

The Pietermaritzburg Declaration, 2002

WE, the 180 participants gathered at the first *International Conference on Adult Basic and Literacy Education in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region* held at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa from 3rd to 5th December 2002, and drawn from the community of adult educators and development practitioners in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Moçambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, joined in solidarity by non-SADC countries including Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, India, the Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland, Sweden and the United States of America;

HAVE NOTED WITH CONCERN that, as stated in UNESCO's recently published *Education for all: is the world on track* global monitoring report, many of our countries are in danger of not reaching the targets of **Education for All** agreed upon in Dakar in 2000 – goals that include achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015 and ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. This also detracts from the momentum created by the enlarged vision of adult learning at the International Conference on adult education (Confintea V, 1997), by the *SADC Protocol on Education and Training* (1997), the new vision for technical and vocational education and training (Seoul 1999), the World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (2001), the renewed emphasis on poverty alleviation and human resource development, the World Bank's re-examination of its policies relating to adult education, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) the declaration of the **Literacy Decade: Education for All** (2002) and the reactivation of lifelong learning as a paradigm for education in the 21st century.

WE ALSO NOTE our shared context of diversity and emerging democratisation that is endangered by poverty and inequality, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, environmental degradation, gender discrimination and social exclusion, unemployment and the marginalisation of adult basic and literacy education, worsened by the negative consequences of globalisation.

WE SEE ADULT BASIC AND LITERACY EDUCATION as a fundamental human right and an indispensable complement to the formal education of children and youth. It is a vitally important component of education policy that must stand alongside formal schooling, as it is adults who hold the responsibility for building sustainable futures. We believe that adult basic and literacy education is the essential foundation for lifelong learning that can be the portal to the development of knowledge, values, skills and sustainable livelihoods. Policies, programmes and legislation should reflect this.

THEREFORE, this community of adult educators and development practitioners constituted by people from governments, education and training institutions, NGOs, unions, adult education networks and donor agencies, expresses its commitment to the revitalisation of adult basic and literacy education for democracy and sustainable development in the SADC region and in the African continent.

WE STRONGLY URGE the SADC member states and the restructured SADC Secretariat to make adult education central to the education agenda and that countries allocate resources to deploy adult education for community development, particularly for the millions of citizens and communities in poverty in the region.

WE ASK FOR the full participation of our countries in the **Literacy Decade: Education for All** and that the integration of the **Literacy Decade** with **Education for All** should be done with integrity so that there is effective implementation of literacy and adult basic education policies, strategies and programmes. We further commit ourselves to mobilise the stakeholders in government, civil society, business, religious institutions, media and donor agencies to rejuvenate action in the field in 2003, the first year of the **Literacy Decade**.

TO ENSURE that this declaration results in action, we support the request of the Technical Committee for Lifelong Education and Training of the SADC that the University of Natal act as an interim co-ordinating body during the period of SADC Secretariat restructuring and that the University start the necessary actions, including the solicitation of funds for strategic and implementation plans, in respect of the following :

- researching and building up detailed information and databases of literacy and adult basic education programmes, activities and resources (human and material) in the region and regularly reporting, making accessible and disseminating such information to all interested parties and assisting in the effective use of such information;
- audits of curriculum, materials, trainer and practitioner development capacity in the region;
- holding of regional consultations on curriculum development and on trainer and practitioner development;
- encouraging the sharing of resources in the region;
- development of advocacy strategies and documents in the interests of the education of adults in the region; and
- development of acceptable funding strategies and guides in the interests of the education of adults in the region.

WE RECOGNISE the devastation caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the region that has the potential to render all education and development efforts redundant. Consequently, we urge that all adult basic and literacy education programmes and activities rapidly incorporate these issues and we ask all governments and agencies to make effective use of adult basic and literacy education in achieving the deeper levels of change required for combatting this scourge.

FINALLY, we reiterate our faith in education as a force for positive transformation of individuals and societies in a rapidly changing world, and therefore we strongly call on our governments to fulfill their commitments and obligations to adult basic and literacy education.

5 DECEMBER 2002
SOUTH AFRICA, PIETERMARITZBURG