Adult Learning and Poverty Reduction


Edited by
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Poverty may be defined as a lack of freedom to meet one’s basic needs. Hunger, lack of shelter and clothing, disease, and vulnerability are the fate of 1.2 billion people living in poverty. The gap between the rich and the poor results in instability that undermines cultures and rules, identities and values, rights and duties.

According to World Bank statistics, one in five of the world’s population (two-thirds of them women) live in abject poverty without adequate food, clean water, sanitation or healthcare, and without education. One-third of all humankind is surviving on less than US$1 a day (UK Government White Paper 2000). South Asia has the largest number of poor people (522 million, or 40% of the population). Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of people who are poor, with poverty affecting 46.3%, or close to half, of the population in this region. Other regional percentages of populations living on less than US$1 a day in 1998 were East Asia and China (15.3%); Eastern Europe and Central Asia (5.1%); the Middle East and North Africa (7.3%); Latin America (15.6%) (World Bank Global Poverty Monitoring 2003).

While the figures are shocking, poverty is not inevitable. The United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997–2006) is a global campaign for concerted action to ensure the effective reduction of poverty worldwide. UNESCO’s role in this lies in promoting the right to development and education. Development is about education, health and co-determination, about giving the individual an opportunity to choose how he or she will live. It is about expanding people’s choices and freedom. Certain conditions are required for successful and sustainable development. These include democracy, the rule of law, effective public management, the combating of corruption and the improvement of infrastructure for agriculture and other industries. By giving priority to the role of education, the cultural dimension of development and the principles of good governance, UNESCO aims to bring about a more equitable economic and social environment. It is in the fields of education, law and ethics that UNESCO will be making its contribution to the reduction of world poverty.

Education and training form perhaps the most important precondition for development. When a large part of the population is illiterate, this hinders economic and social development. Education is thus a key priority. This was clearly articulated in the Dakar Framework:

Education, starting with the care and education of young children and continuing through lifelong learning, is central to individual empowerment, the elimination of poverty at the household and community level, and broader social and economic development. At the same time, the reduction of poverty facilitates progress towards basic education goals. There are evident synergies between strategies for promoting education and those for reducing poverty. A multi-sectored approach to poverty elimination requires that education strategies complement
those of the productive sectors as well as those of health, population, social welfare, labour, the environment and finance, and be closely linked to civil society. (The Dakar Framework of Action April 2000)

The Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 endorsed in large part the priorities in adult education identified at the CONFINTEA V Conference on Adult Education, which was held in Hamburg in 1997. Particular stress was laid on the creation of an enlarged partnership in learning and training for young people and adults. This should include economic partners, NGOs, universities, trade unions, the state, teachers associations, local organisations and other social organisations. In both the Hamburg Declaration and the Dakar Framework, strategies for adult learning and basic education are treated in terms of their power to support new practices in preventive health, environment protection and economic productivity. Also stressed is the power of education to help people to reflect critically on their situations and make autonomous, informed and democratic decisions.

This booklet is the outcome of a thematic workshop held at the CONFINTEA Mid-term Review in Bangkok, Thailand in September 2003. This introduction offers a conceptual framework in the context of the key recommendations identified at the workshop in Bangkok.

The Millennium Development Goals

One of the key Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations in 2000 was to reduce by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. Due to the failure of development programmes to reduce poverty, governments and donors are looking at new strategies for poverty reduction. In recognition of the direct link that exists between debt, poverty and development, the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative was launched in 1996. In September 1999, through the enhanced HIPC initiative for 41 countries, debt relief was linked directly to poverty reduction. Debt relief was made conditional on the development of a poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) by highly indebted countries. In 2000, the World Bank’s Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) proposed a long-term strategy for sustainable development. This entailed enhanced national ownership of development goals and actions, more strategic partnership among stakeholders, and greater accountability for development results. PRSPs are written with the CDF in mind. Low and middle income countries are now committed to producing interim PRSPs that show the proposed design and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, outlining development outcomes and the level of donor support needed to reach these goals by 2015. However, it is anticipated that without increased direct action 28 countries will not meet any of their Millennium Development targets by 2015 (Education International 2002).

Defining poverty

Poverty has multiple definitions. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2002) describes poverty in terms of income, capability and participation, recognising that poverty leads to trauma, powerlessness and shame. The Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC 2000) distinguishes between absolute, relative and subjective poverty. Other definitions of poverty also tend to
reject the notion that poverty is simply associated with income. It may involve lack of self-determination, self-esteem and participatory democracy. These broader definitions of poverty are succinctly summarised in the following extract from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for Bosnia and Herzegovinia (2002: 5):

Until recently poverty was commonly taken to mean insufficient income to buy a minimum basket of goods and services. Today the term is usually understood more broadly as lacking the basic means to live in dignity. It is becoming widely recognised that poverty takes various forms, including the lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or no access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and disease-related mortality; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. Furthermore, restrictions on or lack of participation in the decision-making process and in civil, social and cultural life are also violations of human rights. A multidimensional understanding of poverty helps us define poverty as a human condition characterised by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

Obviously, the above definitions go beyond the traditional indicators of personal income or national macro-economic growth. This broadening of the concept of poverty has come about in the context of a new understanding of development as improvement in human well-being, which Amartya Sen and other economists have articulated over the past decade. The expanded definition has been adopted in the human development reports of the UNDP.

Multidimensional definitions of poverty have implications for adult education programmes, particularly when it comes to monitoring and evaluating poverty. These implications will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The manifestations of poverty

It is important first to recognise that poverty does not have a uniform manifestation. The poor comprise a very large number of varied groups and cannot simply be labeled as those “living below the poverty line”. Poverty and its causes are context-and region-specific. For instance, it affects rural and urban areas differentially. Rural areas are still where the majority of the poor live (about 900 million of the 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty are in rural areas). Lack of water, poor access to education and agricultural research, and inadequate land reforms are major factors hindering progress. Environmental degradation continues to deepen poverty, and over time poor people can become trapped in a downward spiral. The problems arising from lack of access to technology, infrastructure and social services are exacerbated by market distortions that reduce profits (International Fund for Agricultural Development 2002). Although education is a primary factor in bringing people out of poverty, education for children of poor families is often sacrificed due to the need for their labour, thus contributing to the vicious cycle of poverty.

The most vulnerable and marginalised are generally also the poorest. Seventy percent of the world’s poor are female; in the least developed countries in 1997 fewer than 4 out of 10 women could read or write as compared with 6 out of 10 men. Although women produce most of the food in poor regions, they have a limited voice in community decision-making. Poverty is also both a cause and a conse-
quence of disability, with 50% of disability problems thought to be linked to poverty (DFID 2000).

It is a feature of poor regions that people migrate to urban areas in an effort to find employment. Yet this only displaces the problem. As migrants leave behind the economic features of rural poverty, they also leave the traditional rural safety nets and solidarity that cushion poverty (SDC 2000: 34). The UK White Paper on International Development (2000) estimates that, by 2025, 61% of the world’s population will be living in urban areas. Urban living for the poor is characterised by violence, flimsy housing, filthy living conditions, hunger and malnutrition. Urbanisation often brings with it changes in diets that pose new risks to health and nutrition. Fewer than 20% of the urban poor worldwide have access to safe water, as compared with 80% of the rich. They are often surrounded by uncollected garbage, unsafe water and overflowing sewers. People often do not have access to healthcare facilities because of higher user fees, transport costs, time constraints or poor service (International Food Policy Research Institute 2003).

Other causes of poverty include inappropriate use of resources, national debt, war and conflict, gender inequality, poor governance, abuse of human rights, environmental degradation and exploitation of the market by advanced industrialised countries. The poverty status of individuals or groups may also arise out of their belonging to particular ethnic or linguistic minorities, or to gender-based and other culturally determined discriminatory practices. Entrenched hierarchies and vested interest groups perpetuate a social structure that ensures gross inequality of wealth.

Notwithstanding the recognised multidimensional nature of poverty, the most common strategy pursued in PRSPs is still wealth creation. This may include plans for the removal of trade barriers and the liberalisation of financial services to foster growth, border trade, adoption of new technologies, diversification of exports, development of the informal sector and small and medium-sized enterprises, and entrepreneurship skills development (South African Development Community 2002). Adult education has not featured significantly in these papers, although the poorest countries usually have the lowest literacy rates, such as 59% in sub-Saharan Africa and 53% in South Asia (DFID 2000). Adult education is only mentioned in 10 out of 41 PRSPs (Education International 2003). This may be because of a lack of understanding of the relationship between adult education and community development or a lack of understanding of the relationship between lifelong learning and adult education. In any case, it indicates that adult education needs to raise its profile as a contributory solution to poverty reduction.

Adult education in relation to poverty reduction

Adult education may take three distinct forms: formal, non-formal or informal. Formal education is usually learning that leads to certification. It can be part-time or full-time, but it is always institutionally based. Non-formal education refers to the range of targeted learning opportunities that are offered outside of educational institutions but are nevertheless organised to achieve particular learning outcomes. Non-formal education can include work-based skills training, community educa-
tion workshops or any specific learning programme. Informal education is often connected to projects in which education is not the main priority, but which result in increased knowledge, skills and understanding. Such programmes may also provide opportunities for non-formal education, but more often they involve self-directed learning or engagement with others on an informal basis. Examples of informal education include “operating a new piece of equipment in the work-place, or attending a community meeting on land reform” (Government of Namibia 2003: 5).

In the 1970s UNESCO attempted to incorporate adult education, especially non-formal education, into the broader framework of lifelong education and the notion of a “learning society”. Although many educators have supported the concept of lifelong learning as a theoretical basis for non-formal education, activities under the banner of non-formal education are only loosely linked. In the absence of any unifying theoretical construct, the term “non-formal education” has come to represent a large variety of programmes in different countries. It includes literacy and basic education for adults and youths, programmes for drop-outs, political and trade union education and various kinds of educational work linked to development initiatives.

Adult learning has become a significant component of education policies and programmes in developing countries. For example, Namibia’s National Policy on Adult Learning (Government of Namibia 2003) states that the provision of adult learning is a multi-sectoral responsibility, connected to agriculture, extension education, basic education, national heritage and culture programmes, as well as the defence forces, environmental affairs, forest management, skills development, media, health, community skills development, rehabilitation training, vocational and business training, voter education and gender sensitivity.

Adult education is about empowerment, and ultimately poverty reduction is also about empowerment. Both involve issues of sustainability, participatory control, the use of indigenous knowledge systems, local governance and development as participatory action. According to the Swiss Agency for Development Co-operation,

Empowerment includes giving power or entitlement to people, helping people acquire capabilities or qualifications, establishing structures which enable individuals and groups to have more control over decisions that affect them, giving people voice and skills to access and utilise what they are entitled to. (SDC 2000: 36)

Poverty reduction through adult education is an enabling process. Adult education, in conjunction with other initiatives, builds capacity for self-advocacy. The focus of adult education may vary, thus affecting its impact. It may have a political focus and raise awareness about human rights, as well as national and international affairs. Alternatively or additionally, it may address economic disempowerment, particularly if the learning content is relevant to local needs. A social focus encompasses a spirit of sharing and collective action. An environmental focus can validate the use of indigenous knowledge and enable natural, holistic approaches to sustainability (Mosweunyane 2002).

The way forward?

Poverty reduction

There are many dimensions to poverty reduction. The SDC (2000) regards poverty reduction as both a direct and an indirect
strategy. Direct poverty reduction aims at the immediate removal of deficiencies caused by poverty—for example, by supplying humanitarian aid to the poor, creating specific, short-term income opportunities or establishing social safety nets. An indirect strategy against poverty aims at structural changes in the system with the overall goal of enhancing quality of life: “By encouraging good governance, democratisation, decentralisation, improved legal frameworks and the fight against corruption, as well as providing support to stabilise the national economy, indirect poverty reduction can in many cases bring about more long-term benefits” (SDC 2000: 35). It is in the area of indirect poverty reduction strategies that adult education is most likely to play a significant part, though adult education contributes to both direct (e.g., skills training) and indirect (e.g., capacity building) interventions.

The principal focus to date has been on building human rather than social capital and on encouraging economic growth. Yet self-esteem, confidence and a shared sense of purpose are key ingredients of community development as they motivate people to help themselves. Self-help is a necessary ingredient for capacity building which enables people to move out of the poverty trap. Wealth creation strategies alone—particularly at a national level—will not reduce poverty. The trickle-down effect that is widely expected as an automatic result of rising prosperity among the middle classes has not materialised (SDC: 52). Measures far more likely to break the poverty cycle include the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises at the local level, adult education measures and improved access to financial services for women (Asian Development Bank 2003).

The Botswana Council of Non-governmental Organisations (BOCONGO 2000: 9) argues, on behalf of NGOs in Botswana, that poverty reduction policy frameworks must involve consultation, dialogue, social impact assessment, consensus building and partnership. Moreover, training and education need to focus on community-based management and capacity building. Interventions should benefit people with disability, women and small, medium and micro-enterprises. Key issues that need to be considered include the environment, agriculture, population growth, health, human rights, youth and culture, the church and the media. The South African Development Community (2002: 6) links these issues to the need for bottom-up development, good governance, democracy, greater attention to HIV/AIDS, and land and food security.

Education

Education is a key ingredient in poverty reduction. However, as the Millennium Development Goals show, the emphasis is often on basic education and literacy rather than lifelong or continuing education. Research has shown (e.g., Egbo 2000; Raditloaneng 2000) that literacy alone is not sufficient to empower people, though it can help. On the other hand, investing in the education of girls and women results in positive returns to the learners themselves and society as a whole. The effects last for generations—in the form of enhanced earning capacity, increased access and opportunities in the labour market, reduced health risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth, and often greater control by women over their own lives. Many of these arguments would also apply to people with disabilities; they
are rarely included in poverty reduction plans. Such plans need participatory educational approaches that aim to empower, integrate, change attitudes and increase opportunities for independence. Traditional community social systems need to be adapted to ensure social inclusion of women and other marginalised groups if these systems are to be a resource for inclusive, participatory community education and development. Similarly, NGOs are a potential resource for community-based empowerment if they respect principles of grassroots engagement.

Adult education alone cannot eliminate poverty. What it can do is contribute to skills development or empowerment, or both. Successful adult education requires grassroots, bottom-up development in a participatory, partnership-based approach that recognises indigenous knowledge systems and involves the poorest countries in global debates on lifelong learning.

**Current trends**

In the past, development policy has often undermined sustainable indigenous lifestyles and developed a culture of dependency. Recent policies have tried to reverse this trend by reintroducing concepts of participation and partnership, including the use of indigenous knowledge and community meeting places as resources. Typical strategies have included participatory rural appraisals and community action plans in rural areas.

Recent contributions from the World Bank suggest there may be a shift in donor thinking about the role of adult education. The World Bank concept paper (2003a) advances support for adult and non-formal education programmes—literacy programmes, agricultural extension efforts, skills training, public health, adult civic education and continuing education. It emphasises acquisition of particular skills, knowledge and attitudes that enhance lives and improve family situations, enterprises, associations or communities. In this way, community education programmes contribute to the reinforcement of local capacity building, social capital, democratisation and public health.

The notion that the learning needs of adults do not always begin with, or require, literacy represents a significant departure from past responses to literacy as a basic skill. It is now recognised that learners’ needs often go considerably beyond literacy to include new knowledge in realms like health, human rights, agriculture, management, and information and communication technology. Basic education is now widely seen as including more advanced forms of training, and basic education needs are now recognised as ongoing:

Education for all cannot be achieved by primary schooling alone—adult and non-formal education (ANFE) is a key complimentary resource in the form of basic education, literacy, alternatives to formal schooling, enlisting parents in more effective support for children, making primary schooling more participatory, developing complementary vocational training and local income-generation activities. In particular, ANFE offers a means for facilitating continuing primary secondary or even higher education among those who have acquired the basics but missed the opportunity for further learning and the chance to stay abreast of a changing economy. (World Bank concept paper 2003a: 4)

Indeed, it can be argued that the more disadvantaged the group (such as people with disabilities), the more need there is for advanced education in order to counteract prejudice and encourage advocacy and capacity building.
With respect to poverty reduction, there is a growing focus on supporting local poverty reduction and economic development efforts—whether in agriculture, natural-resource management, small industry or credit mediation. The goal is to create more participant-driven, cost effective and locally self-managed—and therefore more sustainable—projects. Adult and non-formal education (ANFE) is seen as critical to local capacity building. ANFE supports local ownership of initiatives, technology transfer, the incorporation of indigenous knowledge into development strategies, decentralisation, improved local management of projects, economic equity for women and minorities and the acquisition of literacy because it can lead to dimensions of improved quality of life, such as broadened communication and more effective political participation (World Bank 2003a: 5). All of these are critical support mechanisms in poverty reduction. They reinforce civil society and democratisation, build human and social capital and promote health.

These recommendations match in many ways those that emerged from the mid-term review’s thematic workshop on adult education and poverty reduction which stipulated that adult education should be context-focused. It does not always have to start with literacy or formal skills education. These naturally develop from context-specific, community-owned initiatives. Recommendations to policymakers, implementers and funders therefore include the following imperatives:

- Recognise the variety of poverty definitions;
- Adopt community-based development and gender-sensitive approaches;
- Collect more baseline disaggregated data;
- Involve NGOs, civil society and the private sector;
- Implement and be accountable for the recommended 6% of education budgets for adult education;
- Recognise the curriculum that is inherent in community development work (e.g., credit, health, traditional birth attendance);
- Influence current conditions and policy frameworks for fast-track initiatives, Millennium Development Goals, etc., so that the profile of adult education is raised;
- Pursue basic adult education beyond primary-level education;
- Address the contradictions in globalisation-related policies; and
- Empower the poor and disadvantaged to have a voice in decision-making that affects their lives.

Once all of these imperatives are achieved, the next requirement is to find a method of evaluating success. The challenge here is to find monitoring and evaluation techniques that address the multidimensional nature of poverty.

**Monitoring and evaluation:**

**Poverty reduction indicators**

The most common, broad-based indicators of poverty are Gross National Product (GNP) figures provided by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. One of the difficulties of monitoring poverty reduction lies with inadequate baseline data from many countries and an inadequate range of indicators to cover all definitions of poverty. Some sample indicators are presented below. The majority of sources (e.g., UNDP 2002) use health and education indicators, such as literacy, infant mortality and life expectancy rates, arguing that poor health and education result in malnutrition and illness, which in turn lead to poverty and low income. To this
list the UK Department for International Development (DFID 2000) adds the following: completion rates of Fourth Grade primary education, contraception prevalence rates, HIV prevalence and child malnutrition divided by sex.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (2002: 70) meanwhile looks at indicators in terms of output and outcome. Output indicators include life expectancy and literacy rates. Output indicators cover prevention issues such as immunisation rate, access to safe water and sanitation, doctor to population ratio and nurse to population ratio.

There is a need, however, to use more qualitative indicators to help measure progress on the social aspects of poverty reduction. To this end, USAID’s Office of Women in Development (2003) conducted a longitudinal study on the impact of integrated literacy and basic education programmes upon women’s participation in social and economic development in Nepal. They assessed two literacy programmes: a basic primary education project and a health education and adult literacy programme. Among their indicators of success, they included issues of participation and increased awareness, such as health knowledge and practice, participation in income-earning activities, political awareness and community participation.

Bearing in mind the particular disadvantages women face, the DFID (2000: 34) has also suggested some qualitative indicators that specifically show the relationship between gender and poverty. These include women’s perceptions of a larger share and control of earned income, household income and assets, and access to financial, non-financial and small business services. The DFID emphasises that these indicators should be supported by quantitative data on women’s representation in national and local government and by sex-disaggregated data on the labour force, including data on women’s role in agriculture and environmental protection.

The inclusion of poor people’s voices in evaluations is an approach supported also by the Swedish International Development Authority (2002: 5), which has suggested that the litmus test of whether an intervention decreases poverty could be “if the effect is that poor people have increased the scope to decide over their lives in areas of relevance to them.” Evaluations that follow this approach are sometimes labelled impact studies, as described by B. Essama-Nssah (2002: 21). They explore whether the desired socio-economic changes have taken place for the intended target population, assess which changes are attributable to the intervention being evaluated, and evaluate the effects of the intervention on non-target groups.

**Monitoring the success of programmes**

In monitoring and evaluating poverty reduction programmes, many factors need to be taken into account. Else Øyen et al. (2002: 3–4) have conducted a general study of the transferability and sustainability of best practices in poverty reduction. They explored both monitoring issues for poverty reduction initiatives and general practices that can be applied to other initiatives. They point out that anti-poverty programmes need to produce benefits that have sufficient “legal and normative status”, so that they enable beneficiaries to “appeal to formal channels if the initiative fails to deliver” (p. 25).

Seymour Miller (2002: 51–64) neatly summarises the key issues in evaluating...
the success of poverty reduction projects, programmes and strategies. He notes that poverty reduction strategies may have diffuse, multiple objectives and that one approach does not fit all situations. Furthermore, projects need a favourable point in time; they need to establish cost effectiveness and must identify how well a programme can travel. In other words, are all of the components needed for its success available in the alternative location? A successful strategy does not stand alone; its relationships with the target community and other institutions and programmes are crucial. Santosh Mehrotra (2002) identifies, at a national level, baseline criteria for nurturing good practices that were present in most of the successful initiatives. He points out (pp. 77–82) that in many cases a mechanism for the articulation of voice existed, that is, a tradition of democracy. He argues, however, that a democratic system alone is not sufficient for a poverty reduction strategy to work—it must be supported by other factors, such as political will.

The chapters in this booklet

The chapters in this booklet provide international, regional and national case studies that examine the relationship between adult education and poverty reduction.

The first chapter offers a World Bank analysis of the role of adult education in poverty reduction. Peter Easton, Maman Sidikou and Luis Crouch explain increased donor interest in the relationship between adult education and poverty reduction in terms of two factors. Firstly, there is growing political movement in favour of decentralisation, local capacity building and development of civil society. This means that local people are increasingly expected to play a larger part in the programmes that affect them. For this, people need education and training and greater understanding of governance issues. Secondly, the challenges of urbanisation and an increasingly interactive world require people to keep abreast of the knowledge economy. Together these factors demonstrate the need for continuing and increasingly more complex educational attainment in order for people to move beyond poverty, and also an increasing motivation for poor people to access education. Easton, Sidikou and Crouch conclude that the World Bank is now paying greater attention to aid applicants that operate within a framework of adult education.

In the second chapter, Laila Iskander focuses on Egypt. She discusses how poverty is interpreted officially in Egypt and how this interpretation now includes multi-dimensional definitions, including the concept of well-being. Poverty in these terms affects 17% of the population of Egypt, a middle-income country. She describes a number of adult education achievements, including targeted and community-based partnerships on women’s issues, expansion of access to educational opportunities, life skills programmes designed specifically to provide curricula of interest to women, income generation and micro-lending schemes for women and initiatives that build on community knowledge. Adult education for rural communities involves health awareness, farming improvements and training local leaders to pass on knowledge of farming and income generation. Education and communication initiatives for people with disabilities include training volunteer helpers, disability awareness campaigns, rehabilitation programmes and support for families who care for people with disabilities.
She identifies empowerment as an indicator of success. This comes in the form of “increased awareness of and responsibility towards community issues such as the environment”, increased capacity of community-based organisations to solve their own problems and organise their own income-generation projects, and an increased representation on decision-making bodies. She presents statistics showing the numbers of people who have been reached by these programmes and highlights the role of NGOs and private-public partnerships in adult learning. Iskander also uses the example of growing environmental awareness and improvements in literacy rates to show that a broader understanding of the purpose of adult education can result in a wide range of achievements. Her arguments concur with many of the key issues in relation to poverty reduction and adult education identified earlier in this introduction.

However, Iskander also stresses that public understanding of adult learning in Egypt is still narrowly defined. It “is considered equivalent to acquiring literacy skills, or at most may expand to include vocational education.” The potential “learning spaces” for non-formal education outside of these traditional areas are extensively described—particularly in the informal sector workplace and community-based learning. She proposes enhancing the role of adult education poverty alleviation across a range of sectors through more equal North-South partnership patterns and better baseline data collection.

To demonstrate the power of the relationship between poverty reduction and community-based, alternative education programmes, Iskander cites the example of the rag recycling centre in Mkattam garbage collectors’ neighbourhood in Cairo.

Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rahman’s chapter provides a contrasting analysis of Pakistan’s progress in terms of human development. Only 45% of the population is literate, and the literacy rate for women is only 32%. Despite progress over the last 59 years, 40% of the population is categorised as living below the poverty line and only 60% of girls enrol for schooling. Many services are poor and mortality rates are high. Poverty in Pakistan is on the rise, largely attributed to a high rate of illiteracy among women. Attiq-ur-Rahman cites a number of examples where programmes to increase literacy among women have had positive social and economic effects. However, she finds that the public sector does not invest heavily in adult education, choosing to focus instead on primary education. She argues that this is a false priority, since 50% of children drop out of school and most of these dropouts come from families in which the parents are illiterate. A focus on adult literacy would have positive benefits for children as well as parents.

To demonstrate what can be done even in low-income countries, Rahman looks at the work of one NGO, Bunyad. Bunyad is a women’s empowerment organisation whose basic education, microcredit and skills training programmes have produced tangible dividends in the form of sustainable enterprises and increased participation of girls in school.

In the Latin American context, Alicia Villanueva describes the role of regional organisations, such as the Popular Educational Network (REPEM), in tackling the problem of poverty from a gender perspective. This network has initiated the Gender, Economy and Educational Pro-
gramme for women in poor rural and urban areas. Its main function is to run enterprise contests that award successful women entrepreneurs. It also uses visual media to document the experiences of these women. Villanueva finds that women entrepreneurs have great potential to contribute to the economy and sustainable human development. Networks that support them as entrepreneurs provide a significant forum for collective and reciprocal learning. Although economic benefits are at the centre of this programme, what emerges most clearly is the personal growth that the women experience. Those who benefit from these contests have been able to increase their knowledge about markets, as well as their productive, management, lobbying and social skills. Because of the integrated approach adopted, this programme has been able to help women overcome disadvantage. The case study shows that women need to be exposed to lifelong learning and permanent education.

The chapter by Halima Letamo on Botswana looks at that country’s major achievements at a policy level, such as its Vision 2016 policy statement, whose major goal is to reduce the proportion of people living below the poverty line to 23% by 2007. The current proportion is 36.7%. Botswana’s other significant policy initiative is its National Policy for Rural Development. Letamo highlights the important role of adult basic education provision for the section of the population that is unable to access education because of childcare and food production. Workplace literacy is also given as an example of achievement in the area of poverty reduction. The author examines the achievements of each ministry and sector in the area of adult education provision. These include gender mainstreaming by the Department of Women’s Affairs, information on HIV/AIDS transmission by the Primary Health Care Committee and the provision of new farming technologies. Although extension education is provided at different levels and focuses on relevant skills, Letamo points out that its actual provision is weak. While community-based strategies and participatory approaches to rural training help communities to take control of the management of their resources, these approaches have so far impacted on only a few communities in Botswana.

References


Introduction


This chapter looks at the connection between adult education and poverty reduction, and the circumstances under which adult and non-formal education programmes can contribute most effectively to overcoming the limitations of severe poverty.

This topic is understandably of major interest to the World Bank, given its standing commitments to economic development and increased economic equity and its recent increased emphasis on the problems of persistent poverty. Yet it often seems that discussion circulates around the subject or focuses on plausible arguments about the virtues of adult education without directly addressing the central question.

Rethinking World Bank policy on adult education

The issue of adult education and poverty reduction is doubly important for the World Bank because it is presently involved in a major effort to review its policy and practice with respect to adult and non-formal education (ANFE). Historically, World Bank support for ANFE has been both modest and irregular. A first period of interest in the late 1960s and 1970s was followed by disengagement during the 1980s, when nearly exclusive emphasis was given to primary education. Funding began to increase once again in the 1990s, but without much in the way of coherent policy. Concern within the Bank about rectifying this situation and devising a policy that takes better account of challenges and potentials in the field, and of the Bank’s own ‘comparative advantage’ in respect to ANFE, have helped to fuel the present initiative.

In this brief paper, the authors first provide a general perspective on the connection between adult education and poverty reduction. They then discuss the implications of different policies and the procedures that have been adopted by the World Bank for evaluating its current policy and proposing modifications.

Working hypotheses

Adult education is central to poverty reduction, not just on general principles but for at least two specific and closely related reasons. Both seem valid across contexts, but one is particularly applicable to poverty in rural and less developed areas, the other particularly relevant to poverty in more urbanised and developed environments.

The first reason lies in the growing movement for decentralisation, beneficiary ownership and local capacity building across sectors. In development activities from health to agriculture, from natural resource management to primary schooling and from financial intermediation to public administration, it is increasingly recognised that both the effectiveness and the sustainability of programmes depend greatly on the degree to which they are...
taken over and directed by local beneficiaries and their institutions. At the same time, movements toward fiscal and administrative decentralisation in government and toward democratisation in civil society, while uneven at best, are beginning to give this phenomenon of empowerment and local authority additional bite.

Yet such decentralisation and empowerment initiatives themselves inevitably require that the local actors involved acquire new skills and knowledge in order to exercise new functions, beginning—where these attainments are weak—with basic literacy and numeracy. Decentralisation and empowerment initiatives thus create a strong demand for adult education of various levels and types.

The second reason why adult education is central to poverty reduction lies in the challenges created by urbanisation, nascent industrialisation and the movement from low to middle income status. Here the challenge might be called, in current terminology, “continuing education for a knowledge economy”—in short, upgrading the skills and knowledge of a workforce that may have basic education, but not at present either the technical competence or the self-directed learning capacity to turn informal sector enterprises into locally and regionally competitive industries. Transformations of this kind are unimaginable without the support of good adult education and training.

The challenges of decentralisation and continuing education are therefore closely related. Decentralisation and beneficiary management initiatives that do not include the kind of technical reinforcement that local actors need to make their service delivery cost-effective or their enterprises financially viable are not truly empowering. Similarly, to upgrade skills for a knowledge economy without allowing workers greater control of productive processes and to participate more in management would amount to little more than high-tech enslavement.

**Bolstering the demand side**

Part of the importance of these two trends is that they help us to fill in what might be called the demand side of the adult education and poverty equation. One problem with Education for All as a stand-alone source of adult education strategy is that it essentially relies on a supply-side rationale—it tells us why continuing or remedial education should be provided, not why adults should want it or how they will be able to use it. In the case of formal education and schooling, one can at least suppose—with some notable exceptions—that the link between academic diplomas and future social status or employment success creates a constant demand of its own.

With adult education, however, motivation has always been largely linked to the actual uses to which the new knowledge and skills acquired can be put: economic, social, political and cultural uses. Unfortunately, a particular characteristic of impoverished environments is that they offer few opportunities for productive and regular use of new knowledge—there is little to read, seldom an employment opportunity requiring or rewarding higher skill levels and scarce investible resources. Moreover, the institutions and regulations governing these environments have typically been built over the years on the postulate that the poor are illiterate and do not have the skills that would enable them to govern themselves or manage resources. Under these conditions, people may flock to learn but are too
often unable to retain and use what they learn. Such conditions do not change overnight without a conscious effort to modify the rules of the game.

Valid movements for decentralisation and continuing education—that is, those that in some sense combine both domains—create a real basis for modifying those rules and for altering the longer-term cost-benefit ratio for learners. They also make clear the critical role that adult education must play in accomplishing Millennium Development Goals. The complaint is sometimes heard that these goals make no mention of adult education. On the basis suggested here, one can argue that adult education is implicit in them; that is, there is no humane way of accomplishing the goals without greater beneficiary ownership of initiatives which, in turn, can only be ensured through the training and empowerment adult education confers.

Policy implications

What are some of the policy implications of this perspective? The first is simply that adult education can and should be directly instrumental in poverty reduction—not just indirectly supportive of it. However, that means linking the supply of instructional opportunities much more carefully to two areas of effective demand now gaining increasing importance: decentralisation/local capacity building and continuing education for a knowledge economy.

Cultivating those two domains requires paying more attention to what is happening outside of education and taking into account challenges and opportunities in urban, industrializing areas, as well as in rural, agricultural ones, while better recognizing the interchange between the two. It also means lobbying those responsible—in governments and in donor agencies—to promote genuine policies of decentralisation, beneficiary empowerment and skills upgrading.

If supply and demand forces are carefully coupled, this is a domain where civil society and a myriad of third parties can do much of the work—and do it more effectively and sustainably than a central command. In this scenario, the role of the public sector and outside support agencies becomes one of organizing the playing field, creating institutional rules and regulations, monitoring quality, circulating information, training the trainers, etc. Outsourcing strategies and “faire faire” methods in literacy provision—though rarely coupled with the sources of effective demand highlighted here—have begun at least to demonstrate the requirements of such large scale facilitation.

The particular contribution of the World Bank and similar development agencies may lie in the fact that they operate in multiple sectors. Therefore, they can promote policies in governance, health, agriculture and communications, which ensure beneficiary empowerment and promote adult education, thereby helping to underwrite the very “bankable” initiatives that meet these needs.

Getting from here to there

The aim of this chapter has merely been to present some working hypotheses proposing new orientations in World Bank practice in adult education. The next step, we believe, is to involve stakeholders in a collective exercise of inquiry and diagnosis, while bringing to the table relevant information on what has worked and what has not, and how needs for adult education—and technologies to meet those needs—are presently evolving.
In its Arab Human Development Report the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2002) concluded that little progress had been achieved in the areas of security and poverty. This has had a negative impact on adult education. A quarter of the 280 million inhabitants of the Arab region are illiterate adults. A third of the population lives below the poverty line. Discussions of poverty must therefore take into account the relationship between development and adult education.

In Egypt a number of poverty surveys define poverty in money-metric terms and base their quantitative research on the data provided by the three major Household Income, Expenditure and Consumption Surveys (HIECS) conducted by the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS 1990–1991; 1995–96; 1999–2000). The following paragraphs present various poverty indicators used in Egypt.

Different interpretations of the poverty line and the concept of the food basket

The poverty line can be understood either as the food poverty line that derives from minimum nutritional standards, the lower poverty line that covers the most essential food and non-food products (that is, the non-food items that families are willing to sacrifice basic food to get; according to Engels’ Law, clothing, accommodation, etc.) or as the upper poverty line that is based on average non-food consumption by the poor. As poverty is very widespread in Egypt (many people subsist around the lower poverty line), the definition of the poverty line is of key importance for the poverty estimate.

Human Development Index

In addition to the money-metric surveys mentioned above, CAPMAS regularly collects quantitative data related to physical infrastructure such as water supply and sanitation, and social indicators such as health and education. Part of this information is used to compile the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI contains four variables: life expectancy at birth, to represent the dimension of a long and healthy life, adult literacy rate and enrolment rate at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, to represent knowledge, and real GDP per capita to represent the resources needed for a decent standard of living.

Capabilities and entitlements indicators

There have been a number of attempts to measure the multiple dimensions of poverty. In its 1996 Human Development Report, the UNDP introduced the concept of capability poverty, which is based on Amartya Sen’s model of entitlements. The capability poverty measure uses a number of social indicators, such as the proportion
of children under 5 who are underweight and the percentage of births unattended by a doctor or trained medical personnel. The estimate for Egypt was based on data from the 1995 Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey and shows that 34% of the population falls into the category of poor capability. This is considerably higher than the percentage classified as poor in money-metric terms. The difference is mainly due to low capability in rural areas.

Table 1. Poverty in Egypt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Poverty Index</th>
<th>31.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>48/88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People not expected to live to age 40 (%)</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children under 5 with low weight (%)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People without access to potable water (%)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNDP 2002.

The UNDP Arab Human Development Report presented a more comprehensive study of multi-dimensional poverty and well-being. As proxies for the variables in the report, it measures life expectancy at birth; the “educational index”, composed of adult illiteracy rate, mean years of schooling, enrolment rates, etc.; “freedom scores”, such as political participation and transparency according to civic and political rights; women’s access to power; internet hosts per capita; and carbon dioxide emissions per capita (European Commission in Egypt 2003: 21–25).

The government of Egypt adopted a target of reducing the poverty from 17% in the years 1999–2000 to 6–10% in the year 2022. Yet there is no strategy or action plan for achieving this poverty target. Instead, the operational section of the national plan tends to focus on economic growth and macro-economic stability.

Through the 1990s, Egypt succeeded in combining economic growth and educational investment that clearly had a positive trickle-down effect. However, this effect only benefited the areas of Lower Egypt that have a stronger economic potential. There was no trickle-down to rural areas in Upper Egypt.

At a consultative group meeting in February 2002, donors urged the Egyptian Government to prepare, within the following 18 months, a comprehensive medium-term anti-poverty action plan (APAP). The objective of this plan would

Table 2. Poverty targets in the Five Year Plan 2002–2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy rate (15 +)</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>3–7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in basic education</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty ratio of total population</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>6–10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>3–5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 mortality rate (per 1000 live births)</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

be to ensure effective planning, implementation and monitoring of social development policies and programmes that target the poor (European Commission in Egypt 2003: 7–8).

Achievements in poverty reduction through adult education since 1997

In this section we shall focus on the key target groups for adult education—women, disabled people, youths and prisoners. We shall also look at specific intervention areas in relation to adult education, such as rural communities, empowerment, environment, literacy and civil society.

Women

Various global figures document the continuing marginalisation of women among the world’s poor. In Egypt, there has been a marked increase in the number of NGOs working on women’s issues. Many of these began as small, local initiatives and have grown into organisations with budgets of approximately half a million U.S. dollars per year. An estimated 500 community development associations (CDAs) operate on smaller scales with budgets ranging from $10,000 to $50,000.

Most of these adult education programmes for women target the poor in Upper Egypt. Target groups are expected to meet a variety of criteria, such as low female literacy rates, early childbearing patterns and female headship of household. Materials are produced on issues such as adolescence, marriage, reproductive health, child development, first aid, violence against women, the environment, income savings and income generation. Group lending schemes have also been established to help women set up their own small businesses and secure sustainable sources of income. Such micro-credit schemes are supported by technical assistance from NGOs in the form of supervisors who assist women with market studies, loan management, accounting and literacy, and often additional services such as literacy classes, legal literacy and medical services.

A multiplicity of partners are promoted links created between ministries such as Health, Education, Social Affairs and agencies such as the General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education (GALAE) and NGOs.

Rural communities

Along with the urban poor, those of rural communities have also received insufficient attention. Many small, innovative initiatives remain unknown and undocumented. A few larger ones have been documented. Their main achievements have been to improve the quality of life of large numbers of households, reaching from 7,000 to as many as 90,000 rural households and farmers in some instances. The increase in incomes among economically marginal farm households in Upper Egypt has empowered them to access new markets and appropriate new agricultural production technologies. These initiatives also participate in civic affairs as an integral part of project design and do not focus exclusively on direct measures against poverty. Low-income households have been targeted in rural communities in the poverty pockets of Egypt, namely Middle and Upper Egypt (Aswan, Qena, Sohag, Assiut, Minia, Beni Suef and Fayoum Governorates). Quality of life improvements seek to increase household income and improve community services in water, sanitation, health and
nutrition awareness, and basic education. Budgets range from US$10–15 million per programme.

Umbrella grant management mechanisms have been used to channel funding through NGOs to the participant CDAs. These NGOs provide assistance to the CDAs to strengthen their technical and managerial capacities.

Disabled people
There is an established link between poverty and disability (visual, hearing, mental and physical) for a huge proportion of the world’s disabled (DFID 2000). Few poverty reduction programmes offer an opportunity for this group to lead enriched, fulfilled lives. In Egypt the magnitude of the phenomenon can be seen from the figures of the Ministry of Social Affairs (GoE, NGO Department 2001), which predict the growth of disability from 2,060,536 people in 1996 to 2,899,180 people in 2016.

Several Egyptian NGOs now provide support, education and training to the disabled and the professional staff who deal with them. They seek to improve the quality of life of the largest possible number of people with special needs, at the least cost and through the best utilisation of available resources with the help of family members and the community. At the heart of the services they offer are information, education and communication (IEC) training of those working in the field or as volunteers. They also raise public awareness of disability issues and support families with disabled members through productive projects and job skills training. They have also established several rehabilitation units and departments.

These NGOs operate in liaison with a number of public agencies, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education. Several initiatives have been introduced to promote the rights of students with disabilities to be educated with their non-disabled peers in neighbourhood schools. This process has involved further training for public school teachers in as many as 270 schools in both urban and rural Egypt.

There are as many as 2,400–4,000 disabled people participating in each programme. Educational interventions cover a wide range of programmes inside and outside of formal school. Alternative education programmes are provided to children who have dropped out.

Empowerment
The field of adult education in Egypt has seen a growth of locally produced learning materials designed and tested in a participatory manner with adult learners. They aim to prepare adults to carry out an analysis of their world, challenge the dominant development paradigm and understand existing power relationships through local knowledge and practice.

Empowerment means increasing responsibility towards community issues, identifying local problems and implementing targeted activities to meet real needs. It entails expanding the reach of development projects, focusing on rural Upper Egypt, building the capacity of girls and women, promoting community-nominated representatives, encouraging a gender balance in community affairs, and empowering youths through alternative, non-formal models of education that lead to lifelong learning. New models of community empowerment are needed that em-
brace multiple concerns and involve networking with NGOs and partnership with the private sector, business associations, municipalities, academic institutions and donors.

Environment

A few large NGOs have taken the lead in addressing the issue of the global destruction of natural resources and the link between environmental destruction and poverty. They have also mobilised smaller community development associations and communities to address industrial pollution affecting low income neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, they have been active in promoting the protection of public spaces. Urban development has led to the loss of livelihoods for fishermen and farmers, as lakes are filled in and farmland destroyed to make way for housing.

Another area of their work involves enabling communities to become environmentally literate in order to identify their needs, develop solutions, and obtain and pool resources to address these needs efficiently and effectively. They have contributed to networking activities in order to strengthen environmental advocacy capabilities. Local CDAs formed an environmental network in order to pool financial and other resources to effect solutions they choose.

Literacy

Two-thirds of the world’s one billion illiterates are women. In addition, millions of children drop out of school, are forced to work instead of going to school and can barely read and write when they do complete primary schooling. Table 3 illustrates the development of literacy classes during the period from 1992 to 1999.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of illiterates enrolled in classes</th>
<th>Number of classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992–97</td>
<td>2,096,736</td>
<td>104,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997–99</td>
<td>1,800,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During the first five years of the National Plan for Literacy, the numbers of illiterates enrolled in literacy classes reached 2 million, while the numbers of enrolled had fallen to 1.8 million in the period 1997–1999. During 2000–2001, the GALAE, established by the government to implement the National Plan for Literacy, reported that the total number of beneficiaries of literacy classes was 663,388.

Graph 1 below shows that the government, NGOs and the Social Fund provide only 10% of funding for literacy classes. By contrast, the GALAE has been responsible for over 75% of literacy funding in all branches and locations.

It is estimated that the total cost of eradicating illiteracy would amount to LE 600 million per year over a period of five years (a total of LE 3 billion). This money would fund programmes for 4 million people a year or 20 million people over a five-year period (Egypt Human Development Report 1998–1999). However, the GALAE operates on a yearly budget of only LE 72 million, with LE 500 million allocated for the span of the entire project.

NGOs have been very active in the literacy domain, whether literacy has been a main objective of one of their programmes or merely a component. According to the
Adult Learning and Poverty Reduction

Education for All Newsletter (May 2003a), only 3.6% of 16,000 NGOs in Egypt run literacy programmes. According to a director at the Ministry of Social Services, there are about 1,014 NGOs working in the field of literacy, with a total of 4,370 literacy classes including a total of 43,995 participants (Education for All 2003a:12).

Civil society
The field of adult education and development has seen a marked increase in involvement by local agencies. This has been the case in all fields of learning and has involved single groups, networks of CDAs, or groups in partnership with government, donors or research agencies. This involvement has increased the capacity of community-based institutions to mobilise communities to enhance their economic, social and educational resources, and establish working relationships with relevant government officials. They have provided basic organisational development interventions for community-based institutions, implementing literacy programmes, primary health projects, water and sanitation projects at the village level, micro-credit schemes, legal literacy, environmental literacy and public awareness, small school improvement action plans in communities, and action research on educational improvement. They have extended their coverage all over Egypt. The larger NGOs have documented the work of these small CDAs and have collaborated effectively with them and with national institutions.

NGOs have also been active in producing adult learning materials, reports and training manuals, and have contributed in a major fashion to teacher/facilitator preparation in the field of adult education and development.

Youths
In Egypt youths represent approximately 30% of the population, but the learning

Graph 1

Funding for Literacy Classes


1. 10%
2. 70%
3. 0%

Social Fund for Development

Non-governmental organizations/private institutions

Government

GALAE

Independent sources/self financing
needs of the majority of them in the poverty sector are not met. Young men live and work primarily in the informal sector where employment occurs in largely unregulated workshops where exposure to health risks and industrial hazards is high. Girls and women work mainly in the agricultural sector, with a growing number appearing in urban, marginal, unprotected employment in the informal sector as well.

A number of NGOs have begun offering Business Management Skills Training Programmes which include training and capacity building programmes for individuals, small business owners, trainers, private industries, CDAs and others. Adult education for unemployed youths has focused more on vocational training interventions, although many programmes have also included leadership training, communication skills, computer literacy and IT skills. Most of these programmes have sought to promote sustainable and equitable social transformation by enhancing human resources and organisational skills. Additionally, the Social Fund for Development of Egypt—a safety net created to offset the negative effects of structural adjustment programmes—has invested in programmes all over Egypt to prepare youths for employment. Its investments have focused on carpentry, machine welding and small road construction, working through contractors and CDAs implementing infrastructure projects. Credit programmes organised by NGOs have also indirectly benefitted youths by opening up additional income opportunities through small, family-owned businesses. It is estimated that 80% of Egypt’s economy is in the informal sector. Hence, employment-related initiatives are best managed by non-profit organisations and small local groups that are closer to the needs and capabilities of communities.

**Prisoners**

In Egypt the GALAE has begun to complement the work of NGOs that have for some time now been offering prisoners opportunities for adult learning. This work focuses mainly on the acquisition of literacy and vocational skills in preparation for their release and reintegration into society. However, no research or documentation exists to determine the effectiveness of these programmes.

**Key issues and problems still to be addressed**

**Funding**

Private, high-cost, high-quality education continues to be offered at a price which most people cannot afford. Consequently, they have to rely on non-profit organisations to raise funds from donors, the private sector or benevolent individuals. Such funding sources are extremely limited, especially when compared with the adult learning needs of the poor.

**Understanding Adult Learning**

In Egypt adult learning is still equated with literacy or, at most, vocational education. Adult learning as a tool of poverty reduction must develop a broader focus. It is required in many domains, including agriculture, micro-credit, health and environmental awareness.

Adult learning within the context of poverty is largely non-formal. It represents a vast “school” or “learning space”, within the informal economy. In large measure it revolves around self-employment schemes, such as street-vending or crafts.
co-operatives, barter, exchange, local production and family-owned businesses. Initiatives such as these provide ideal settings for non-formal education as they rely on community relations and the adoption of technologies such as recycling to create local products.

In Egypt the informal sector provides settings for non-formal learning such as have been exploited by the non-profit sector in other parts of the developing world. It has provided poor children, youths and adults with the opportunity to engage in a rich world of transformative learning. Whether driven by the poverty of their parents or working alongside other adults, children and youths are increasingly finding themselves plunged into a world where they learn and earn in very adult contexts.

Learning as an engine of development is still not recognised in the theory and practice of adult learning. There is still no discourse and little interest in relating adult education to lifelong learning.

Structuring adult learning

Adult learning is still widely perceived to mean adult basic literacy. Most adult learning occurs outside the purview of the government, within the domain of non-profit organisations. Still, the cooperation between these two sectors is inadequate. Community learning in the fields of health, early childhood education, agricultural improvements, training, environmental literacy and skills training are undertaken by many small CDAs and a few large ones. Ministries offer parallel interventions at national levels, but little coherent tracking, conceptualizing or experience sharing takes place. Thus they are considered two separate sectors.

Since much of adult learning is tailored to the needs of learners in local settings, there is a strong need to decentralise efforts and allow adult learning to reflect the diversity of communities and their needs. However, the general current trend is to standardise learning approaches and package learning in ways that often run counter to the development needs of poor communities. Relevance of learning would be greatly enhanced by such decentralisation.

What is needed is a new vision that combines adult learning with development in the context of development efforts that combat poverty. Adult learning should receive the attention it merits in international policies, programmes and reforms. There needs to be a stronger focus on adult education and an awareness that limiting the education agenda to primary basic education will not improve the lives of the poor in the developing world.

Few countries keep statistics on the full numbers participating in adult education programmes. This means that there is no true appreciation of its contribution to national development or poverty alleviation. Documenting the quantity and quality of adult learning is essential if we are to arrive at an assessment of its value. The needs of adult educators in the field of development is another factor that has not been adequately measured and addressed.

New social partners are emerging in the field of adult learning. However, the political weight that each brings to the field differs, so that while non-profit organisations contribute to grassroots implementation, they are seldom included in policymaking in developing countries. Concurrently, international organi-
sations still have not established partnership patterns which provide recipients in the South with equal voice. The following are some of the main agents of such partnerships in Egypt.

**Government programmes:** The Government of Egypt has delegated the mandate of poverty reduction to the Social Fund for Development (SFD). This deals with public works, small enterprises, community development, human resources and institutional development. Several donors have supported the SFD, among them the World Bank and the European Union (EU). A second initiative taken by the Government of Egypt, and supported by donors, is *Shorouk*. This programme aims to increase productivity and employment generation at the local, village level, and thus enhance the efficiency of public utilities. A third initiative is the Productive Family Programme. This entails a mix of training, loans, production and marketing advice for employment generation for the poor.

**Social development agents:** Two organisations—the National Council for Children and Motherhood (NCCM) and the National Council for Women (NCW)—have a high political profile. Both organisations target the poor and vulnerable, and are identified as partners in poverty alleviation initiatives to be supported by the EU.

**NGO and CDA programmes:** There are some 15,000 community-based non-profit organisations in Egypt with varying levels of activity and efficiency. CDAs are small community groups comprised mostly of local people, whereas larger NGOs receive international funding and staffing. NGOs and CDAs run numerous poverty reduction and education programmes which are community-based and target the most vulnerable groups. No comprehensive data exists on the exact operational strength and effectiveness of NGO’s operating in Egypt at present, but it is fair to say that they play a substantial role.

**Donor support:** There is an abundance of donor funding to Egypt. An EU report from 2002 estimates the total value of actual donor commitment to be 13.4 billion euros. While all sectors related to social development receive substantial support, there has been a bias towards economic development, industrial and productive sectors compared to social sectors, human rights and support of NGOs.

In the education sector, donor support represents roughly 5% of government spending, whereas in the health sector the annual donor support is estimated at LE 1.1 million, or 18% of the government budget. The donor contribution, however, is expected to decline over the coming years with USAID, the EU and some EU member states, such as the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark, cutting aid to Egypt. The donors have given different reasons for this. Many point to the fact that Egypt is now a middle-income country (European Commission in Egypt 2003: 6–12).

While the government invests in large scale programmes through its various ministries and semi-autonomous organisations, these efforts largely deal with the formal sector of the economy. Donors operating on a bi-lateral basis channel most of their support through governments. A few allocate resources directly to NGOs. Policies facilitating NGO access to government-channeled funding are regulated through the NGO Law as implemented through the Ministry of Social Affairs and its branches in the governorates. The regulations favour large and middle-sized urban NGOs. Smaller NGOs do not
Non-formal education in Egypt: A case study

Development projects provide valuable non-formal learning settings where individuals learn new ways of thinking and new working methods. The rag recycling centre in Mokattam, a garbage collectors’ neighborhood in Cairo, was designed as an alternative educational delivery system which offered learning opportunities in out-of-school settings, and earning opportunities in out-of-formal-sector settings. The interdisciplinary curriculum at the rag recycling school incorporated the following elements:

1. Literacy and numeracy – Arabic;
2. Personal and environmental hygiene;
3. Business mathematics;
4. Computer literacy;
5. Foreign language – English;
6. Principles of project management;
7. Bookkeeping and simple accounting;
8. Office skills;
9. Recreation;
10. Theatre arts: Plays, songs, puppet theatre, poetry.

The cross-sectoral development initiatives encompassed the following:

1. Income generation;
2. Credit;
3. Vocational skills;
4. Primary healthcare;
5. Reproductive health and family planning;
6. Handicrafts;
7. Marketing;
8. Community mobilisation/leadership training;
9. Advocacy;
10. Training of trainers.

These initiatives covered economic, environmental, social, financial and political themes. The experiment indicated that multi-disciplinary approaches to education and multi-sectoral approaches to development are complementary. Education and development were thus combined to produce change.

The education aspect of the activity aimed to provide lifelong learning and earning skills, an education that would not alienate participants from their families and their trade in a setting that was flexible and involved earning while learning. This experience gave learners a sense of value as individuals and built on their existing skills in sorting garbage. It was an experience marked by dignity and respect for their knowledge, an education that respected their position in the solid waste trade of Cairo. It used teaching and learning methods that were adapted to their life situation of having either to go out on the garbage route or to sort garbage manually 365 days a year. It used an educational delivery system that would accommodate their working schedules and working situation. The learning content showed them how to change their home working methods and environment for the better. It was a well-balanced experience which combined working, learning, celebrating and changing the community.

Key issues emerging from this case study

Innovative methods in non-formal basic education were needed to provide learning opportunities for those who are caught...
in the poverty trap and cannot access for-
mal schooling. Since one of the main
reasons people are excluded from formal
schooling is the necessity of working, be
it in the fields, workshops or the home,
on-formal education inherently links the
learning process to work-related and in-
come-generating contexts. It has to seek
to anchor learning in local practice and
indigenous knowledge of how to work,
earn income and organise communities.

To improve the lives of working chil-
dren and youths in poor and disenfran-
chised communities, it was important to
design an educational system for children
and youths who could not go to school.
This included designing and implement-
ing environmental learning projects
specifically to address the safe, clean re-
covery and recycling of non-organic
waste. The educational system had to be
designed in such a way that it led to life-
long learning and earning skills while
creating a network of learning communi-
ties within the local population.

Case study 2: South-South dialogue in
non-formal education: New learning
opportunities for youths and children
in Egypt and South Africa

This initiative involves a technology trans-
fer in the field of adult learning and solid
waste management between Egypt and
South Africa. It began by inviting youths
from South Africa to Egypt to examine an
adult learning model of community-based
waste management. This model creates
economic empowerment for the most mar-
ginalised groups (garbage workers and un-
employed youths), while also providing
learning and health opportunities. Com-
munity and Institutional Development
(CID), a Cairo-based development consul-
tancy, has mobilised a number of partners
(NGOs, municipalities, private sector, etc.) in Egypt around similar projects
which have combined income genera-
tion and learning in out-of-school settings.
This South-South co-operation addresses
the needs of adults and youths in margin-
alised contexts.

Many of these youths and adults
missed out on attaining formal educa-
tion. CID developed an approach which
seeks to empower them through an al-
ternative, non-formal model of educa-
tion based on designing working condi-
tions that lead to lifelong learning and
earning skills, and creates a network of
learning communities.

The project combines earning in-
come, work skills, environmental protec-
tion, arts and recreation, literacy, industri-
al safety, and personal hygiene. The con-
cept and design are based on the fact that
working children need to be given in-
come-generating skills and opportunities
that do not threaten their lives or health.

Learners are trained by various pro-
fessionals in learning centres which CID
established in Cairo, South Sinai, and the
10th of Ramadan district. Learners come
from among the poorest of the poor who
are forced to enter the labour market.
Four recycling schools have been utiliz-
ing the approach established: two in
Mokattam (a garbage collectors’ neigh-
bourhood) under the auspices of the Asso-
ciation of Garbage Collectors for Commu-
nity Development (AGCCD) and the As-
sociation for the Protection for the Envi-
ronment (APE). The third is in the 10th of
Ramadan district under the auspices of
Hope Village Society (HVS). The fourth
is in Nuweiba, South Sinai, and is run by
the Hemaya Association for Community
Development.
The goals of the project are: to design an educational system for unskilled and semi-skilled youths and children who could not go to school but had to work; to improve the health situation of marginalised youths, women and children; and to provide the organisations mobilizing the poor with greater capacities for literacy provision. In addition, the project aims to offer lifelong learning and earning opportunities revolving around waste management and recovery; to design and implement environmental learning projects that specifically address the safe, clean recovery and recycling of unsoiled non-organic waste; to create and support the institutions (CDAs) which constitute this network and build their capacities to create linkages with formal sector recycling industries (paper, plastic, aluminum, etc.).

Waste management practices in many African countries need to be improved. The informal sector in the developing world is a growing phenomenon in economic, social and political terms. It plays a significant and vital role in solid waste management. Egypt has transformed scavengers into dignified recoverers of waste who are organised through planned interventions to benefit them economically, educationally and socially. This benefit comes from trading in recovered non-organic waste and recycling it in micro-enterprise workshops. Curriculum is created from the recovery and recycling process.

Concurrently, growing unemployment has led to slower economic empowerment of the poor, growing crime, social and political instability, higher school dropout rates due to families’ inability to support their children’s education, and a growing marginalisation of unskilled and semi-skilled people. This has forced the poorest of the poor to live off the heaps of trash accumulated in dumpsites all over the major cities of the developing world. They eke out a living under inhuman working conditions to manually recover non-organic waste which they sell at informal markets. Egypt has a long-standing tradition and local indigenous expertise in its waste collector zabbiil community. They have serviced the city of Cairo for 50 years and have upgraded their methods in the new model they established in the town of Nuweiba, South Sinai. This model has eliminated the undignified manual recovery of putrefied waste, created 7–8 jobs per ton of waste collected, used local technologies and capitalised on both formal and informal markets ready to receive the recovered waste. It creates jobs for marginalised, unemployed youths, promotes waste recovery (80% of waste) with dignity and empowers families to procure health and educational services.

References
Poverty and Adult Education: The Experience in Pakistan


Poverty and Adult Education: The Experience in Pakistan

Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rahman

An occurrence last year made me very aware of the connection between women’s rights and adult education. A gang rape was perpetrated in Merawali village in the region of Mukhtar Mai where I was working. Initially the case was ignored. Only when the media took it up did the woman who was raped get some support. Upon receiving a large amount of cash as compensation, she handed the cheque over to me and said, “Madam, I do not want the money. Open a school so that our voices are heard. No one listens to us.” We were shamed by her words into doing something and quickly started up a few adult education centres in the area. This incident made us more aware of the relevance of literacy for women for their protection and empowerment. In rural Pakistan, only 25% of women are literate (GoP 2002). If we are to eradicate poverty, these women have to be made literate; only then will they be able to play a positive role in the development process. Our NGO, Bunyad, concentrates on empowering rural women with functional literacy and micro-credit support.

Pakistan: The national context

Pakistan has many different geographic regions, ranging from deserts to high-altitude, snow-clad mountains. It is also a culturally diverse country composed of various ethnic-linguistic groups with distinct cultures and traditions. Pakistan has a population of about 145 million (GoP 2002a). Approximately 41% of the population is below the age of 15, including 17 million below the age of 5 (NIPS 2000). The current rate of population growth is 2.1% per annum, which is among the highest in the world (PAP 2003). Pakistan’s economy is predominantly agricultural. Since it gained independence in 1947, economic growth has averaged 5%, but one-third of the population lives in absolute poverty (GoP 2002a).

Problems of political instability affect the country’s development. Federal structures impact on human development through restrictive practices, while centralised governmental structures hamper the delivery of basic services. The level of human development continues to be one of the lowest in Asia. Only 45% of the population is literate (GoP 1999), with literacy rates characterised by large urban/rural and gender disparities. Adult literacy rates range from 6.3% in rural Balochistan to 79% in urban Sind. The overall literacy rate for adult women is 33% as compared with 57% for adult men (UNESCO 2003).

Pakistan’s progress in terms of human development in sectors such as education, health and family planning has been disappointing. The seriously underdeveloped state of Pakistan’s human resource base seriously constrains the transformation of Pakistan into a dynamic, middle-
income economy. Table 3 below shows UN human development indicators for Pakistan.

**Poverty and poverty alleviation**

Historically, poverty has been identified mainly in terms of income level among the poor, or as a slow growth of GDP at the macro/national level. Therefore, in the past, international assessments depended heavily on income level as the basic measure of poverty. However, as discussed earlier in this booklet, there is now general agreement that poverty transcends this traditional definition.

Poor people have to acquire the capability not only to access existing institutional mechanisms for improving their lives but also to reorient the functioning of these mechanisms so as to assist their continued progress. The obvious solution is an educational programme that effectively equips the poor to meet their immediate needs and also liberates them from the trap that condemns their children to lives of servitude and misery. Poverty is both a social (gender, social status, family, education) and an economic (income, employment) phenomenon.

**Reasons for poor social growth**

Pakistan’s economy has grown much more than other low-income countries, but, according to the World Bank, the country’s social progress lags behind its economic growth (World Bank 2002). It maintains that the educated and well-off urban population in Pakistan lives not so differently from their counterparts in other countries of similar income range.

Table 3. Basic development indicators for Pakistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Percentage or Millions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated population (millions)</td>
<td>142.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual population growth rate (%)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth (years)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy rate (%)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female literacy rate (%)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP per capita (US$)</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human development index</td>
<td>0.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-related development index</td>
<td>0.392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population in poverty (% of total)</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population without access to health services (%)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population without access of safe water (%)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population without access to sanitation (%)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malnourished children under 5 years of age (%)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Government of Pakistan 2002a
However, the urban poor and rural population are being left behind. For example, access to sanitation in Pakistan is 232% lower than in other countries with similar income levels.

Poverty, according to the World Bank, remains a serious concern in Pakistan. Poverty rates, which had fallen substantially in the 1980s and early 1990s, started to rise again towards the end of the millennium. According to the latest figures, 39.2% of the population is poor (GoP 2001a). More importantly, differences in per capita income across regions have persisted or widened. Poverty rates vary significantly between rural and urban populations, and from province to province, from a low of 16% in the Northeast to 44% in the Northwest Frontier Province.

The World Bank also acknowledges that Pakistan has developed significantly in the 56 years since gaining independence, as measured by some key social indicators. It states that health and education services have expanded and improved, and life expectancy has increased from 59 years in 1990 to 65 in 1999. Infant and maternal mortality rates have also dropped, as have illiteracy rates. According to the Pakistani government, “Pakistan has turned a deteriorating macroeconomic situation into a rapidly improving one. In 2002–2003 GDP grew by an estimated 5.1% while inflation remained low at 3.3%” (GoP 2002a). “The budget deficit was contained at 4.6% of GDP”, the report adds.

A primary reason for Pakistan’s poverty is that, in most social sectors, it still lags behind countries with comparable per capita income. Only 49% of its population is literate, compared to an average of 64% in countries with similar income per capita. According to the World Bank (2003), “There are also significant gender gaps in both literacy and health status in Pakistan. Gender disparities in education remain significant. While the male population completes an average of five years of schooling, the female population in Pakistan completes only two and a half years. The enrollment rate for boys is 77 percent as opposed to 60 percent for girls.”

A second reason for poverty in Pakistan is a “dependency syndrome”, where less than 20% of the population supports the other 80%. According to the ILO Labour Report (2000), only 5.5% of women are officially employed; thus the work of nearly 95% of women is not recognised. Most of these women work in the informal sector in farm-related and family work. Included in this category of dependents are the 42% of the population that is below 14 years of age, plus people with disabilities and older citizens. Unless more people contribute to the economy through income tax, poverty will not be curtailed. With a large child labour force and approximately 70% of women illiterate, literacy is a key factor in improving quality of life.

A third cause of poverty is the particular social vulnerability of women. Women, especially rural women, lack access to services like health, education, skills and credit and are quite dependent on the decisions of the male members and the elderly of their family. They generally live in extended families, which have little else to offer besides social security. Nearly 40% of the population lives in one-room accommodations, shared with as many as 15 other family members (GoP 2001). Beds are stacked together in the morning and taken out again at
night. Schools are generally close by, but their work is hampered by a high rate of teacher absenteeism. Health services are poor, especially maternal health, illustrated by the fact that, on average, one woman dies during child birth every 20 minutes. On the other hand, Pakistan has a high birth rate: 8 babies are born every minute (UNICEF 2001). The rate of contraception use is less than 28%, though over 97% women know about contraception (NIPS 2000).

In South Asia as a whole, where roughly 21% of the world's female population lives, three out of every five women are illiterate (Daily Dawn 2003). Discrimination against women starts at birth—female foetus abortion and infanticide, neglected health, gender-biased feeding products and preference of sons over daughters. The participation of women in South Asian economies is only a fraction of that of men. Six percent of the South Asia region's judges are women, 9% in the civil services, and less than 1% of the latter are at a decision-making level (Daily Dawn 2003).

Poverty and education

The Asian economic crisis of 1997 highlighted the fact that the potential benefit of market reforms and globalisation cannot be realised in the absence of an appropriate regulatory framework. This means that the poor are often subjected to acute hardships during the process of liberalisation.

The connection between education and poverty has to be viewed within this context. There is no dearth of empirical evidence relating education with a number of general development indicators. Amartya Sen’s interpretation of poverty in terms of capability has brought the role of education into sharper focus, not just in alleviating poverty but also as a core constituent of development and human well-being. Not only are basic levels of health and education a right of the poor, they are also important in accelerating poverty reduction, as they allow the poor to take advantage of the opportunities created by economic growth. However, in many countries the poor have less physical and economic access to education and health services than the better-off, resulting in lower rates of utilisation and hence worse health and literacy outcomes. Thus a cycle develops, leading to ill health, malnutrition and illiteracy, and back to poverty.

Non-formal education and income-generation programmes

Community action is critical in reducing the misery arising from poverty. It is this understanding that has made poverty alleviation an important agenda in all developing countries. Thus community-based non-formal education—in particular, programmes involving skills training for income generation—are considered vital in tackling the inter-related problems arising from poverty.

Non-formal education occurs when learners opt voluntarily to acquire further knowledge or skills by studying with a teacher who addresses self-determined interests using an organised curriculum, as is the case in many adult education courses and workshops. In the early 1970s, UNESCO attempted to incorporate the concept of non-formal education within the broader framework of lifelong education and the notion of the learning society.

Forty-five percent of the world’s illiterate are located in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, and are expected to become half
the world's illiterate population by 2015. Pakistan's illiterates stand at 5% of the world's total illiterate population (Courier, UNESCO 2003).

Poverty in Pakistan has increased at an alarming rate. Every year over 31 million are added to the population, an already huge 145 million. Of this, 53.8% are 29 years of age or younger. Contraceptive prevalence is barely 27.6%; the fertility rate is 4.6; and the population growth rate is as high as 2.6% (SDPI 2003). Overpopulation is expending national resources and retarding economic growth. Planning for the future is thus hampered. One cause of this high population growth is the very high illiteracy rate among women.

In the total population of Pakistan, the male/female ratio is 51.9/48.1%. While the total literacy rate is 45%, females have a literacy rate of 33% (GoP 2002). Some improvements have been made: in 1961, female literacy in Pakistan was 6.7%; this increased to 32.5% in 1998. Despite the relative improvement, the current literacy level, especially of women, is not acceptable. When we move from percentages to actual numbers, Pakistan has nearly 60 million illiterates, more than the population of many countries.

Based on the example of Pakistan and other countries in South Asia, it is clear that adult education impacts in a number of ways on the reduction of poverty:

- It improves the overall development of the country.
- Adult education for women helps to reduce family size.
- It positively affects health indicators, such as maternal mortality, immunisation and polio eradication.
- It helps people to become aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- Children stay longer in school when they have parents who are literate. Illiterate parents often do not see the long-term benefit of sending their children to school.
- Literate adults become more involved in local development schemes, such as water management, co-operatives and micro-credit schemes.
- Literate adults are more likely to seek and use legal support.
- Literate women become more confident in living their lives, forming groups, taking on leadership roles and improving the quality of their lives and that of their children's.

Impact along these lines has been observed in connection with illiteracy programmes already running in Pakistan. One of the more recent and successful of these was the Aujala programme, where 180,000 women aged 15–25 were given short courses in literacy. Voices of the Poor was another scheme which included training in skills. Both of these were short-duration schemes (2000–2002) which received no government support to extend them. The curriculum aimed to give rural women basic reading and writing skills and over 24 messages useful for their daily life. Basic numeracy was also taught.

The public sector in Pakistan is not very supportive of adult education. Most public funds are channelled to primary education for children. But with nearly 50% of children not completing primary education, it can be argued that until parents are made literate the high dropout rate will continue. Therefore, adult education, at least for young women aged 15–25, is essential to pave the way to a learning society. If the national literacy programmes of Bangaldesh and India have started to change the mindset of adults and parents, the same can be achieved in Pakistan.
Case studies: *Bunyad* Literacy Community Council and NGO Resource Centre

The *Bunyad* Literacy Community Council is a non-governmental, non-profit and non-political organisation committed to social change and founded in 1994 by the author and others. Its first initiative involved the promotion of literacy in Hafizabad. The realisation that literacy is the first step towards development and that quality education is needed to reach the Education for All Goals led *Bunyad* to undertake the education of girls in rural areas. The project was called the ILM Non-formal Primary Education (NFPE) Project. From literacy and education in one district, *Bunyad* has gradually expanded both its geographical spread and its fields of activity. Presently it is active in 14 districts of the Punjab, and in addition to literacy and non-formal education its activities include projects in such diverse fields as child labour, women’s empowerment for poverty alleviation, awareness raising, saving and micro-credit schemes, community development, integrated sanitation and farming systems, and reproductive health.

*Bunyad* started working in adult education as early as 1992. *Bunyad* activists found that adult women were keen to learn to read and write. In 1995 it started the Women’s Empowerment for Poverty Alleviation Organisation (WEPA) with UNESCO support and under the guidance of Drs. Prem Kaseju and Anjum Haque. It catered to over 1,000 women. The results were significant: basic learning, micro-credit and skills training were given to women. Results were quite positive and the confidence the women got from these courses was astonishing. Mothers started small enterprises and regularly sent their children, especially their daughters, to school. The results in terms of poverty reduction were indisputable.

In Pakistan the dropout rate for girls at primary level is nearly 50%. Less than 49% enrol in schools at all. Since most mothers are illiterate, they are not aware of the benefits of education for their children, especially for girls; *Bunyad* committed itself to giving basic literacy classes to mothers at our NFPE centres. At first, many mothers were reluctant to take part. However, when we started WEPA, these young mothers became eager participants in our programme. We used books that were specially designed and developed for rural women on issues relevant to them. After the completion of the nine-month course many women started reading their children’s textbooks. Unfortunately, when the programme was completed there was no government support for continuing the programme. The government feels that the little it has in educational funding should be allocated for sending children to school, rather than for making mothers literate. However, *Bunyad* has persevered in its work in the conviction that adult education is an important factor in the retention of children in school, in poverty alleviation and in empowering women. The Government of Punjab has now started using the adult education books of *Bunyad* for their Female Adult Centres.

References


Enterprise Contests: An Educational Experience with Adult Women in Latin America

Alicia Villanueva

This chapter discusses an educational experiment with adult women which has been under development since 1994 by the Popular Educational Network of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (REPEM). REPEM has an education and citizenship programme for women who, mainly because of limited training, are working under disadvantageous conditions. REPEM is a regional organisation that brings together more than 140 organisations in Latin America and the Caribbean. REPEM was created in 1981 and is a member of the Educational Council for Adults in Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL).

In 1994 REPEM initiated its Gender, Economy and Educational Programme, which was re-named the Permanent Educational Programme for Macro- and Micro-economy in 2000. This programme is a response to socio-economic changes in the region, resulting from an increase in poverty and the important role that women play in overcoming their poverty. REPEM unites people from institutions that support women engaged in economic activities.

Field experience has shown that although women lead successful economic ventures and represent a great human development component, they continue to be disadvantaged with respect to education and work, discriminatory attitudes, family care responsibilities and time for rest and recreation. Continuing education is therefore considered a vital ingredient in the development of women as individuals, entrepreneurs and participants in society.

REPEM verified that 50% of women in Latin America are totally or functionally illiterate. They have either had no access to formal education or have not remained in it. This has limited their performance considerably. Their low educational level is an endemic problem and therefore policies are required which would facilitate their access to adult education programmes within the framework of lifelong learning.

In many cases, barriers to education and opportunity are created by women themselves. Very often women, for reasons of fear or simply out of habit, do not want to leave the safety of their homes to look for more information and knowledge. In spite of the commitments made by various Latin American governments to support adult education for women, there is not enough funding for these programmes. Educational programmes for adult women compete with children’s educational programmes for resources and, of course, priority is given to children. REPEM is aware of the limited resources available, and therefore it is crucial that these are used in the best way possible.

In 1998, REPEM began a regional educational strategy for women entrepre-
neurs from poor rural and urban areas. REPEM started to organise Enterprise Contests accompanied by a regional award-giving ceremony. It did so simultaneously in eight countries in the region. The main objective was to publicise the experiences of women entrepreneurs and to learn more about them. To date, four contests have been held: in Caracas, Venezuela (1998), Guadalajara, Mexico (2001), Cuenca, Ecuador (2002) and Porto Alegre, Brazil (2004).

Each year, five to ten successful examples of family businesses, associative companies, community companies and/or local development projects are presented. To participate, women have to fill out a questionnaire that requires precise information on the economic, social, innovative and gender aspects of their endeavours. Women have to give a self-diagnosis of their own micro-enterprise. This covers teamwork with their own workers, advice from experts, evaluation of costs of their machines and products, etc. In addition to awarding and publicising successful enterprises, the contests also have an added benefit for the participating women: They are given the opportunity to compete as well as co-operate with other women, and to learn from the excitement, disappointment and challenges that process entails.

Women who reach the final stage of the contest are interviewed by a jury. They have to be able to present their workplace, production and accounts, and predict the future of new products or campaigns. Many of the women are exposed for the first time to mass media, radio and TV interviews, as well as the written press. This media exposure and access serves as an additional training element and helps women to overcome their fear of speaking in public and to value the importance of media in the promotion of small businesses, especially in dealing with clients and banks. At the end of the contest, women attend training workshops on macro-economics. These workshops are adapted to the needs and realities of the women and are conducted in agreement with an academic institution. This year, for instance, the Universidad del Pacífico, Peru, is in charge of the workshops.

REPEM is committed to maintaining links with these women. It follows up on the contests by designing further training courses and establishes contacts with organisations that are close to the market. The women all require ongoing education to keep in touch with changes in the globalised world, the world of work and new technologies.

The experience from the four contests has shown, firstly, that women entrepreneurs have great potential to contribute to sustainable human development. This is because women spend a lot of their energies in improving their families’ quality of life, as well as investing in their workers. Secondly, they have created networks for collective and reciprocal learning. In the development of women as entrepreneurs, women are no longer treated as isolated workers but as part of a larger learning network. The third benefit from this experience is that, although economic benefits are necessary for women entrepreneurs, what was most important to them was being recognised as successful entrepreneurs and having the opportunity to develop personally. The fourth benefit is the increase in educational assets. Those who participated in this contest have attained higher levels of knowledge and information about markets, production, management and lobbying activities. These contests are a means of promoting other strate-
gies that could contribute to the development of women. The contests are an informal educational instrument and a motivating factor for continued learning.

The following selection of comments from women entrepreneurs who participated in the contests reflect their positive experiences:

"While filling out my participation form, I was able to learn which were my weaknesses and my strengths. I learned, without realizing it, to describe my business's actual status."

"It was a very valuable help for me and perhaps the key to my company's progress, because my husband did not calculate the costs properly, left things out or simply guided himself by other manufacturers' sales, all of which did not allow us to see the fruit of our work."

"I have received considerable training and have made good use of it, because I put it into practice. I have learned what business leadership, strategic management, marketing techniques, gender and education, basic accounting records and costs are. It has taught me to organise myself, to order myself, and to know how to organise my time."

One of the wide-ranging benefits of the contests is that other women are able to learn from the exchange of experiences transmitted by mass media communication and in national and regional meetings, and through publications such as Así se Hace (This is the Way), which have documented the entrepreneurial success of women. This educational strategy integrates the development of women's self-esteem, identity and rights with the promotion of their economic and productive abilities and market management.

The contests represent an educational process in support of women's empowerment. For the entrepreneurs themselves, the contest is an instrument for acquiring knowledge and experiences, as well as access to new educational opportunities and support networks. From the point of view of private and public institutions, strategic alliances are formed with a sector that has potential but that is facing difficulty and is greatly in need of support. For ordinary members of society this is a learning experience. It is an opportunity to learn more about the realities of life on the ground, especially in the critical phase in which a number of Latin American countries find themselves with regard to corruption. Social entrepreneurship in this context can be a way to convert negative experiences of neo-liberalism into positive ones. For example, the contests have helped to raise awareness of the importance of consuming indigenous products.

Since these contests are conceived from a holistic and integrated perspective, they serve as an important educational instrument that helps adults to enter onto a better path of development. They also help to encourage policies that favour adult women who are involved in economic activities. These women face a whole series of cumulative disadvantages, not only because they are women but also because they are poor. Therefore, many barriers need to be overcome. In the age of a global economy and in the context of ever-changing technologies, there is no way forward but through lifelong learning and education.

References


Adult Education and Poverty Reduction in Botswana

Halima Letamo


Based on these policy documents, the Botswana National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) was developed. Consultation and research undertaken during the development phase of the strategy suggests that Botswana has made progress towards increasing participation and addressing challenges in adult education delivery. These achievements have been accompanied by increased research on adult learning. In this chapter I shall discuss how these national achievements relate to the national policy frameworks. My analysis will focus separately on each of the three categories of adult education identified in the Revised National Policy on Education for Botswana (RNPE). These categories are adult basic education, extension education and continuing education.

Policy frameworks for Botswana

Vision 2016 and the National Development Plan 9 are two policy frameworks for Botswana and serve as a guide for all development initiatives, whether by governmental departments, NGOs or the private sector. At the policy level, one of the major achievements for Botswana has been the development of Vision 2016, the principal goal of which is to reduce the proportion of people living below the poverty line to 23% by 2007 and to 0% by 2016. The proportion currently stands at 36.7% (MFDP 2003a). The Vision 2016 strategy acknowledges that education is still not a practical option for all, especially the poor (Presidential Task Group 1997). The strategy therefore proposes development of all human resources so that the poor are able to utilise job opportunities created through economic growth.

The National Development Plan 9 is based on the principles of rapid economic growth, social justice, economic independence and sustainable development. This plan aims to alleviate poverty and develop human resources. It highlights the fact that public spending on education has risen from 20% of the national budget to 28%, and suggests that this level of spending may be unsustainable in the long run (MFDP 2003a). The plan therefore focuses on the revival of self-reliance in education, where stakeholders and beneficiaries complement government efforts. This policy shift could increase the exclusion of the poor, especially adults, from the education sector as investment in adult education tends to be given lower priority than other forms of education.
The other significant policy initiative is the Revision of the National Policy for Rural Development (RNPRD). It focuses on nine thematic areas, including capacity building and poverty. It points out that poverty in Botswana is much more severe in rural areas and therefore advises that members of rural communities be provided opportunities according to their capacities. The RNPRD notes that education and training should be targeted to cover areas of scarcity and comparative disadvantage (MFDP 2002). The policy sees capacity building through education and training as a way of addressing the structural ramifications of poverty. It therefore recommends the creation of a poverty reduction strategy. In response to this recommendation, the Botswana National Poverty Reduction Strategy was developed. One of its main areas of focus is human resource development (MFDP 2003b).

Achievements in adult basic education

Adult basic education is defined as the provision of opportunities for all adults, namely out-of-school youths, women and men, to complete basic education; that is, to Grade 10 or Junior Certificate (Ministry of Education 1994). Two major achievements in this area that are relevant to poverty alleviation are the establishment of the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) and the Botswana National Literacy Programme.

BOCODOL was established in December 1998. This institution provides learning opportunities for individuals who were unable to attend formal school and attain the Junior Certificate. According to Tonic Maruatona (2003), by 2001 2,000 learners had enrolled at BOCODOL. However, since it provides adult education through distance mode, the dropout rate is more difficult to assess. Moreover, a lack of systematic statistics makes it difficult to assess all adult learning experiences offered by BOCODOL. Nevertheless, it clearly represents a step forward in the area of poverty reduction. It means that a part of the population that cannot access education because of duties like child care and food production is able to continue undertaking these duties but also access education by distance mode.

The Botswana National Literacy Programme, which saw increased enrolments in 2002, is another achievement in the area of adult education and poverty reduction in Botswana. According to Maruatona (2003), the Department of Non-formal Education, which is the provider of the programme, focused on workplace literacy activities in 2002, which resulted in a dramatic increase in the enrolment figures from 9,399 in 2001 to 13,329 in 2002.

Achievements in extension education

Extension education has been defined as the provision of new programmes for young people and adults to develop knowledge, attitudes and techniques that would help to improve the quality of life in their homes and communities (Ministry of Education, cited in Maruatona 2003). This form of adult education has a direct impact on poverty alleviation as it focuses on the provision of skills that can be applied directly to income generating projects. This form of adult learning is provided at two levels by the Government of Botswana. The first level is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning through the Rural Devel-
opment Council (RDC) and the Rural Extension Co-ordinating Committee Sub-Committee on Training (Sub-RECC). In this case training officers for government departments, NGOs and training institutions for extension workers come together and share experience from their respective areas of work. Common needs are identified, and tailor-made courses are developed to address these common needs. Since 1997 a tailor-made course developed in this manner has been run annually by the Department of Adult Education of the University of Botswana. The Basic Extension Skills Training Course was developed after it was found that most extension officers were failing to impart their technical know-how to communities and thereby hampering the delivery of programmes. This course has now trained about 200 extension officers from different government departments and the NGO sector.

The same committee has also trained 19 District Extension Teams (all DETS in Botswana and some Sub-DETS) on participatory approaches to development (Dipholo 2002). Non-participation of the poor in development initiatives was noted as one of the major contributing factors to poverty in Botswana since the needs of the poor are often excluded when decisions are made. The government now promotes popular participation through policy dialogue and consultation with communities, and decentralisation through emphasis of a bottom-up approach to planning. The National Poverty Reduction Strategy proposes that the kgotla system, which is a local system for consultation, be reviewed in terms of its capacity to provide a forum for effective participation. It was noted, however, that this review should take into account the weak participation of marginalised groups such as women. In view of this, the focus of the Sub-RECC has been to train extension workers in participatory development to create an environment enabling members of the community to participate in the programme and policy dialogue.

The second level for the provision of extension education comprises sectoral initiatives for the delivery of policies, projects and programmes to the community. Due to the lack of a co-ordinated system to document these initiatives, I have been unable to access information on all initiatives in this area.

According to Maruatona (2003), the Ministry of Agriculture employs one agricultural demonstrator to 500 farming households, which is acceptable by the standards of a developing country. This service has a direct impact on poverty reduction since the dissemination of information and introduction of new technologies on farming can reach farmers faster, thus improving production. The Botswana College of Agriculture also provides courses for farmers.

The Ministry of Health has a Primary Health Care Committee that is responsible for adult learning on health matters. This committee sees to the training of health workers at the district level, produces and distributes training materials and teaches expectant mothers in both pre-natal and post-natal clinics. But between 1997 and 2003, the major focus of health extension has been on combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Achievements in this area include the provision of free anti-retroviral drugs and information relating to them. This includes education on the use of the drugs, as well as testing for HIV in order to receive the drugs. Campaigns, workshops and seminars have
been held to ensure that information on HIV/AIDS transmission, prevention and care reaches every Motswana, including the illiterate. A further healthcare initiative is the Home-based Care Programme. This is a participatory healthcare programme run by volunteers to help to care for AIDS patients in their communities (Republic of Botswana 2003). These community members undertake training and in turn train community members in how to care for the sick, taking all the necessary precautions to avoid transmission of the virus.

Other initiatives launched since 1997 include the Consumer Education Unit, which educates consumers on their rights with the aim of protecting them from unfair business practices. According to Maruatona (2003), the unit organised numerous workshops and seminars, involving over 2,000 participants between 2002 and 2003. The Department of Women’s Affairs has also organised gender sensitisation workshops for different departments and has piloted gender mainstreaming exercises with four government departments. This effort is significant since a large number of households in Botswana are headed by women (Women’s Affairs Department 1999). The Independent Electoral Commission has also conducted considerable training in voter education in 2002–2003 in preparation for the 2004 national elections.

The NGO sector has made achievements of its own in the area of extension education provision, since most of them are focused on issues that affect disadvantaged groups. The Tebelopele testing and counseling centres are places where voluntary counselling and testing for HIV is provided free of charge. This enables the poor to get testing services outside the clinics where they have to pay a fee. These centres have increased in number throughout the country between 1997 and 2003. According to Maruatona (2003), the Botswana Coalition of Non-governmental Organisations (BOCONGO) recently organised training in the use of participatory methods for extension workers, and the Botswana Adult Education Association has organised numerous adult learning activities, such as the Adult Learners Week and the Week of the Elderly during 2002–2003. UNICEF has also been implementing participatory methods at district level. This means that the communities are trained and empowered to assess their situation and find means of bettering their livelihoods.

While some notable achievements have been made in the area of extension education since 1997, it should nevertheless be noted that the quality of the programmes must be reviewed in terms of meeting the needs of the poor.

**Achievements in continuing education**

Continuing education refers to planned formal and non-formal educational programmes for adults who intend to continue their education beyond the basic level of the Junior Certificate. The major providers of continuing education in Botswana are BOCODOL, the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) of the University of Botswana, the Centre for In-service and Continuing Education (CICE) of the Botswana College of Agriculture and the Department of Vocational Education and Training (DVET).

The achievements of BOCODOL have been referred to earlier in this chapter, but it is important to note at this stage that the college also offers distance education courses at the senior secondary level.
According to Maruatona (2003), BOCO-DOL was able to enroll 2,500 learners in 2002 alone.

The Centre for Continuing Education’s achievements since 1997 include the introduction of the Diploma in Adult Education by distance mode in the 2002–2003 academic year. This diploma replaced the Certificate in Adult Education, which the department had offered for a number of years.

The Centre for In-service and Continuing Education focuses on the production and dissemination of materials for agricultural extension education. The centre also offers short courses that can be tailored to meet the needs of stakeholders. The centre is now considering expanding its scope by providing evening courses (Mazwiduma 2003).

The Department of Vocational Education and Training is a government department under the Ministry of Education and is concerned with the provision of vocational education and training. There are currently 41 registered vocational training “brigades”, of which 37 offer training in Botswana. There are also six technical colleges run by the Department of Vocational Education and Training. These centres graduate over 1,000 students each year (Marumo 2003).

Key issues still to be addressed

The challenges for adult education are still great, especially if it is viewed as a poverty reduction mechanism. Starting with policy issues, the National Development Plan 9 proposes cost recovery in education. While it is understandable that the national budget is being stretched by education expenditures and that there is need for the public to share education costs with the government, a sharp reduction in expenditures could result in the exclusion of the most vulnerable sections of the population. Free education has contributed greatly to accessibility of adult education, especially literacy. Having to pay for education could deny the poor access to education. The challenge therefore is one of ensuring that relevant stakeholders see the need to invest in adult education.

Another challenge posed by budgetary constraints is the issue of resource mobilisation. The non-formal sector of adult education has always competed with the formal sector, and usually gets a smaller share of resources. The challenge to adult education therefore is to ensure that a policy on shared resources is developed and implemented and is not biased towards formal schooling.

The private sector offers a considerable amount of adult education and training, but faces problems insofar as the certificates they offer are not recognised by employment organisations and other educational institutions. It is therefore important that private institutions offering adult education get accreditation.

The other challenge for adult education in Botswana relates to the growth of extension programmes. Extension education, as indicated earlier, is offered at different levels and even though there are co-ordination structures in place, the actual co-ordination of the provision of this form of education is weak. It cannot be denied that efforts made through provision of participatory rural appraisal training and the adoption of a community-based strategy have enabled communities to engage in learning that empowers them to take control of their own resources. However, this initiative has ben-
adult education is therefore to ensure co-ordination and documentation of extension education programmes.

An additional challenge facing adult education in Botswana is research-based. Research on adult education is conducted mostly by individual consultants and is segmented. The only area of adult education that is reached at a national level is the literacy sector, through the Botswana National Literacy Programme. There is a need for the country to undertake a study of the adult education situation and its impact on poverty reduction.

A further issue that still needs to be addressed relates to the relevance of adult literacy programmes. These should be reviewed since in most cases they do not meet the needs of the beneficiaries. Adult literacy programmes have been focusing on provision of basic reading and writing skills. Benefits of owning these skills are not immediate and this could cause many people to fail to appreciate them. Therefore, the programmes need to be aimed more at local needs and should consider providing skills that will have immediate benefits.

Finally there is the challenge of ensuring deliberate incorporation of adult education as a poverty reduction strategy in policy development and implementation. In most cases the role of adult education as a poverty reduction strategy is only implied in policies through recognition of the need to rehabilitate the poor, for example, through training.

**Recommendations**

1. Botswana needs to ensure that relevant stakeholders see the need to invest in educating adults. A policy on shared resources should therefore be developed and implemented.
2. Private institutions that offer adult education should be given accreditation.
3. Co-ordination and documentation of extension education programmes should be strengthened.
4. A study of the adult education situation and its impact on poverty reduction should be undertaken.
5. Adult literacy curricula should be targeted to respond effectively to the needs of the learners.
6. Adult education as a poverty reduction strategy needs to be explicitly profiled in policy development and implementation.

**References**


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