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan") funded by the Japanese Government together with a National Literacy Action Plan; providing input for a new Education Law approved by the Cabinet in 2008 that established a National High Commission for Literacy; and organising national advocacy events. Since its inception, the LIFE Coordination Working Group's membership has grown and the scope of its activities has widened. Under the umbrella of the LIFE framework, it has developed into the steering force for national literacy policies within a sector-wide approach.

*Sources: Minutes of monthly LIFE Coordination Working Group Meetings, 2007-2009, Ministry of Education, Afghanistan Country Report, January 2008*

### BOX No. 4

#### Partnership of government and civil society for literacy in Egypt

In **Egypt**, the relationship between government and civil society organisations active in the field of literacy has traditionally been characterised by mutual distrust. Within the framework of the Egyptian LIFE initiative, a strategy for NGOs working in literacy was developed to address this problem<sup>47</sup>. It was prepared by a group of 12 NGOs from different governorates in Egypt and subsequently shared with the director and staff of the Adult Education Authority (AEA) in the course of two full-day meetings. It was then presented to the Minister and his senior officials, who welcomed and supported the work of NGOs in Egypt. It was further discussed and reviewed during a national NGO seminar attended by more than 50 participants from NGOs and AEA. The final document covers a range of interventions including: learning environments; curricula and programmes; teachers and facilitators; monitoring; financial resources; and network building. For each, details of the activities planned, potential partners, possible challenges and expected outcomes were listed. The development of this document – endorsed by the Egyptian education authorities and integrated into the national education strategy – has opened up a forum for dialogue between government officials and NGO and civil society personnel working on literacy. It has also been welcomed in the region as a whole, with the Yemeni government planning to devise a similar strategy for local NGOs.

*Source: Report, UNESCO Cairo Office*

<sup>47</sup> Non-Governmental Organizations' Strategy for Literacy and Adult Education, December 2007.

## BOX No. 5

### LIFE Core Group as a national coordination structure in Pakistan

In **Pakistan**, a LIFE Core Group has been established under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Education (Projects Wing) with representation from the public and private sectors. Members of this committee include representatives from the Ministry's Projects and Curriculum Divisions, Directors from the four Provincial Literacy and NFE Departments, a representative of the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) and representatives from major NGOs and foundations active in the field of literacy. The main objective of the Core Group is to facilitate and oversee the planning and implementation of LIFE-related activities, while also strengthening literacy capacities in the country. Regular meetings are held to discuss implementation strategies for the CapEFA project, to monitor progress through measures such as the Situation Analysis and to ensure that planned activities receive support from all partners involved. 6 LIFE coordination meetings were held in 2008 and 2009 with more than 50 participants attending in each case. With this mechanism in place, LIFE has succeeded in bringing together key stakeholders from government, civil society and the private sector. This national partnership for literacy has developed into an example of sustainable, collaborative action that helps to bridge gaps by establishing a strong national and institutional coordination structure.

Sources:

- Ministry of Education, *LIFE Pakistan Report*, Jan. 07

- <http://www.paklife.net/partners.html>

## BOX No. 6

### Cooperation across sectors in Brazil

In **Brazil**, past evaluations highlighted the difficulty of focusing literacy training opportunities, since literacy courses have tended to address people with low levels of education rather than those with no reading and writing skills whatsoever. In order to channel its related activities more effectively, the Secretary of Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD) has now established partnerships with other governmental services that gather data on and attend to the needs of population groups with low incomes (e.g. the Family Grant Programme and the Single Health System), thereby encouraging connections between local literacy course managers and the staff of community health services who have access to families. In this way, literacy providers draw on information concerning people's educational level in order to identify and approach potential learners.

Source: *Ministério da Educação, National Report from Brazil, 2008*







### 4.3 Raising the profile of literacy through advocacy and communication

The key to advocacy is the development of a multi-stakeholder network and effective partnerships willing and equipped to make a case for literacy. Motivating political will to invest adequately in literacy is just one dimension of advocacy. Another important dimension is the creation of an effective demand for literacy through awareness-raising campaigns, a system of incentives, the creation of literate environments and the provision of further learning opportunities that extend beyond basic literacy.

Some examples of successful advocacy and communication activities include:

- Nationwide advocacy policy campaigns in the framework of the CapEFA project in **Bangladesh**, during which around 1,000 policy-makers, NGO managers, volunteers and other stakeholders were trained. Two sets of advocacy materials were developed to support this work and sensitize illiterates.
- In 2007, PAMOJA and ANCEFA organised a ten-day advocacy caravan that visited rural communities in **Guinea, Senegal and Mali**. They then presented the demands of these communities to participants attending the African Regional Conference in support of Global Literacy, which took place in September 2007 in Bamako, Mali. One of these demands was that at least 3% of national education budgets be allocated to literacy and adult education<sup>48</sup>.
- In **Egypt**, a National Advisory Board for Adult Education has been established. In the context of LIFE, it has acted as a think tank for advocacy on literacy.
- **Southern Sudan** marked International Literacy Day 2009 with a SMS text message campaign. Close to one million subscribers to five different mobile companies received the following text message: "Today 8 September is International Literacy Day! Empower your LIFE through literacy! Help built a bright future for S. Sudan! Supported by UNESCO – MoEST/EAS".

<sup>48</sup> African Platform for Adult Education: Civil Society Report: Forging Partnerships Towards a Renewed Vision of Adult education in Africa, 2009, p.22.

## BOX No. 7

### Interactive LIFE website in Senegal

In **Senegal**, the national LIFE steering committee has worked together with BREDA to put forward an advocacy and communication strategy, which includes a website focusing on the issues of literacy and non-formal education. This dynamic and interactive website encompasses a range of high-quality information on LIFE, related activities in Senegal and across Africa, the extra-budgetary project with its thematic components – including education programmes leading to qualifications for women working in the food industry (EQJA), national languages, curriculum and training, the Non-Formal Education Management Information System (NFE-MIS), etc. – as well as opportunities for interactive exchanges and South-South cooperation. This undertaking increases the overall visibility of LIFE.

Sources: UNESCO Dakar/BREDA: Final Report CapEFA Project 2006-2007, 16 October 2008 ,  
Presentation Senegal, Regional Meeting of African LIFE Countries, 29-31 January 2008

## BOX No. 8

### Making a case for literacy through advocacy events in Nigeria

In 2007, the Government of **Nigeria** initiated a dialogue with policy-makers and literacy practitioners from all over the world, to see how lessons can be learned from the past and how literacy can be transformed into a national priority. 60 participants from 24 countries with a shared commitment to building a new momentum for adult literacy – including Ministers of Education, Permanent Secretaries, Directors and Managers of National Literacy Programmes, United Nations officials, donors and civil society organizations – gathered in Abuja from 12-16 February 2007. A Call for Action at the national and international levels was agreed upon by all participants, and provides guiding principles for national, state and local governments as well as civil society and international actors to mobilise momentum for adult literacy and new investments that will accelerate literacy efforts.

In the same year, from 26-28 September 2007, the Government of Nigeria held an international workshop on the Use of Mass Literacy Campaigns as a Strategy for Achieving EFA and MDGs on Education. The workshop, which took place in Abuja, aimed to bring together relevant experiences on mass literacy campaigns from different regions of the world and make the lessons learned from such campaigns available to LIFE countries. One of its outcomes was to develop a framework for effective and sustainable national literacy campaigns in Nigeria.

Sources:  
ActionAid, Writing the Wrongs, High-Level Workshop on Adult Literacy, Abuja, Nigeria, 12-16 February 2007, Call for Action and UNESCO Abuja



## BOX No. 9

### Mobilising Parliamentarians for literacy in Pakistan

In **Pakistan**, a Parliamentary Caucus/Forum on Literacy in Pakistan (PCLP) was set up to achieve the following objectives related to literacy: a) awareness among literacy stakeholders, particularly parliamentary peers; b) government support for policies and provisions for sustainable literacy programmes; c) campaigns to motivate the general public to participate actively in existing literacy programmes; d) an effective monitoring and evaluation system for literacy programmes; and e) the establishment of networks and sustainable literacy programmes through public private partnerships. Since its inception, the executive committee of the PCLP has convened four provincial meetings, which were attended by parliamentarians, senators, members of the national/provincial assemblies, educationists and representatives of NGOs working in the field of literacy. PCLP has produced publications, leaflets and reports which have been shared widely in meetings, seminars and workshops. The PCLP executive committee has formulated proposals for literacy and NFE policies that emphasise the need for the government to allocate and spend an extra development budget for literacy/NFE and provide structural and technical support to build literacy professionals' capacities. Over the past few years, UNESCO has been interacting with parliamentarians on EFA and literacy, and a number of meetings of Parliamentary Forums on literacy took place at the national and provincial levels. As a result of efforts to advocate for the importance of literacy, Prime Minister Gilani recently announced that 2010 would be Literacy Year in Pakistan. In addition, on International Literacy Day 2009, the President proposed the formation of a National Literacy Council, convened by the Prime Minister.

Source: Report UNESCO Islamabad



*Mobilising for literacy  
in Pakistan*

#### 4.4. Mobilising additional funds and resources

Although small increases can be registered, financial allocations to literacy from national education sectors and development partners remain very limited. Advocacy has paid off in some countries, such as Senegal, where the percentage allocated to literacy in the ten-year education plan has risen from 0.1% in 2005 to 1.9% in 2007, compared to less than 1% in Pakistan.

Thanks to LIFE, bilateral and multilateral agencies in several countries – such as Afghanistan, Haiti, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Papua New Guinea and South Sudan – have promised or provided additional funds to support a major literacy drive within the LIFE framework. For example, in 2008, Afghanistan received a grant of US\$15 million from the Government of Japan (through UNESCO) to fund literacy programmes that will benefit around 300,000 learners, notably women, in nine Afghan provinces. This may potentially be extended by





*Learners developing literacy skills by sending text messages in Nigeria (above).  
Role play in a training course for midwives in Afghanistan (below).*

another US\$17 million by the end of 2009, thereby enabling a further 300,000 learners in nine additional provinces to benefit from basic and post-literacy programmes. Furthermore, under the framework of LIFE and with UNESCO as lead agency, an UN Literacy Joint Programme is currently under development, and will be implemented during the period 2010-2013. The programme involves the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, WHO, FAO, UN-HABITAT and ILO to enhance and improve the quality of literacy programmes by striving for an integrated approach combining literacy, livelihoods and life skills.

In Mauritania, meanwhile, the European Union, UNFPA, the Spanish International Cooperation Agency and the World Bank have promised to fund major literacy programmes developed within strategies designed in the LIFE framework. With UNESCO as its technical partner, the European Union is funding a number of the areas covered by the Moroccan CapEFA Literacy Project. In Pakistan, where the One UN Programme has been piloted, literacy and NFE form one of 4 main components of the Education Sector. The Government of Spain has provided US \$12 million to address gender disparities in Pakistan. Of this, US \$1.4 million have been allocated to UNESCO to implement a youth literacy programme.

The Government of Japan has provided funds for evidence-based policy and programme development in Papua New Guinea, which will entail conducting sample literacy survey data and mapping languages in order to improve national capacities for literacy. In Niger, the development of a major multi-year plan has encouraged the UNDP, African Development Bank and World Bank to provide funds for literacy and NFE activities.

As a result of successful advocacy, the annual budget of the Nigerian National Commission for Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) has increased more than 10-fold. Allocations have been drawn from a Debt Relief Fund and have been used: 1) to scale up the Nigeria Literacy by Radio Programme from 12 to 36 states plus the Federal Capital Territory; 2) to train technical committee members and programme facilitators; and 3) to develop primers in additional languages.

At the beginning of 2009, UNESCO provided LIFE Iraq with technical support for the development of a concept paper and project document. This LIFE Project on capacity-building for the provision of literacy, life skills and non-formal education – one of UNESCO's responses to post-conflict situations – will focus particularly on out-of-school children, internally displaced children, youth, girls and women, as well as on other vulnerable groups. It is funded by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned, First Lady of Qatar and UNESCO Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education.

Additional funds for literacy and adult education have also been mobilised within national budgets. For example, the Egyptian authorities (Ministry of Finance) were ready to allocate almost US\$20 million to roll out the innovative approach to literacy which was piloted during the CapEFA Literacy Project and for which UNESCO had provided around US\$1 million. This is one example of a government that has succeeded in scaling up innovative approaches developed within a literacy project. This example also shows that, in some countries, literacy problems are not always the result of a lack of financial resources, but of a lack of ideas regarding innovative practices, relevant knowledge and experiences, and that political will is necessary to influence change.



#### 4.5 Making the principle of solidarity work through South-South cooperation

45

The LIFE framework provides participating countries and regions with manifold opportunities to exchange experience and knowledge, as well as to learn from and collaborate with one another. Using UNESCO's approach to promoting South-South cooperation as a means of achieving progress towards EFA, LIFE has established genuine networks of participating countries which are inspired by the idea of solidarity.

The following lists some examples of the successful implementation of the South-South cooperation scheme:

- **Mozambique** is receiving support from Brazil in a number of areas such as the training of literacy teachers, programme monitoring and evaluation, and the production of teaching materials. Technical missions and study visits to Brazil have been undertaken by senior-level Mozambican staff.
- The LIFE process in **Yemen** has benefited from the experience and support of **Egypt**. For example, Yemen was able to apply the same terms of reference and instruments as Egypt and adjust them for the purpose of its initial situation analysis.





- The launching of LIFE has allowed **Morocco** and **Mauritania** to establish a close cooperation in the field of literacy. For example, when Mauritania decided to establish a national programme, it received support from Morocco. This South-South cooperation has also supported: new programmes for out-of-school children; national strategies and conventions for literacy; the situation analysis; capacity development through the training of trainers; partnership-building; and a new process of decentralisation.
- The reinvigoration of the **Regional Council for Education and Literacy in Africa (CREAA)** – a group of 15 countries, most of them LIFE countries – is another example of a network for effective South-South cooperation<sup>49</sup>.

---

49 CREAA is supported by “l’Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie” (OIF) and contributes to improving the quality of literacy programmes, supporting national strategies and assisting with capacity-building activities in its 15 African Member States.



## Box No. 10

### South-South cooperation through the Lusophone Network on Youth and Adult Education

In August 2006, under the auspices of UNESCO and the Brazilian government, all Portuguese-speaking countries of the South – Angola, **Brazil**, Cape Verde, **Guinea-Bissau**, **Mozambique**, São Tomé and Príncipe, and East Timor – attended the First South-South Cooperation Workshop on Adult and Youth Education in Brasília. The workshop allowed participating countries to identify recurrent challenges in the field of adult and youth education and to agree upon a strategic plan for cooperation. A network was established with a joint and rotational presidency, starting with Brazil and Cape Verde. A second Workshop took place in Salvador, Brazil, in February 2008. The topics addressed included the training of trainers, teachers and managers; international funding for adult and youth literacy and education; the promotion of reading practices; statistics and educational data; and programme monitoring and evaluation.

Participants concluded that UNESCO's LIFE initiative had facilitated South-South cooperation, which they saw as an opportunity for the countries of the South to improve their adult and youth education policies through closer and continuous contact. At the same time, successful North-South-South triangulation actions have been established (e.g. distance education initiatives via radio in Guinea-Bissau spearheaded by Cape Verde and the Spanish Cooperation).

A third Workshop is scheduled to take place in Cape Verde in October 2009, with the aim of further discussing four main topics: the training of trainers; the gathering of statistics and educational data; programme monitoring and evaluation; and access to and the use of ICTs in adult education and training programmes.

#### Sources:

UNESCO: *Educação de Jovens e Adultos nos países de língua portuguesa: novos diálogos para a cooperação sul-sul, Brasília 2007*

UNESCO: *Second South-South Cooperation Workshop: Adult and Youth Education in Portuguese-speaking Countries, Final report, 2008*









## 5 Challenges and lessons learned

In many countries, literacy is given a low priority by governments and donors alike. This is often reflected in a lack of political will, resources and capacities to deliver good-quality literacy programmes at scale. LIFE has taken up this challenge with the aim of reversing this trend in the 35 targeted countries by advocating and working for change. The initiative offers participating countries hope and a new vision for genuine commitment and effective partnerships that will accelerate literacy efforts.

The range of countries participating in LIFE is broad, due mainly to the decision to select countries on the basis of a strict statistical criterion – i.e. only countries in which more than 50 per cent of the population or 10 million adults have no or low levels of literacy skills. On the one hand, there are poor countries with high percentages of illiteracy (such as the post-conflict countries, Afghanistan and South Sudan). On the other, there are high-population, middle-income countries (such as China and Brazil<sup>50</sup>) with lower illiteracy rates (9.1 and 11.4<sup>51</sup> per cent respectively), but more than 10 million adults still waiting to become fully literate. 24 of the participating countries are LDCs with low Education Development Indicators (EDI)<sup>52</sup>. While 22 are low-income countries, 12 LIFE-countries are lower middle-income countries<sup>53</sup>, and one country, Brazil, is classified as an upper middle-income country<sup>54</sup>.

Each country started from a different situation and has initiated LIFE in its own way. This diversity of baseline situations not only requires flexible and tailor-made approaches for integrating LIFE into national literacy, education and development agendas; in some cases, it has also proven more difficult to convince governments that, despite lower rates of illiteracy overall, millions of their citizens continue to face major literacy challenges that need to be addressed on national agendas.

There are also several countries with literacy rates of just over 50 per cent, which are in dire need of support but which were not included in the LIFE initiative because UNESCO, after assessing its existing capacities, decided that it would be most effective to provide targeted support to 35 countries. Guided by the principle of solidarity and South-South cooperation, LIFE has actually evolved into an initiative that is now starting to expand its outreach beyond the 35 participating countries.

50 Brazil alone accounts for around 40% of the total number of adults in the Latin American and Caribbean Region who were unable to access literacy training in the period 1995-2004.

51 The latest figure for illiteracy in Brazil from September 2009 is 10,0% (PNAD, 2008).

52 This refers to the 20 countries for which information on Education Development Indicators (EDI) is available in the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009, pp. 248-249.

53 This list also includes Sudan, although South Sudan, after emerging from a 25-year conflict in 2006, should really be included in the low-income category.

54 World Bank list of economies (July 2009).







*Celebration of International Literacy Day in Kabul, Afghanistan.*

LIFE-related initiatives and the regional literacy conferences, succeeded in generating momentum and making a case for literacy. Thanks to these conferences, LIFE has become well-known among participating countries, and UNESCO has received requests from other countries to be included in the initiative. Even if these countries cannot be included, they will undoubtedly benefit from the experience, knowledge and resources generated within the LIFE framework, as well as from the networks and partnerships that the initiative has facilitated. One of the main challenges for LIFE will therefore be to generate relevant knowledge and make it available to all Member States.

From the outset, LIFE was confronted with the challenge of creating a common understanding of what the initiative actually entails. Initially, misconceptions of LIFE as a UNESCO-funded initiative hindered its launch in some countries. As a result, support for LIFE at country level has been uneven. It took some time to make it clear to all involved

stakeholders and partners that LIFE is intended to be a country-led process that seeks to embed literacy in national policies and strategies, and mobilise relevant national and international partners to make a difference. A range of advocacy and capacity-building events, workshops and publications provided a better understanding of the transformative potential of LIFE. However, it will remain a challenge for LIFE to embed a common understanding of LIFE among all involved parties and at the same time to encourage engagement in country-specific processes.

Mobilising funds has been and continues to be a key challenge for LIFE. In many cases, and particular in Africa, LIFE countries are also the most disadvantaged ones and are in need of external financial support to increase their literacy efforts visibly. In addition to regular budgetary allocations during the biennium 2006-2007 and 2008-2009, six LIFE countries<sup>55</sup> have received special extra-budgetary funds in the

<sup>55</sup> Bangladesh, Egypt, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan and Senegal. Each of these literacy projects received between USD\$740,000 and USD\$995,000 to enhance national capacities for developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating literacy policies, and to mobilise and coordinate partners to ensure plans are brought to scale.

framework of UNESCO's Capacity-building for Education for All (CapEFA) Programme. These funds have provided LIFE with a lifeline and enabled it to achieve visible impacts through major projects, demonstrating that by bringing together human and financial resources and utilizing them in strategically planned activities, LIFE can generate more resources.

Another two-year cycle of extra-budgetary funded projects within the CapEFA Programme was initiated in 2009. These earmarked around half a million USD to benefit four LIFE countries<sup>56</sup> and another US\$1 million to support a further three LIFE countries<sup>57</sup>. The challenge will be to implement the planned activities effectively by using the UNESCO family approach and thereby consolidate the CapEFA Programme as a recognised multi-donor modality that reinforces UNESCO's support to LIFE countries.

The challenge of continuously mobilising and pooling resources has grown due to the decision – in the context of the three regional meetings of LIFE countries – to involve all 35 LIFE countries in the initiative from 2008 onwards rather than rolling out the initiative in three implementation cycles, as foreseen in the *Vision and Strategy Paper*<sup>58</sup>. The *Maputo Strategic Platform* in particular called on all 35 LIFE countries to initiate their LIFE processes immediately, irrespective of resource allocations from UNESCO. In other words, it was not deemed effective for the remaining 11 third-phase countries to wait until 2010 to launch their LIFE processes. This, however, has increased the demand for support, which is difficult to meet without revising the strategy and securing additional resources.

UIL has attempted to address the lack of financial resources and qualified/experienced staff by using a decentralised, networked approach, whereby it has coordinated and worked through other UNESCO entities (particularly its Regional Bureaus and field/cluster offices responsible for LIFE countries). However, organising support for the 16 LIFE countries that have no UNESCO Field Office has proven particularly demanding. There is a need to guarantee

adequate personnel resources, time and funds in order for UNESCO field staff to efficiently perform their LIFE-supporting role.

LIFE has developed into a mechanism that genuinely supports South-South cooperation through modalities such as networking, twinning arrangements and interactive online platforms (LIFeline). There are numerous examples of cross-country and cross-regional exchanges, and a number of Arab and African LIFE countries have benefited from the experiences of the Asian model of community learning centres. In turn, Asian LIFE countries benefited from African and Latin American experiences of multicultural and multilingual approaches to literacy learning. South-South cooperation has become an important implementation strategy for LIFE. The challenge now will be to further strengthen these initiatives in order to boost innovative and effective practices as well as to create a critical mass of literacy specialists in, and beyond, the LIFE countries themselves.

Research evidence and examples of effective literacy policy and practice from different research projects have been crucial in supporting LIFE advocacy, policy dialogue and capacity development activities. Furthermore, the LIFE Resource Pack (containing a series of publications, leaflets, research reports and trailers, and available both in print and



56 Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Senegal.

57 Mauritania, Mozambique and Papua New Guinea.

58 The following countries were chosen to participate in the first phase starting in 2006: Bangladesh, Egypt, Haiti, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sudan and Yemen. For the second phase starting in 2008, 13 more countries were invited, namely Afghanistan, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, China, Gambia, DRC, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Mozambique, Mauritania and Papua New Guinea.



online) and databases listing effective literacy policies and programmes have been instrumental in supporting stakeholders' advocacy, communication and capacity-building activities in LIFE countries. The aim now is to emphasise more participatory, action-research approaches for developing and piloting innovative programmes in combination with capacity development. Another challenge will be to pair this research with in-depth studies that give a more accurate account of the results and impacts of innovative approaches. The initiative must strive to assist LIFE countries in further building their research capacities; hence, enhancing national capacities for literacy assessment and the monitoring and evaluation of non-formal education is a crucial task and must be used to mobilise additional funds.



*Training of facilitators in Niger (above) and LIFE launch workshop in Sudan (below).*

While the empowering role of literacy is uncontested, and LIFE is making a concerted effort to empower (rural) women and girls, there is still much left to do in order to engender literacy policies and programmes in all their dimensions. Very few curricula, for example, address gender roles and relationships in innovative and culturally sensitive ways. The principle of empowerment needs to permeate the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of learning programmes more systematically. This also requires working more resolutely towards achieving a gender balance at decision-making levels. The promotion of new role models will encourage more female staff and learners to engage in literacy programmes. The monitoring and evaluation of LIFE and national literacy activities needs to integrate a "gender lens" more systematically into indicators and measurement instruments.

In order to capitalise on the experiences reported within the framework of LIFE so far, reference should be made to the following **lessons** drawn from the first three years of its implementation:

1) The success of LIFE implementations has been dependent on the readiness and political will of the authorities and civil society to address the literacy challenge with a longer term perspective. This needs to be taken into account when inviting countries to join similar initiatives in the future. However, UNESCO also has a normative and standard-setting function: hence, it must at the same time continuously advocate for reaching out to marginalized and difficult-to-reach groups with good quality literacy provision and basic skills training as the minimum foundation of lifelong learning. Upstream-oriented activities should therefore strive for a clear, sector-wide and cross-sectoral focus within a rights-based and lifelong learning perspective.

2) Existing national policies, strategies, initiatives and development frameworks in LIFE countries need to be the starting point for and should continue to lead literacy-related activities. They should neither be remodelled nor recreated as artificial "LIFE plans". Instead, LIFE should contribute towards improving national frameworks, strengthening partnerships and mobilising resources for the successful implementation of these activities. As a result, UNESCO's role and strategy have had to adjust to the specific and diverse situations of LIFE countries, ranging from the poorest countries, such as Bangladesh, Benin, Mali and Mozambique, to

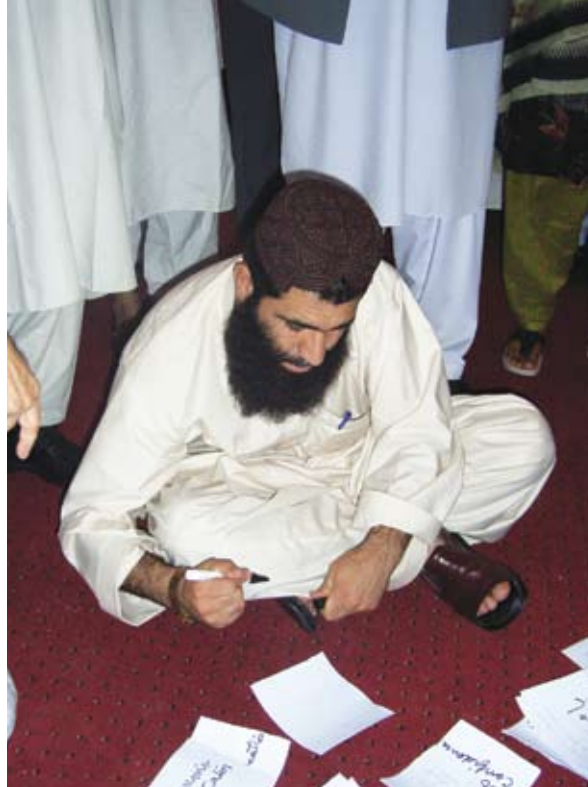


middle-income and richer countries, such as Brazil, China and India. A special approach was required to address countries recently or currently affected by conflict, such as Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Iraq, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Sudan. The challenge in each case will be to make sure that support will be mobilised for countries in dire need and ready to move forward.

3) Partnerships at all levels have played a critical role in establishing ownership and making interventions sustainable. Although national and local governments and/or ministries must be involved in order for support activities to achieve an upstream impact, political changes and instability may result in uncertainty for the sub-sector as a whole and result sometimes in setbacks. Working with teams (instead of individuals) and a broad range of partner institutions and organisations (instead of relying on just a few) is helping to build the capacities of a critical mass of stakeholders and therefore achieve continuity. Although LIFE coordination mechanisms have mostly been successful in terms of enabling the exchange of ideas, experiences and information, much remains to be done in order to improve the quality of such partnerships, including the establishment of a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities (e.g. assignment of areas) as well as collaboration on specific tasks at the country level.

4) Through the LIFE activities and CapEFA literacy projects, more interactions and debate have been promoted among governmental institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector. However, there are also many cases where institutions and organisations work in isolation from each other, without any exchange and mutual reinforcement. There is therefore a need to capitalise more on the convening power of the LIFE framework by creating relevant coordination and networking mechanisms among stakeholders. This, of course, would also entail bilateral and multilateral efforts between governments and UN agencies, as well as joint UN initiatives. LIFE is fully in line with the “UN Delivering as One” strategy. However, further efforts are needed to raise other UN agencies’ awareness of the fundamental importance of literacy for empowering individuals and developing societies.

5) The cascade approach to strengthening national capacities for literacy policies and the delivery of good quality programmes, which consisted in training national – and sometimes middle-level – literacy



*Training of senior literacy managers in Pakistan*

experts and staff, has had a multiplier effect. This in turn has increased the cost-effectiveness of LIFE interventions and ensured the upstream impact necessary to make those activities sustainable. By training national-level literacy specialists and personnel, LIFE ensures that knowledge and skills are subsequently passed on to literacy specialists and personnel at the regional/provincial and local levels. The cascade strategy applied to LIFE capacity-development has been paired with participatory, reflective and practice-oriented processes which reinforce the local ownership and continuity of such developments. It ensures that effective support and scaffolding mechanisms are built and strengthened to ensure quality all the way down to the teaching and learning process with and for the learners.

6) Many countries that experience major literacy challenges display high gender disparities<sup>59</sup>. Efforts to achieve EFA goals on literacy and gender are generally characterised by short-term, project-based approaches, while no separate and targeted budget allocation exists for addressing issues related to literacy, gender and quality. Experience has shown that a genuine will on the part of national authorities to address the gender gap and empower women can only be effective if paired with clear advocacy

<sup>59</sup> In Pakistan, for example, the gender gap is 25%, according to a gender study undertaken within the CapEFA Literacy Project.

messages, measurable indicators and concrete action. For example, empowering girls and women through linking literacy to vocational skills training and income generating activities has proven to be effective.

7) There are issues other than gender that clearly need to be emphasised more, such as targeting disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, respecting linguistic and cultural diversity (“mother tongue literacy”), professionalising literacy personnel, creating literate environments, and introducing minimum standards and assessment tools that provide more accurate and comparable data, among others.

8) In particular, the most populous LIFE countries are faced with the strategic challenge of taking their literacy programmes to scale. Policy-makers, meanwhile, are continuously under pressure to deliver results quickly in terms of lowering national illiteracy rates. Many literacy campaigns are launched with unrealistic goals in mind, and there is also a trend towards expanding literacy programmes rapidly without focusing sufficiently on the quality of

provision. Experiences from the past have shown that the formula “quantity comes first and quality follows” is not a successful one. In spite of the difficulty of striking a good balance between quality and quantity, LIFE should work more strongly towards achieving (at least) a minimum level of quality before gradually expanding literacy provision to the levels required to achieve the ultimate goal of literacy for all.

9) In many LIFE countries, there is a scarcity of qualified adult educators and experts with specialist knowledge of adult literacy, yet they are needed to design adequate programmes, train trainers, develop curricula and learning material, conduct field surveys and research work, and to ensure links between literacy and development. Close guidance, monitoring and technical backstopping from UNESCO have therefore been essential for ensuring quality outputs and the timely implementation of planned activities. One of the lessons learned, therefore, is that capacity-development processes must be given top priority. Short-term action that emphasises the immediate outcomes would put the sustainability of results and the continuity of the processes at risk. Furthermore, LIFE needs to address the literacy challenge by systematically involving younger people and thereby developing the capacities of new generations that will be needed to support future literacy and skills-training initiatives.

10) In the case of the literacy projects supported through the CapEFA Programme, the lessons learned suggest that the LIFE framework could be better capitalized with the aim to achieve a more sustainable impact by bringing “on board” both the relevant players from the field of literacy and NFE and new partners (in particular, bilateral and multilateral donors). Activities should be addressed from a longer-term perspective; legal frameworks and policies must be established and approved by the relevant governing bodies; and relevant institutional and organisational structures should be developed or strengthened. While UNESCO Field Offices have been primarily responsible for the implementation of the planned activities, the UNESCO family approach operated as an internal institutional implementation mechanism, which tapped into the expertise and competencies of various UNESCO entities and involved them in the implementation process. For capacity-building and research activities, efforts must be made to draw on existing capacities at national universities and institutes.



*Developing capacities of new generations*





LIFE has further enhanced UNESCO's comparative advantage in efforts to achieve literacy for all within the framework of the UNLD, EFA and the MDGs. The visible contribution that LIFE has made in this regard and the **value added** to these missions and mandates of the UN System include:

- a) the development of networks, the strengthening of partnerships and the establishment of an effective and efficient *modus operandi* for supporting the implementation of LIFE;
- b) improved coordination, harmonisation and synergies among different literacy-related activities;
- c) improved literacy policies and practices through the identification, creation and sharing of knowledge and innovation;
- d) increased commitment and literacy kept high on political agendas through advocacy events such as the series of regional literacy conferences;
- e) an "extra shot" of strengthened capacities developed through the literacy projects carried out under the CapEFA Programme; and
- f) the rich experiences and significant lessons learned from the first years of implementing LIFE which can be applied in subsequent years.







## 6

# Strategies for the way forward

Once again, the 2009 edition of the EFA Global Monitoring Report<sup>60</sup> shows that progress is not being made swiftly enough to guarantee that the EFA goals will be achieved by 2015. In particular, the goal related to adult literacy continues to be neglected. On the occasion of the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group on EFA, the UNESCO Director-General, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, stressed that “If current trends continue, over 700 million adults will still be illiterate in 2015 and *de facto* excluded from full social participation. This situation is utterly unacceptable in the twenty-first century”. Much more has to be done to address the deep disparities that continue to undermine EFA progress. “The Report is clear: business as usual is not sufficient,” the Director-General stated<sup>61</sup>.

LIFE is UNESCO’s response to the urgent need for immediate and coordinated action involving the mobilisation of key partners, stakeholders and resources towards literacy for all. Making a difference also involves placing literacy high on national and international agendas, and on implementing strategies that are able to reach the scale that the size of literacy challenges require, rapidly and effectively.

Summarising the lessons learned over the first years of implementing LIFE shows that meeting the goal of universal literacy calls for:

- more efforts to articulate policies for sustainable literacy with a longer-term and cross-sectoral perspective that embed literacy in national development frameworks and allow literacy skills to be developed as a continuum alongside other life skills and key competencies. It is therefore imperative to make a leap forward to achieve more accurate and cross-nationally comparable

measurements of literacy skills (through instruments such as LAMP) and evaluate the results/impact of literacy programmes by drawing on a broader concept of literacy;

- more efforts to build a long-term commitment and ensure the sustainability of literacy and NFE work at different levels. Within national decentralisation strategies, literacy and NFE programmes must be included in regular education and development plans at the provincial and district levels. There is a need to work towards changing the way that literacy is dealt with in many countries. Rather than running short-term literacy campaigns, more systematic efforts need to be made to articulate literacy with further NFE and adult learning opportunities within a lifelong learning perspective. This includes the development of institutionalised capacities for training, research, resources and professional support of all kinds for the field activities;
- more and better-quality financing for literacy and NFE programmes – and this investment must prioritise the poor and disadvantaged. There is a risk that public spending reinforces inequalities because wealthier regions and groups tend to be in a better position to attract financing than more disadvantaged areas and groups in society. Similarly, donors and development partners must prioritise the poorest countries facing the greatest literacy challenges. Donors need to be convinced that – both due to and in spite of the ongoing economic crisis – there is an urgent need to significantly increase aid allocations for literacy and NFE in low-income and post-conflict countries. Likewise, the governments of middle-income countries need to provide sound budget allocations for meeting the basic learning needs of all those youth and adults who have missed out in the formal system.

60 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report: “Overcoming inequality: why governance matters”.

61 UNESCO/ ODG, Flash Info N° 159-2008.

The relevance of LIFE to the efforts to achieve the overall goal – literacy for all – has been demonstrated and is widely appreciated, in particular by Member States participating in the initiative themselves. The continued implementation of LIFE will benefit from UNESCO’s plan to raise the profile of literacy



policy-driven and action-oriented research evidence for advocacy and capacity development, developing policy briefs and generic tools, providing technical services, networking, building partnerships and publishing materials (such as the LIFE Resource Pack, LIFELine, effective literacy policies and practices database, etc.). Lifelong learning will be promoted as a conceptual framework within sector-wide and cross-sectoral approaches to literacy and NFE.

There is a need to create a pool of experts specialising in different areas of literacy in order to respond to the increasing demand for technical support. This is true for the Organization itself at all levels as well as for the Member States. Together with UIL and UNESCO programme specialists, these experts will work as part of a LIFE team to support related advocacy, capacity development, research and network activities at the country level. Sub-regional, regional and cross-regional workshops will be organised to strengthen capacities in critical areas and to advocate for policies and programmes of sustainable literacy within sector-wide and national development frameworks.

Some of the cross-cutting issues that will be addressed in future LIFE capacity development activities (particularly with regard to curriculum and materials development as well as teacher training) will be AIDS prevention and mitigation, gender equality, peace education and conflict resolution, and cultural and linguistic diversity. UNESCO will develop a teacher/facilitator training and capacity development strategy for LIFE countries. In this framework, synergies will be created with UNESCO’s other two EFA flagship initiatives, namely the Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA) and EDUCAIDS.

The Capacity-Development for EFA Programme (CapEFA) has further evolved in focus and scope. In the proposed strategy for the current biennium 2008-2009, the aim is to contribute to developing organisational and institutional capacities to ensure that the reform and revitalisation of national education plans and policies, as well as their implementation, “integrate literacy and non-formal education to provide basic education opportunities and skills training for disadvantaged groups, especially women and marginalized youth, as a foundation for lifelong learning and sustainable livelihoods”<sup>63</sup>. The Regional CapEFA Support

and make it an integral part of the Education Sector Programme for the next biennium 2010-2011 (35 C/5)<sup>62</sup> and beyond. Not only will this provide LIFE with a necessary boost, it will enable LIFE to continue enhancing the Organisation’s capacities in the field of literacy: a win-win situation for all those involved, and one that inspires confidence and forward-looking strategies.

A major process to evaluate the progress achieved by LIFE in the African Region is currently underway and the results will be used to refine the implementation strategy. The evaluation will also contribute towards strengthening commitment and proactively developing concrete proposals at the country level in support of LIFE. Lessons learned and knowledge generated within the framework of LIFE will also contribute to fertilising related processes in other countries, in particular those with pockets of illiteracy rates comparable to those of the LIFE countries. Furthermore, the lessons learned so far will provide critical inputs for the formulation of UNESCO’s literacy strategy.

UIL, with its long-standing expertise in literacy, will continue to coordinate LIFE activities by acting as a clearing-house: i.e. by generating knowledge and

62 UNESCO: Draft Resolutions 2010-2011, 35 C/5 Volume 1.

63 UNESCO, 2008, Capacity-development for Education for All 2008-2013, p. iii (draft of 14 April 2008).



Programmes will help to capitalise on the benefits of the literacy projects carried out to date and ensure that these are also made available to non-LIFE countries. Furthermore, they will support efforts to motivate bilateral and international donors to provide additional funds that allow the activities initiated under the CapEFA Programme to be sustained and scaled up.

The ongoing CONFINTEA VI process, with its overarching thematic focus on adult learning and education, provides excellent opportunities to streamline and integrate LIFE organically into the process. One of the conference's five key thematic strands focuses on literacy and key competencies. Literacy, which is at the heart of basic education and an indispensable foundation of lifelong learning, will be dealt with as an integral part of adult learning and education<sup>64</sup>. During the follow-up to CONFINTEA VI, LIFE will continue to make a difference with regard to the literacy challenge, particularly through the implementation of the conference's outcome document, the Belém Framework for Action<sup>65</sup>. Launching a vigorous international effort to increase literacy rates, in particular in LIFE countries, is one of the commitments that participants of the Conference are expected to make with regard to adult literacy.

Eight of the E-9 countries, where two-thirds of the world illiterates live, were invited to join LIFE and will attend a seminar on Literacy and Adult Learning in Rural Areas, which will take place in Beijing, China, in October 2009. At CONFINTEA VI, delegates from E-9 countries will have opportunities to discuss effective and innovative practices and lessons learned with regard to accelerating literacy efforts and strengthening South-South cooperation. A further milestone of this South-South process will be the 8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Review Meeting of the E-9 Initiative, which will take place in Nigeria in 2010 and focus on literacy and NFE.

The solidarity principle and South-South cooperation will play a key role in paving the way forward for the implementation of LIFE. The initiative will continue to act as catalyst for mutual learning and the exchange of experiences among and beyond LIFE countries. The vision of offering relevant learning opportunities of good quality to all youth and adults denied the right to education, building strong partnerships of collaborative action and implementing an effective strategy of resource mobilisation will enable LIFE to make a real difference to the lives of millions of learners.



<sup>64</sup> This was already strongly reflected in the concept of the preparatory conference for the Latin America and Caribbean Region held in Mexico City in September 2008, which was combined with the regional conference in support of global literacy. The momentum and focus were carried on in the subsequent regional preparatory conferences as well as in a special thematic conference for francophone countries entitled "Enabling sustainable literacy: preventing and fighting illiteracy", which took place in Lyon, France, in February 2009.

<sup>65</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UIJL/confinteavi/pdf/working\\_documents/confinteavi\\_framework\\_en.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UIJL/confinteavi/pdf/working_documents/confinteavi_framework_en.pdf).







# References

- African Platform for Adult Education. 2009. *Civil Society Report: Forging Partnerships Towards a Renewed Vision of Adult Education in Africa*.
- Belém Framework for Action. 2009. *Harnessing the Power and Potential of Adult Learning and Education for a Viable Future*. Belém do Pará, Brazil, CONFINTEA VI [http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UIL/confintea/pdf/working\\_documents/confinteavi\\_framework\\_en.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UIL/confintea/pdf/working_documents/confinteavi_framework_en.pdf)
- Martin Jenkins. *Evaluation of UNESCO Strategic Programme Objectives 1 and 2*, Draft Report, 6 July 2009
- UNESCO. 2000. *The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All – Meeting our Collective Commitments*. World Education Forum, Dakar, UNESCO.
- UNESCO. 2004. *The Plurality of Literacy and its Implications for Policies and Programmes*. UNESCO Education Sector Position Paper, Paris, UNESCO.
- UNESCO. 2005. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006. Education for All: Literacy for Life*. Paris, UNESCO.
- UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education/ UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. 2008. *Regional Meeting of Asia and Pacific LIFE Countries, 21-24 January 2008, Dhaka, Bangladesh*. Bangkok, UNESCO Bangkok.
- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. 2008. *Maputo Strategic Platform for LIFE (Flyer)*.
- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. 2007. *Literacy Initiative For Empowerment 2006-2015. Vision and Strategy Paper (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*, UNESCO, Paris.
- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. 2008. *Maputo Strategic Platform for LIFE*. Flyer.
- UNESCO-UIS. 2009. *The Next Generation of Literacy Statistics: Implementing the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP)*, Technical Paper no. 1, Montreal.
- United Nations. 2001. *Resolution on Literacy Decade*. (Adopted by the General Assembly, 88<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting).
- United Nations. 2005. *UN Millennium Development Goals*. New York, United Nations <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (accessed 22 June 2008).
- United Nations General Assembly. 2002. *United Nations Literacy Decade: Education for All: International Plan of Action: Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 56/116*. Paris, UNESCO.

## Websites:

UIL:

[www.unesco.org/uil](http://www.unesco.org/uil)

<http://www.unesco.org/uil/litbase/>

<http://www.unesco.org/uil/en/focus/litinforemp.htm> <http://www.unesco.org/uil/en/nesico/bamako/bamakores.htm>

UNESCO Literacy Portal:

[www.unesco.org/education/literacy](http://www.unesco.org/education/literacy)

[http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=53813&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=53813&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

# Annex 1

## Countries participating in LIFE

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
<b>Africa (18)</b>	Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal	Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique	Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Sierra Leone
<b>Arab States (6)</b>	Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Sudan	Mauritania	Iraq
<b>Asia &amp; the Pacific (9)</b>	Bangladesh Pakistan	Afghanistan, China, India, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea	Iran, Nepal
<b>Latin America &amp; the Caribbean: (2)</b>	Haiti	Brazil	



# Annex 2

## LIFE logframe

Immediate objectives	Expected results
To reinforce the national and international commitment to literacy through advocacy and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships developed with UN agencies to engage in joint planning with government through a shared agenda for basic education.</li> <li>Comprehensive advocacy campaign for LIFE designed, funded and implemented through newspapers, radio and television.</li> <li>New partnerships to engage in the programme at national and international, public and private, traditional and non-traditional levels.</li> <li>Political lobbying at country and international level encouraging commitment to LIFE</li> <li>Additional funding for literacy at national and international levels</li> </ul>
To support the articulation of policies for sustainable literacy within sector-wide and national development frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education policies and systems reviewed and monitored in selected countries.</li> <li>Review of PRSP in particular to assess government commitment to EFA and literacy.</li> <li>National policies and programmes to integrate literacy into all appropriate development activities: joined-up thinking.</li> <li>Good practices in literacy policy analysed and disseminated to all target countries, with realistic implementation strategies.</li> <li>Mechanisms to support the participation of socially excluded groups within the education system.</li> <li>Cooperation with Government, UN, bilateral and multilateral agencies in joint planning and shared agendas for collaboration</li> </ul>
To strengthen national capacities for programme design, management and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Country assessment of needs, including capacity to manage and technical support requirements.</li> <li>Scale and quality of literacy provision enhancing focus on women and girls.</li> <li>Appropriate programmes are designed and undertaken within targeted countries.</li> <li>Human resources are adequately developed and allocated to deliver programmes in a sustainable fashion.</li> <li>Programmes for multi-tasked teachers developed.</li> </ul>
To enhance countries' innovative initiatives and practices in providing literacy learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New projects formulated focusing on women and girls and implemented taking into consideration needs assessments, review findings and lessons learned from past practice.</li> <li>Non-formal education promoted through broad community based development programmes.</li> <li>Civil society literacy and EFA networks supported and established at country level to promote LIFE promoting South to South cooperation with literacy projects.</li> <li>Partnerships with the private sector developed to undertake interventions within the workplace.</li> <li>Examples of good practices identified and disseminated.</li> </ul>



UNESCO Institute  
for Lifelong Learning

