Literacy and Adult Education in the Arab World

Regional Report for the CONFINTEA V Mid-Term Review Conference, Bangkok, September 2003
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Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident from this regional report that there is a deep commitment to adult education in the Arab region. The mid-term review consultations, surveys, analyses, research, meetings, and a host of other activities undertaken in this context, speak of seriousness with which this region views adult education both at the governmental and non-governmental levels.

The report has also revealed that since the Hamburg Conference in 1997, the region not only renewed its commitment to adult education, but also took concrete steps in practically every country to translate this commitment into actions based on the recommendations of CONFINTÉA V.

The establishment of the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education (ANLAE) that has been identified as one of the major regional responses to CONFINTÉA V, is also an expression of that commitment. Its role as a link between governments and NGOs at the national and regional levels, a support for NGO work in the field, and its identified priority of “setting strategies for work in literacy and adult education within the context of lifelong learning” are all essential ingredients for the success of adult education efforts in the region.

Despite the commitment to adult education as articulated through the themes of CONFINTÉA V, and despite the adoption of these themes by all countries in the region, the Mid-term review has revealed that for the Arab region as a whole, adult education is still defined as literacy. The concentration of efforts in the field of adult education is on the reduction of illiteracy. This is not surprising in light of the kind of burden that 70 million illiterates people place human, social and economic development in the region.

However, the themes and priorities identified in CONFINTÉA V are being introduced into literacy programmes and curricula across the region. The growing awareness of literacy as a tool to a productive and better quality of life has been radically changing literacy curricula in the region. Vocational education, micro enterprise, health, nutrition, childcare, agriculture, banking and money management have all become a part of literacy programmes. Also notable is the use of media and new technologies to reach as many illiterate populations as possible. Distance and open learning, home schooling, community schooling and family education are all providing choices to meet the different needs.

Education for All has also provided a new impetus for adult education, in particular in the area of women’s education. In many countries the CONFINTÉA V theme of empowering women through education and the EFA goal of eliminating gender disparities in education, have merged to make women and girls’ education a priority across the board for every country and community in the region without exception.

Women and girls’ literacy programmes are being tailored to overcome cultural and traditional constraints that have in the past excluded women from the educational process. Statistical data reflect the improvements that have been made in women’s literacy levels in the region.

It is worth noting, however, that on CONFINTÉA theme number 1, “Adult learning and democracy: challenges for the 21st century”, has been dealt with only from the angle of democratizing the relationship between NGOs and government institutions, giving NGOs a voice, and increasing their participation in policy and decision making. Issues of democracy and political participation at the popular level have not yet made their way into adult education curricula in any noticeable manner.
Another issue of great importance that has been identified at both the governmental and NGO regional consultations is the lack of reliable documentation on adult and non-formal education. The regional consultation that took place in Hammamat, Tunis strongly recommended that this be considered a priority area for future work and included it in its final report as follows:

**Recommendation 1:** There is a need to develop, create and reinforce existing capacities in data collection and documentation on adult and non-formal learning. This is necessary in order to collect, analyze and retrieve information to be used in conducting studies and research, developing curricula and educational materials, and evaluation measurements and instruments particular to the region. This information will be used to enrich the ALADIN Network and the UNESCO website on the Literacy Decade and UIE [www.literacyexchange.net](http://www.literacyexchange.net)

This is not to say that there is no research taking place in the region on adult and non-formal education, but rather that there are no specialized research and documentation centers or institutions taking an interest in adult and non-formal education at the regional level. Therefore, another recommendation that was made at the Hammamat meeting dealt with this issue as follows:

**Recommendation 2:** There is a need to identify research centers in the region working in the areas of adult and non-formal education, and create a network that will generate information to help governments make informed policy decisions based on reliable information in order to improve the quality of education at the regional and national levels.

Curriculum development, monitoring, evaluation were also areas of weakness that emerged in this report and that were tackled at the regional consultation in Hammamat.

**Recommendation 3:** There is a need to develop pilot systems in the areas of curriculum development and evaluation in a number of Arab countries so that they would serve as the basis for implementation and replication in other countries of the region.

It is necessary to develop common indicators for monitoring and evaluating the quality of non-formal education in the Arab region (literacy, post-literacy, and other adult learning programmes).

The above recommendations, along with those made by Dr. Fawzi Ayoub in relation to literacy books in the region (Annex II Evaluation of Literacy Materials in the Arab World) and those made by the regional NGO consultation in Cairo, (Annex I The NGO Point of View) form a clear vision and agenda for future action which needs to be taken up by all parties concerned with adult and non-formal education in the region.

It is important also to note that there are barriers to education in the region that are beyond the control of regional expert and government officials, and which require international action and support. Armed conflict, occupation, economic recession in such countries as Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, Lebanon are threatening to derail any progress made over the years in improving literacy levels and providing education for all. If there is to be comprehensive and sustainable development in the region, then these conditions cannot be allowed to continue and persist.
I. Introduction

This report constitutes the Arab region’s main input into the CONFINTEA Mid-Term Review process. It is also an attempt at a critical assessment of the progress made since the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA), which took place in Hamburg in July 1997, and the Arab Regional Preparatory Conference, which took place in Cairo in February of that year.

The report, prepared by the UNESCO Bureau for Education in the Arab States, is based on the decisions, commitments and plans of action emanating from both the International Conference and the Regional Preparatory Conference, and compares and measures the progress made against documents resulting from those two meetings. It will also include the response from a 15-point questionnaire that has been sent to 18 countries and a number of literacy and adult education organizations, in attempt to glean information that may not be available or may not yet be documented.

Attached to this report is information gathered from two Arab NGO consultations that took place in Cairo, organized by the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education (ANLAE). The consultation was based on a questionnaire prepared by the ANLAE in collaboration with the Center for Adult Education at Ain Shams University in Egypt. (Annex I.)

Every attempt has been made throughout this report to use the latest information available and to verify facts and figures with the countries concerned. Much of this report will focus on the efforts being made to reduce or eradicate illiteracy, this being the most urgent issue where adult education is concerned in the Arab region.

A Regional Preparatory meeting for the Mid-term Review was held in Hammamat, Tunisia from July 15 to 18, 2003, in order to gather information and enrich the Arab Regional Report, and to discuss future regional actions within the CONFINTEA Framework for Action. Therefore, much of the information contained in this report is taken from the National Reports of 17 countries entitled “Adult Education and Literacy: Six Years After Hamburg” that were presented at the meeting.

The meeting reiterated that much of the adult education work in the region revolves around literacy and that the understanding of adult education remains anchored in literacy and post-literacy programmes, those being regional priorities. Although many countries do include issues such as the environment, citizenship and democracy education, life skills, as well as agriculture and health education in their literacy curricula, the emphasis is still on literacy.

Additionally, it was revealed that there is a shortage in the availability of statistical and narrative information on adult education and literacy in the region, and some of the information is unreliable. This has been attributed to the lack of dependable centralized documentation and information collection. While there are many successful programmes in many countries, and valuable studies that are worth duplicating and adapting, they have not been sufficiently documented, published or distributed. Therefore, it was concluded that there is a body of knowledge in the region that is not being shared and not being made use of.

Also critical, in this context, is the absence of information systems in the area of curriculum development and evaluation; and the lack of measurable indicators on which to base evaluations and the review of programmes, and by which to make informed decisions and

* Countries represented at the Hammamat meeting: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, as well as the Arab Network for Adult Education and Literacy and other NGOs and civil society organizations.
policies for future strategic planning. This report will include a number of recommendations that arose from the Regional Preparatory meeting on these issues.

Additionally, although country reports and research material indicate that evaluation of programmes has taken place in many countries and that changes to curriculum, programme content, methodology and teacher training have resulted, there is little or no documentation or data of either the evaluation results or the changes they have effected.

Information on curriculum development and analysis of the materials and books is also sketchy or non-existent. Which is not to say that such activities do not take place in the region. Such deficiency indicates not so much a lack of action in adult education, but negligence in documenting such action.

In this context, the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States commissioned Dr. Fawzi Ayoub to conduct a study on the “Evaluation of Literacy Books in the Arab Region”. The study was published shortly before the Hammamat meeting and the findings were presented at the meeting. A synopsis is found in Annex II.

II. Background

The first International Conference on Adult Education was held in Elsinor, Denmark in 1949. Since then there have been four more conferences that have deepened the discussions on and the understanding of adult education. These have taken place in Montreal, Tokyo, Paris and Hamburg in 1960, 1972, 1985 and 1997 respectively.

The concepts around adult education have evolved through the years from the upgrading of professional skills, to literacy, to lifelong learning and empowerment through education. While the Montreal conference asserted adult education’s role in upgrading and improving professional qualifications and established it as a condition for achieving economic progress, Hamburg expanded that understanding to include all types of learning engaged in by adults, and whose aim is to improve people’s lives and abilities to participate in a more holistic way in overall social and human development.

Other conferences on education over the years have taken into consideration many of the agreements and resolutions on adult education. A case in point are the Education for All goals set in the Dakar Framework. Three of the six Education for All goals are concerned with adult education. These are:

- **Goal # 3** Ensuring...learning needs...of adults are met through...access to life skills programmes.
- **Goal # 4** Achieving 50% improvement in adult literacy by 2015...
- **Goal # 5** Enhancing educational quality...Ensuring...measurable learning outcomes are achieved...especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

(Dakar Framework for Action)

A. CONFINTEA V (Hamburg, 1997)

The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), which was held in Hamburg in 1997, provided a comprehensive and holistic view of adult education. *Agenda for the Future*, the Hamburg document, makes the links between past conferences and declarations on adult education, including the *Learning to Be* (UNESCO1972), the *UNESCO Recommendations on Adult Education* (1976) and Delors Commission’s report on Education for the 21st Century, entitled *Learning: The Treasure Within*. It also links and emphasizes the role of
education, and adult education in particular, to a host of international conference resolutions and agreements from Meeting Basic Learning Needs (Jomtien, 1990); Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992); Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995); Women (Beijing, 1995); and Human Settlements (Istanbul, 1996).

The result of this comprehensive view of the role of education in all aspects of human development was a multi-layered agenda that dealt with adult education across a broad spectrum of themes:

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

Although not each one of those themes is a priority in the region, however, as will be made clear through this report, attempts have been made to deal with all, but with varying degrees of success.

Moreover, in its organization as well, CONFINTÉA V represented a departure from traditional United Nations conferences and set a precedent in the area of democratic participation and inclusion. What was essentially a symbolic gesture aimed at underlining the role of NGOs in all aspects of adult education from instituting a vision to programme design to delivery of programmes, was translated over the past seven years into actual cooperation and collaboration between governments and NGOs in the Arab region. This report will attempt to highlight how this collaborative relationship has been strengthened and explore the structures that have been put in place to support it.
Box 1

**One of the main results of CONFINTEA V in the region: Arab Network For Literacy and Adult Education**

The establishment of the Arab Network For Literacy and Adult Education has been identified as one of the major results of CONFINTEA V (Hamburg, 1997). The ANLAE was established in 1999 in Egypt to support NGOs and civil society organizations and enable them to play an active role in literacy and adult education. Its main objectives are:

- To encourage the establishment of new associations at the grassroots level;
- To connect the Network's activities at the local, national and regional levels with similar activities at the regional and international levels.

The main priority of the Network is to activate NGOs and civil society through:

- Setting a strategy for work in literacy and adult education issues within the context of lifelong learning;
- Coordinating the planning, implementation and follow up of programmes among NGOs, Arab governmental and semi-governmental organizations;
- Focusing on the problems of school dropouts;
- Involving the media in the work of adult education.

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**B. Concepts of Adult and Non-formal Education in the Arab World**

Adult non-formal education is defined as any organized educational activity that takes place outside the formal scholastic framework and educational system. It aims at meeting the educational needs of learners not enrolled in formal education, those who have dropped out of school or those who have never had a chance to receive formal schooling, due to a complex and intricate set of social, economic reasons as well as the failure of basic education systems to retain students. These may be adults, youth or children. In the Arab region, a large percentage tends to be women or girls who have not had the same opportunities as men or boys.

Therefore, adult education in the region has been a way to make up for what people have missed in terms of formal schooling and a way of combating the serious illiteracy problem that has burdened the region. In the past decade, however, adult education in the region has begun to take on other characteristics more prevalent in other parts of the world.

These include providing people with, in addition to literacy, the skills and knowledge needed to respond effectively to the growing challenges of new technologies and the information age. Adult non-formal education has become more diversified recently in terms of levels, goals, content, methodologies, teaching and learning skills, monitoring of progress and evaluation of results.

In the Arab region, adult non-formal education also includes equivalency classes for those who did not finish primary, basic education, and for youth who missed the opportunity for schooling or who dropped out of school. It also includes vocational training, and, in the last few years, technology and computer training. Additional topics have been added to the non-formal, adult education programmes in most countries of the region since the mid-1990s. These include, health and environmental education, basic science, life skills, and family education. In short, all education that aims at helping youth and adults develop their capacities, knowledge and skills, enhance their qualifications, positively influence their behaviour and contribute to their economic, social and cultural well-being, and allows them to become productive, participating members of society. It is viewed as a basic and integral part of all human, social and economic development programmes.
C. Concepts of Literacy in the Arab World

It is important to begin with a definition of adult education as it pertains to the Arab region. It is both fortunate and unfortunate that the focus of adult education in the region as a whole has been primarily on literacy. Apart from countries such as Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Qatar that have been able to raise literacy levels, and that are now expanding the scope of adult education, most of the region still deals with adult education as a literacy issue.

Adult education in the region is also a way of closing the gap left by the formal education system before the universalization and expansion of basic education that took place over the last decade. It is also a way of narrowing the gender gap in education, and achieving education for all, a point emphasized at the Regional Preparatory Conference for CONFINTA V in Cairo (February 1997)

Literacy, therefore, is one of the main types of both formal and non-formal, adult education that takes place in the Arab region, and is considered the pre-requisite to all development programmes. Due to the prevailing situation, therefore, literacy has been the main activity on the adult education agenda.

D. The Challenges

The region has faced a number of challenges, however, in its attempts to implement the recommendation of both CONFINTA V and the Regional Preparatory Conference for CONFINTA V. One of the main challenges that has stood in the way of setting and achieving a comprehensive development agenda has been the continued armed conflicts, wars and threats of war that have menaced the region over the past two decades. This, perhaps more than anything else, underscores the need to make adult education in all its manifestations, a priority for the Arab world.

Another important challenge, which directly affects the writing of this report, and is linked to the ability to implement, assess, measure and evaluate the implementation, has to do with the recommendations that arose from both CONFINTA V and the Regional Conference. Although both conferences came out with concrete sets of recommendations, none were expressed in measurable terms. Words and phrases like “encourage”, “support”, “confirm the importance of”, “help”, “strengthen”, “ensure”, to name but a few, have made any objective assessment very difficult. The absence of goal-oriented wording and specific timelines, as well as the lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have made it difficult to judge exactly what has been achieved and how much more needs to be done.

A recommendation to come up with concrete, measurable, quantifiable goals, timelines, implementation mechanisms, and monitoring and evaluation systems was made at the Arab Region Mid-term Review Meeting in Hammamat, Tunis.

E. The Dangers

Much of the progress seen in the past two decades in the area of literacy is slowly being reversed in Palestine and Iraq due to the deteriorating security situation, drawn-out armed conflicts, economic sanctions, prolonged curfews, the inability of students to reach their schools, the destruction of schools and educational facility and physical degradation of the learning environment. Although there are no concrete statistics concerning the levels of regression, there is much concern about the dangers facing education in general and adult education and literacy in those two countries.
Another country in which literacy levels attained in recent years may be in danger of being reversed, is Lebanon. There has been an observable increase in school drop-out rates despite the expansion and universalization of primary formal education.

During the 1999-2000 school year, there was a 98.3% enrolment rate in school. However, Ministry of Social Affairs figures indicate that 3.9% of those had dropped out by the end of the schools year and did not register for the school year 2000-2001.

The Ministry attributes the failure of these children to complete basic education for the following reasons:

J. The deteriorating economic situation causing rapid inflation and rising unemployment, leading families to spend on what little they have on necessities at the expense of school fees for their children
K. The lack of government-funded schools in some regions of the country, particularly those in rural and poorer areas
L. The lack of awareness of the importance of education by the parents who themselves may be illiterate or semi-literate
M. The lack of confidence among a large percentage of the population in future prospects for the country and consequently for their children
N. High cost of private education, making it prohibitive to all but the privileged few
O. The rapid increase in youth and child employment, itself a result of the deteriorating economic conditions, forcing families to send their youngsters out to earn instead of learn.

III. Literacy After CONFINTÉA V: Problems and Practices

A. Regional Literacy Rates Development

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Genders</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy for over 15</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy for 15-24</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arab countries combined have managed to reduce the rates of illiteracy among the over 15 population and among the 15 to 24 year old population during the 1990s.1

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy for women 15-24</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy for women over 15</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Improvement of literacy for women 15-24 years of age in all Arab countries except for Djibouti, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen.2 Improvement in literacy levels for women has been steady throughout the past two decades.3

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1 Eradication of Illiteracy and Adult Education: An Integral Part of EFA National Plans, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2002
2 Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001
Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>W/M</th>
<th>W/M</th>
<th>W/M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.89</td>
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<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.87</td>
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<td>Libya</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.74</td>
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<td>32.9</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>0.52</td>
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<td>52.7</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>57.7</td>
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<td>61.9</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.53</td>
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<td>Oman</td>
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<td>76.9</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>74.6</td>
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<td>80.4</td>
<td>0.57</td>
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<td>0.77</td>
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<td>Qatar</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
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UNESCO figures [www.unesco.org/uis/ev](http://www.unesco.org/uis/ev) Statistical tables

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3 Eradication of Illiteracy and Adult Education: An Integral Part of EFA National Plans, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2002
Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>POPULATION 15 &amp; OVER</th>
<th>ILLITERACY RATE (%)</th>
<th>POPULATION AGED 15-24</th>
<th>ILLITERACY RATE (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>YEMEN</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>53.6</td>
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<td>74.7</td>
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</table>

UNESCO Institute for Statistics

To say that literacy is the pressing issue on the adult education agenda for the Arab region would be an understatement. If we consider that the Arab region has entered the twenty-first century burdened with over 70 million illiterates out of a population of 280 million, and that there are approximately 10 million out-of-school children who will, in no time at all, swell the ranks of the illiterate in the region, then we know we are talking about a catastrophe in the making. Literacy rates vary widely in the region from country to country ranging from 5.5 per cent in Jordan to over 55 per cent in Mauritania.

At the governmental, organizational and social levels, there is great awareness of the seriousness of the situation. Efforts to deal with it predate CONFINTEA V and most of the previous conferences on education and adult learning. But although much has been done to reduce illiteracy, results have been mixed.

In reducing illiteracy the region has made great strides and much progress over the past 20 years. National councils and commissions, and regional committees have been set up to draw up strategies and action plans, to oversee, supervise and coordinate implementation, and to monitor activities and evaluate results. Combating illiteracy is considered a national responsibility in every country, which requires the coordinated efforts of all sectors: governmental and non-governmental, public and private.

According to a study conducted by UNESCO Beirut, published in 2001, these efforts have contributed greatly to reducing the levels of illiteracy since 1990 in the region as a whole from 48.7% in 1990 to 38.5% in 2000.

* All statistical data used is from the EFA 2000 Assessment, unless otherwise indicated.
* Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001
As for illiteracy reduction among women 15 to 24 in 17 Arab countries the numbers are as follows: from 44.9% in 1980 to 29.9% in 1990 to 19.4% in 2000\(^5\). Also the special attention given to reducing women’s illiteracy levels has paid off in girls and women above the age of 15 in 18 Arab countries as follows: from 64.9% in 1980 to 51.9% in 1990 to 40.2% in 2000\(^6\).

There have also been some very impressive results recorded among women 15 to 24 in 9 Arab countries where illiteracy has been reduced to less that 10%. Notable among these have been Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon and Qatar. With the exception of Djibouti and Mauritania, there have been significant advancements made in combating illiteracy in all other Arab countries.

In many areas and in certain pockets there have been success stories of varying degrees. In Lebanon and Kuwait, for example, two countries that are, in relative terms, at either end of the economic spectrum, the enrolment rate in early childhood education programmes stands at 74.5 and 98\(^7\) percent respectively. This is already showing positive results in the rates of academic attainment on the part of students and retention of students in schools and consequently on literacy rates.

### Internal and External Problems Hindering Literacy Development in the Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Problems</th>
<th>External Problems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deteriorating economic situation in post-war, post-conflict countries</td>
<td>Relentless wars, armed conflicts, and the continuous threat of war</td>
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<tr>
<td>Absence of political will</td>
<td>Global political unrest affecting the region specifically</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of adequate financing for education</td>
<td>Rapid technological advances resulting in difficulties in catching up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Lack of international cooperation in the area of education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rapid population increase in some countries unmatched by economic progress</td>
<td>Global economic slow down</td>
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<td>High rate of school drop outs particularly among young men in some countries</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of measurable goals and achievable strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of evaluation mechanisms</td>
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<td>Lack of reliable statistical data, research and documentation</td>
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<td>Weakness of government-run, public education system</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional and cultural barriers to women’s education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Weakness of early childhood education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^5\) Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001
\(^6\) Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001
\(^7\) Arab Regional Conference on Educations for All, EFA 2000 Assessment
Literacy in the Arab States: Country by Country

Although adult education has always been important in the region, particularly where literacy is concerned, a new realization regarding adult education emerged after Hamburg. The best way to ensure support, sufficient financial and human resources, is to set government policies dealing with the development of new curricula, the delivery of programmes, and cooperation between ministries, government departments and civil society and non-governmental organizations. Following are some examples of the countries that have set policies of this nature and have been implementing them.

Algeria

In Algeria, collaboration between civil society organizations and the government has resulted in using the financial and human resources available to government combined with the expertise and know-how of the organizations to:

- Draw up a long term strategy for adult literacy which concentrates on quality education, relevant educational materials, professional teacher training and the improvement of learning conditions and the learning environment.
- Activities include lectures of education and the teaching of adults open to the public, public awareness campaigns
- Fundraising activities aimed at providing quality materials to literacy centers.

Literacy rates for women and men in Algeria stood 51 and 75 percent respectively in 1999-2000, multi-lateral efforts that have included government ministries and agencies, non-governmental and community organizations and international funding partners have been implementing successful literacy programmes.

**Box 2**

Successes worth noting in Algeria

One such successful programme is being run by the Centre National d’Alphabetisation, which has integrated health education, environmental education, agricultural know how, economics, social values and life skills into adult literacy, using audio-visual materials, and sometimes computers. The programmes have been primarily directed at women and have included vocational training aimed at both income generation and the preservation of traditional crafts and products. These include pottery, knitting, leatherwork, weaving, silkworm breeding and silk work and horticulture.  

Another successful literacy programme in Algeria is run by Iqraa’ and Association National de Planification Familial, with support from the ministries of education and social affairs. It is described by the Association National as follows: “the aim of this project is to achieve an appreciable increase in the literacy rate of families in rural areas, and of women and girls in particular”.

Although it has been described as successful in meeting its targets through the use of radio and television as well as especially designed textbooks and workbooks, there is no data to explain the words “appreciable increase” in measurable terms.

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8 The National Bureau for Eradication of Illiteracy and Adult Education, A Brief Description of Programmes (Arabic Leaflet)
9 The National Bureau for Eradication of Illiteracy and Adult Education, A Brief Description of Programmes (Arabic Leaflet)
Box 3

Example of Good Practice/NGO Self-portrait: Iqraa’

Iqraa’, an internationally recognized accredited and award winning organization in Algeria, provided the following brief on literacy and adult education activities in that country.

Algeria has had adult education as priority for the government since its independence in 1962. It was enshrined as a right in the Constitution when 85% of the population was illiterate, and was reinforced by presidential decree in 1976 through a nine-year plan, with the establishment of the National Center for Literacy and Adult Education.

CONFINTEA V in Hamburg in 1997 resulted in new presidential decision to transform the National Center into the National Council for Literacy and Adult Education under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education, with the following objectives:

- To encourage civil society participation in all illiteracy eradication activities.
- To draw up a new national strategy for literacy and adult education.
- To implement the government’s strategy
- To mobilize all efforts at the national level to in the battle against illiteracy.

Its responsibilities included the using of all possible means and resources to combat illiteracy; conducting studies and research on illiteracy and illiteracy eradication; raising awareness at all levels about the importance of literacy; guaranteeing the right of illiterate people to non-formal education; providing the necessary materials for national literacy activities; training literacy teachers; raising funds from all possible sources for the national activities.

Adult education priorities for Algeria at the national level and in all areas of the country are literacy, basic education, lifelong learning, women’s education and are centered around the following population groups: people living in rural and remote areas; people with disabilities; prisoners, the poor and particularly women, and cover issues such as environmental and health education, life skills, human rights and citizenship education.

The leading adult education and literacy organization in the country Iqraa’ established centers across the country to absorb the school dropouts and youth under 16 years of age. The programmes offered are meant to help them catch up with the formal education programme in order to re-integrate them into the system. Teachers for these programmes are generally unemployed university graduates with degrees in such disciplines as psychology, sociology, and other humanity disciplines, who then trained by Iqraa’.

In order to motivate women to join the literacy and adult education classes, courses such as embroidery, weaving, painting on silk, sewing and hairdressing are offered along with literacy and life skills. These motivators have been particularly effective in drawing women from rural and remote areas. Additionally, they are given certificates at the end of each course, which provide a sense of accomplishment. Still there are man obstacles to these programmes include bureaucratic and administrative difficulties involved in opening new centers; the lack of sufficient financial resources; a shortage of books and educational materials; and the lack of adequate human resources since most of these efforts depend on volunteers.
After the Hamburg Conference in 1997, the association Iqraa’ drew up a new strategy for the advancement and inclusion of women, particularly those living in remote areas which entailed setting up literacy and adult education centers exclusively for women.

The first center was launched in 2000 and has been welcoming more 500 women a year. The second was opened on International Literacy Day (8 September) in 2002 in a province that had been devastated by communal violence for more than a decade. Another center is currently being set in another province that has been undergoing the same devastation. Iqraa’ is now preparing to produce appropriate literacy and adult education materials to be used by the women attending those centers. The materials will focus on such issues as poverty alleviation, community participation, sustainable development, resolution of violent conflict, and prevention of infectious and communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Iqraa’ conducts periodic evaluation of its programmes through the annual testing of learners, evaluation of the books and teaching methods used in collaboration with the National Center for Planning and Analysis, and through learner evaluation of the literacy programmes they have undergone.

Bahrain

In Bahrain the Ministry of Education put together a plan for illiteracy eradication targeting the over 10 years of age. The purpose, in addition to eradicating illiteracy, is to provide them with the skills necessary for personal and professional development, including human and citizenship rights education.

A system of incentives and rewards has been put in place whereby no government jobs can be obtained without a certificate proving the completion of this course, or a signed agreement to enroll in it.

The Gulf countries have a combined literacy level of 84.3 per cent, with male literacy at 89 per cent and female literacy at 79.4. Qatar and Bahrain boast the highest literacy rates in the region with 89 and 84 per cent respectively, with male and female literacy almost on par. These figures, however, represent only the literacy rates for Qatari and Bahraini nationals. There are no figures for the over 50% of the population who are foreign workers.

Additionally, part of the plan’s orientation is the development of an integrated educational system for adults that combines formal and non-formal educational curricula. This measure is aimed at enhancing the quality and relevance of adult education programmes and more closely linking them to social and economic development needs.

The Government of Bahrain, through the Ministry of Education, is also directing its efforts towards women by facilitating their enrolment in flexible programmes offered in the afternoons and evenings for those who cannot attend daytime classes. This measure was instrumental in curbing the numbers of women dropping out of literacy courses. Additional conveniences for women include supervised childcare facilities within literacy centers. The number of centers offering this facility reached 19 by 2000. Health, nutrition, family life skills, child care

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10 Education and Training in Bahrain, Study, Gulf Global Economic Consultancy, December, 2000
11 Eradication of Illiteracy and Adult Education: An Integral Part of National EFA Plans, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2002
awareness programmes are also part of literacy curricula for women, and are designed with the help and collaboration of women’s associations. Instructors in these programmes are usually university graduates who have undergone literacy training.

**Egypt**

In Egypt where illiteracy rates, particularly among women and rural inhabitants call for immediate action, laws have been enacted since the early 1990s to mobilize state and civil society efforts by launching the National Campaign for Literacy and Adult Education.

The National Plan for Literacy targets illiterate youth and young adults aged 15 to 35. As of 1999 the number of illiterates in this age group was 57.2%, of those 3.8 million were enrolled in literacy programmes. However, all those above the age of 35 are given a choice to join literacy programmes in order to be able to absorb the more deprived members of society into the programmes, such as women, the poor, inhabitants of rural and remote areas.

According to the government statistics, illiteracy rates were reduced by 10.8 per cent in 10 years (1986-1996) bringing the percentage to 38.6. There has been a further reduction to 34.2 percent by 1999-2000.

One of the reasons for such success has been attributed to the fact that the policies adopted on illiteracy eradication were part of a comprehensive package of policies and procedures aimed at far-reaching economic and social reform. Another important factor in the reduction of illiteracy rates among children and youth has been the expansion of access to education.

The General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education developed two consecutive plans for illiteracy eradication, 1997-1998 and 2000-2001, targeting specific age groups in specific governorates with the greatest number of illiterate populations.

The national literacy curriculum developed by the Authority includes, life skills, human rights, national unity and forgiveness, rejecting extremism and violence, and respecting the other. This new curriculum, developed as part of the 2001-2002 national literacy plan, includes the use of new technologies, and employs, as part of its methodology, discussion groups on the above-mentioned topics and free, guided conversation.

The Egyptian post-literacy efforts have been included adding classes for the newly literate that cover the formal basic education curriculum in a more simplified manner. 10,000 individuals graduated from these classes between 1993 and 1997, and the number has increased to 190,000 between 1997 and 2002.

During this period also, after 1997, a number of centers were opened in both rural and urban areas for the post-literacy population for vocational, skills and micro-enterprise training. In that time also, the General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education published 46 books on a variety of subjects (16 of which were produced in collaboration with UNESCO), and opened 100 lending libraries in a number of regions.

Adult education programmes in Egypt have been aimed at delivering basic education derived from the formal educational system in addition to vocational and skills training, as well as help in setting up micro income generating enterprises.

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A paper presented at the Regional Workshop on Adult Education, Cairo

12. Literacy and Non-formal Education in the E-9 Countries, UNESCO, 2001
Since 1999 special post-literacy materials have been produced as well as a special daily newspaper entitled “Enlightenment” (Tanweer)\textsuperscript{13} which is distributed free of charge to the newly literate.

The 1992 law stipulating the establishment of the General Association for Literacy and Adult Education, granting it responsibility for planning, executing, implementing and coordinating educational activities in the country, represents the highest political involvement in tackling the problems of illiteracy in Egypt.

The General Association for Literacy and Adult Education has developed an innovative approach described as “free and voluntary contractual agreement for literacy”\textsuperscript{14}. The Association recruits teachers, educators, university students and vocational college graduates, and religious leaders to contribute to literacy eradication within their own communities. The Association identifies the needs and classifies the populations by age, profession and learning needs, offers books, stationery and teaching aids free of charge, and conducts testing every six months. It grants certificates of completion to successful learners and symbolic remuneration to the volunteers at the end of each six-month session.

This method has proven successful and worth repeating in more communities. However, Egypt’s large illiterate population and its huge and growing population, require a diversity of approaches, methods and techniques. Some of these include the creation of large literacy awareness cadres to visit remote densely populated areas to persuade people of the importance of literacy and invite them to join literacy classes, as well as offer health and nutrition awareness.

Another approach has been to invite well-to-do, highly respected business people to contribute to literacy eradication in their villages. Taking advantage of their social standing within the community, these people are being asked to contribute towards the building of community centers that would offer literacy classes, vocational training, cultural activities, health education, and sports facilities\textsuperscript{15}.

Radio and television are also being used in illiteracy eradication efforts. These televised and broadcast literacy lessons are offered at different times during the day and cover the majority of Egypt’s governorates. An agreement with NileSat, the Egyptian satellite channel, has been made at starting illiteracy eradication programmes via satellite.

In an effort to encourage lifelong and self-directed learning, the Association is distributing, free of charge, taped literacy courses and guidebooks.

Literacy classes have also been started in prisons, in community clinics, in women’s organizations, in mosques and churches, in youth and sports centers with flexible times and encouraging incentives. Hundreds of young people have been trained to offer literacy, and health professionals, such as nurses and midwives in villages have also been recruited to contribute to these efforts\textsuperscript{16}.

One new and, so far successful, experiment has been the recruiting of young female university graduates in small villages to provide literacy for women in their own homes. The General Association provides the materials and pays for the conversion of a room into an appropriate classroom. This has been successful in providing women and young girls who are not allowed to go to literacy classes the facility of gaining those skills in neighbouring homes. It has been

\textsuperscript{13} Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001
\textsuperscript{14} Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001
\textsuperscript{15} Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001
\textsuperscript{16} Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001
found that this method has not only encouraged more women to attend literacy classes, but also to continue beyond basic literacy and go on to seek more advanced education.

Box 4

**Example of Good Practice/Institute Self-Portrait: Ain Shams University, Adult Education Center**

The Egyptian National Plan for Adult Education and Literacy in Egypt sets as its priority the eradication of illiteracy among 100% of adults between the ages of 14 and 35 and the eradication of illiteracy among 20% of the adults between the ages of 35 and 60, according to the Adult Education Center at Ain Shams University in Cairo. In terms of priority population groups, the Egyptians have accorded top priority to the most vulnerable in society with special focus on all aspects of women’s advancement including women’s literacy.

Most literacy and adult education teachers and trainers are unemployed university graduates who undergo training in literacy funded by the Social Fund, which also funds literacy classes. An extensive media campaign and the involvement and cooperation of rural community and religious leaders, female health professionals, political figures and distinguished personalities have served to enhance the awareness of importance of literacy and increase participation in literacy classes.

In most cases literacy is linked to professional or skills training and followed up by extensive post literacy in keeping with the philosophy of lifelong learning. Some post-literacy courses consist of English language instruction and computer training for the high achievers in literacy classes.

As mentioned previously in the section on Egypt, self-directed learning is encouraged through radio, television, taped lessons, guidebooks and workbooks. Additionally, according to Ain Shams University, there has been active participation by the armed forces and the police force in the “battle” against illiteracy, whereby members of these two institutions have been recruited and trained to deliver literacy courses to men in some remote areas. The Ain Shams source also mentions the one-room rural schools as examples of methods that have shown remarkable results. However, there are no statistical information and analysis of results available. The Ain Shams source also asserts that there are a number of literacy programmes being implemented in women’s prisons, however, no information has been found to support this claim.

One of the main influences that CONFINTEA V (Hamburg 1997) has had on the adult education scene in Egypt has been the increased awareness of the role of non-governmental and civil society organization in raising awareness and helping implement literacy programmes, according to the Adult Education Center in Ain Shams University. As a result the General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education has been increasing its cooperation with these organizations in a number of areas, namely teacher training, opening new centers in rural areas, and follow up and post-literacy programmes.

Moreover, there are two programmes designed and funded by the General Authority and implemented by civil society organizations. The first entitled “I learn, I am enlightened” is being carried out by 70% of the civil society organizations, and the second entitled “learn to become liberated”, being carried out by 50% of the organizations. Two other programme, entitled “the new teacher” and “education is light”.

Some of the improvement that have been made to adult education programmes have been attributed to CONFINTEA V and the raised awareness it has engendered. In addition to furthering and deepening the cooperation between government and civil society, and resulting in the establishment of the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education, there has been a move toward developing more scientific approach to literacy in terms of research and an attempt to tailor programmes to the economic, social and demographic needs. There has also been a

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marked improvement in teacher training for adult literacy and in the development of new specialized curricula and the production of special books.

In terms of priority areas in adult education, Ain Shams emphasizes environmental and health education through their literacy programmes and citizenship education. Although they acknowledge that human rights and life skills education are listed among their priorities, they admit that not much has been done on the practical level in these two areas.

A number of motivators are used to encourage people to join literacy programmes, these include symbolic financial remuneration and offering the products of craft classes, as well as the granting of a certificate at the end of the course. The barriers that prevent people from joining literacy classes are of a social, economic, cultural nature, as well as impediments resulting from the programmes themselves and those that have to do specifically with women.

- Economic barriers: most illiterate adults work in jobs that do not require them to read or write and therefore see no need to learn; the connection between poverty and literacy is not a clear one for them.
- Social barriers: self-consciousness about being an adult learners, the conviction that education is useless which is reinforced by an environment where the written word is not necessary to daily life.
- Programme issues: literacy programmes often fail to meet the immediate needs of learners; the lack of qualified, trained educators and trainers; the shortcomings of the basic education system which produces illiterates and put them off learning; the lack of incentives for learning.
- Women’s barriers: the wide economic and social gap between women and men; the limits imposed on women’s role in society exemplified in bearing and rearing children; women’s ignorance of their rights.

As far as evaluation goes it has so far been restricted to testing learners.

Jordan

In Jordan the government’s strategy is to tackle even the smallest pockets of illiteracy in Kingdom. Their target is to reduce illiteracy from the 10.5% rate of 2000 for the over 15 population to 5% by 2010. Therefore, the official policy is that there is no group too small to merit educational services. In order to ensure meeting their target the Jordanian Ministry of Education will establish literacy and adult education centers in any community that has 10 or more adult learners.

Illiteracy in Jordan today stands at less than 11% with the largest concentration among women in the over 55 population, the illiteracy rate is on the decline. These successes are attributed to a committed political will at the highest levels, and across a wide social spectrum, to the eradication of illiteracy using all the means available.

Investment in education and the strong political will to back it, have paid off well in Jordan. Between 1960 and 2000, pro-education government policies raised the literacy rate from 33 to 95 per cent for men and 85.4 per cent women. Although there remains a gender gap, policies and programmes have been put in place to close the gap by the year 2010. Additionally, Jordan remains committed to the complete eradication of illiteracy and is working through national literacy programmes focusing in particular on women and rural areas.

Evening classes, home study programmes and summer courses have been organized to provide post-literacy or continuing education for the newly literate. In 2000 these programmes were being run through a collaborative relationship between the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and a number of NGOs and civil society organizations. These programmes are characterized by their flexibility and their ability to respond to the life and professional needs of learners.
Kuwait

Kuwait also has one of the highest literacy rates in the Arab world at 74%. This is primarily due to the fact that all education, including formal and non-formal education, is free\(^\text{18}\). However, access to these programmes does not extend to the large contingent of foreign workers in that country.

Lebanon

In Lebanon, the Ministry of Social Affairs which has responsibility for adult education, along with the Council for Reconstruction and Development, developed a comprehensive three year plan (2000-2003) for illiteracy eradication, which will come under review and evaluation early in 2004.

The plan includes:
- Developing and strengthening the capacity of civil society and non-governmental organizations already working in adult education and literacy, in order to increase their effectiveness and allow them a greater role in illiteracy eradication.
- Articulating and developing a national educational programme for adults
- Developing new educational materials for illiterate people, which would help them in conducting their daily lives.
- Developing a proposal for the production of new books that would include exercises dealing with daily, practical, useable life skills.
- A plan for better and more effective coordination between the Ministry and other concerned organization and ministries.

\(^{18}\) Economic Development Board, website http://www.biz.bahrainedb.com/News/
posted December 2000
Example of Good Practice/NGO Self-Portrait: ALPHA (Association for Human Development and Literacy)

The aim of the Association is to tie education to human development issues. It works through a comprehensive national plan drawn by the National Committee for Illiteracy Eradication, and through cooperation and collaboration with a number of NGO working in adult education to cover targeted population across the Lebanese territories.

ALPHA asserts that the Hamburg conference provided the impetus, strengthened the momentum of literacy work, and widened the scope of understanding of adult education issues. This was manifested through the change that some literacy organization underwent in blending literacy into their overall human development strategies, and the Lebanese government’s setting up of the National Committee for Illiteracy Eradication. However, according to ALPHA, the national plan for illiteracy eradication has so far remained ink on paper; it has neither been activated nor is it a government priority.

The Committee was given the overall responsibility of activating literacy and adult education programmes run by the Ministry of Social Affairs. It is also responsible for the training of literacy practitioners, monitoring and following up on literacy activities. It is currently in the process of producing new literacy materials and books for all three levels. Although part of its responsibilities is to coordinate work with NGOs and civil society organizations working in literacy and to help them in programme implementation, so far the only cooperation has been in the area of training.

ALPHA priorities change according to the educational needs in each of the areas or communities they work in. Programmes may be restricted to literacy in some areas, while they may concentrate on computer literacy and information technology in another, or to applying the basic education programme in yet another depending on need. However, the education of women is a priority that cuts across all their work. All programmes include life skills, environmental and health education, as well as human rights education to a certain extent and children’s rights education to a much greater extent.

ALPHA has produced a book, entitled “learn life” targeting illiterate and out of school youth in cooperation with UNICEF and the National Committee. ALPHA, along with the National Committee, is currently training teachers across Lebanon on three basic literacy programmes.

According to ALPHA the only means at their disposal to motivate people to join literacy classes are intellectual motivators, i.e. raising people’s awareness of the importance and benefits of learning.

Some of the drawbacks and failures, according to ALPHA, can be attributed to the lack of proper follow up and the lack of accountability when programmes go undelivered, as well as the weakness of political will in supporting literacy and adult education programmes and lack of financial resources. However, there has been effective collaboration among a number of NGOs working in education based on tying adult education programmes to the goals of Education for All and other priority human development goals. This has resulted in new programmes targeting a range of age groups, and the production of appropriate teaching and learning materials.

Monitoring and evaluation of programmes is basically done through periodic and regular assessment visits to all programmes and regular training of teachers on the principles and concepts of adult learning. Another tool of evaluation is through questionnaires distributed to teachers, field workers, and the educational experts supervising the programmes.
Example of Good Practice/Project Self-Portrait: UNILIT: Capitalizing on the Contributions of Higher Education

UNILIT

UNILIT stands for UNIversity Students for LIteracy. The idea for the project originated at the Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education in March 1998, when UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States (based in Beirut), announced the launching of the project in the Arab states, as a joint project between the Literacy programme and the Higher Education Programme. The concept of “each one teach one” requires that each university student lift at least one person per year out of illiteracy. The hope is that by the time that student has graduated, he or she would have contributed to eradicating the illiteracy of at least four individuals.

It is an attempt to join literacy programmes and higher education institutions in an effort to combat illiteracy and one way in which higher education can become a partner in the development of society. UNILIT allows higher education to descend from its ivory tower and take to the streets where the needs are greatest and the contributions can make a difference. In creating the university-community partnership, UNILIT allows universities to extend their commitment to educating the countries human capital in the service development, and to providing educational services at different (non-traditional) levels of learning.

UNILIT aims at bridging the gap between privileged young adults and those who have not had a chance to attain an education. The UNILIT project is still in its infancy and there is as yet not enough data available to judge its success or failure. However, there have been some indications that it is potentially a powerful tool in the fight against illiteracy if it is used effectively.

How UNILIT Works

The UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education set the vision, mission, objectives and basic mechanisms for UNILIT, and established contacts with one university in each of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Yemen, Morocco and Sudan to establish UNILIT as a pilot project in these institutions. Each university would have its own approach and its own conditions. For example, Balamand University in Lebanon designed a UNILIT programme that includes literacy through the teaching of basic health and hygiene because it is being piloted through the Department of Public Health.

The mission of UNILIT is to assist in the national efforts against illiteracy being undertaken by the countries mentioned above. It also aims at sensitizing the academic community and raising its awareness of the problem of illiteracy. The steering committee, made up of UNESCO experts and staff, and academicians from the universities, has the responsibility of overseeing the project and producing literacy materials combined with awareness raising and life skills issues. They also facilitate the coordination between the various partners and evaluate the project on an ongoing basis.

UNILIT uses university students as tutors for illiterate individuals aged 10 and above. The students recruited are trained in basic literacy, health, environment and other development related issues. They would also need to have a demonstrated ability to identify underlying social problems in their communities. Teaching an illiterate person would contribute to the development of the students' personal awareness, commitment, and capacity to cope at the professional levels, with some of the major social issues facing humankind such as illiteracy, poverty, population, public health and social participation. The training sessions include field visits to the local communities they will be working in. The objective is that by the end of the tutoring the target groups would have gained basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills and basic knowledge of health, environment and other issues relevant to them.

UNESCO has offered each of the universities the modest sum as seed funding to be used in forging the needed partnerships between the university departments, ministries of education and non-governmental organizations. Students are offered one free academic credit for every 40 hours of tutoring they provide.
Students recruited, however, need to be motivated by more than just the chance to earn free credits. They have to be interested in social and community work, concerned with helping people, enthusiastic about gaining new experiences beyond the scope of their university and every day life.

Early evaluation of the project has revealed its potential for being a successful tool in eradicating illiteracy, fostering cooperation between various social actors, civil, community and non-governmental organization, higher education institutions and grassroots communities.

**Box 7**

**UNILIT Personal Testimonies**

“First I didn’t feel involved because I had no experience in social work. But then I started to feel so happy. I was giving something of my heart. I was reaching out to people.” Rabih Jamaledine, a hotel management student at Balamand University in Lebanon was amazed by the word he discovered when he joined the UNILIT programme.

Samer Annous, UNILIT Field co-ordinator at Balamand University, adds that the programme promotes social cohesion. “Rich and poor people mix and even people of different religious and cultural backgrounds come together in the programme,” he says.

Dr. Ramzi Salameh, co-responsible, along with Dr. Nour Dajani, for the UNILIT Project at UNESCO Beirut says, “It is not the students who are difficult to mobilize but the university managers. Our main problem is that the initiative has not become an institutionalized part of the universities. When a dean leaves the faculty the programme tends to disappear as well.”

**Libya**

Home schooling and family education in Libya were used as effective means to provide basic education to out-of-school children and literacy to their parents. One of the main challenges in Libya is the scattered population in vast desert areas. It was therefore found that the use of radio and television were the most effective means of reaching these populations. The programme was a concerted cooperative effort by the ministries of education, culture, information, social affairs, health, and agriculture, as well as the collaboration of civil and international organizations. By 2000 there were 28,435 individuals registered in the home schooling programme and being monitored by education experts. The programme was deemed successful and is being continued with the same degree collaboration and attention.

Another important initiative undertaken by the Libyan government has been referred to as the “free collaborative education and training programme”, which incorporates the goals of Education for All and non-formal, self-directed adult education with a focus on life-long learning. The aim of the programme is to support and shore up basic education and illiteracy eradication targets in the country. It entails forming educational collectives in which learners chose the skills and knowledge they deem necessary to help them live productive lives. This programme was started in the early 1990s, however, there is very little information as to the degree of its success and the results it has garnered to this date.

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20 The Education of Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO, 2000
Mauritania

According to the national report presented by the Mauritanian Ministry of Education representative at the Hammamat meeting, much progress has been made in reducing illiteracy among women and men in urban areas. The latest statistics issued by the government of Mauritania in 2002, clearly illustrate the wide discrepancy between urban and rural literacy for both genders. Literacy for men in urban areas stands at 82.8% while rural men’s literacy stands at 52.4%. The same is true of women, who enjoy a literacy rate of 71.7% and 41.2% in urban and rural areas respectively. In this context, Mauritania is working on raising awareness of the importance of education and literacy among rural communities. One of the main difficulties it is facing, according to the national report, is the lack of support, both in terms of financial resources and expertise from regional and international organizations with the exception of the World Bank.

Morocco

In Morocco, where roughly 50% of the population is illiterate, the government has been collaborating with both the private sector and NGOs with the target of reducing the illiteracy rate of the 16 and above population by half by the year 2010. The government of Morocco has also signed a Learning and Innovation Loan agreement with the World Bank aimed at supporting the NGO literacy initiatives which have had, according to the world Bank, the highest levels of enrollment and which target the most marginalized groups in society such as the poor and women in rural area.

Box 8

Gender Trends of Illiteracy in Morocco

In Morocco, a direct literacy assessment module was designed and integrated into the National Survey on Household Living Standards, sponsored by the World Bank. The main objectives of this survey were to examine in greater detail the range and variability of literacy skills and knowledge among individuals, and especially among women. The literacy survey consisted of nine sections, including self-report questions on literacy skills and behaviors, questions on basic healthcare behaviors, assessment of information location skills, mental and written numeracy assessments, and assessments of reading and writing in Arabic. A national stratified sample of 2240 participants received the survey. The most significant finding was that Morocco has cut its illiteracy rate by one-half during the past three decades, and the trend is one of continuing improvement. However, the disparities in literacy attainment between men and women (as well as between urban and rural populations) remain a major issue.

Surprisingly, the gender gap in literacy among the present younger generation is even larger than that of their grand-parents or even parents. Whether this is the result of selective out-migration of literate individuals from the countryside to the towns, or of insufficient educational access and quality in rural areas, is a question with profound policy implications, and requires further investigation. It clearly shows that males have received more education than females during this time period. Results of the study suggest that part of the explanation for high levels of illiteracy in rural areas is the relative frequency of households in which both parents are illiterate, while in the urban areas men are more likely to marry a woman who has some literacy skills. The evidence indicates that completely illiterate households are by far more likely to raise illiterate children, while maternal literacy positively affects both boys’ and girls’ enrollment and attainment. Adapted from: Lavy, et al. (1995).

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21 http://www-sop.inria.fr/rodeo/boudani/morocco.html (Welcome to Morocco, Official Site)
22 World Bank Media Center: Promoting Adult Literacy http://web.worldbank.org/NEWS
23 www.unesco.org /wef/en-leadup/findings_literacy (adapted from Lavy, 1995)
Oman

The magnitude of the problem of illiteracy in the region often blinds us to the success stories where countries are succeeding against great odds to, not only reduce the illiterate people, but are also adopting and implementing strategies to improve and modernize education as a whole, and involving government and social sectors in doing so. Oman is one such country.

In Oman the concentration since 1999 has been on closing the literacy gender gap and the geographic disparities. In the area of girls’ and women’s education, where customs and traditions form one of the main barriers, the inclusion of such topics as health, nutrition, family education, life skills, child care and motherhood, have been successful in changing popular attitudes and have secured public acceptance for literacy and education for girls and women. Additionally, graduates from literacy programmes are awarded 30 books each, dealing with health, civic education, environment, agriculture, history and heritage and other relevant subjects that will allow them to continue learning.

Moreover, in an effort to raise the status and professional level of literacy education in Oman, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with Sultan Qabous University and other civil and education organizations, have developed a comprehensive, specialized training programme for literacy instructors, on the one hand, and a programme of revising, re-writing, adapting and developing books, literacy materials and teaching methods.

The collaboration between the government, higher education and civil society has been considered one of the many contributing factors to the success of the project.

Box 9

Oman: A Success Story

The experience of Oman illustrates not only one of the reasons for the high percentage of illiteracy in the region, but also serves as a case study on ways of overcoming it. It must be noted that, considering the level at which Oman had started the progress made has been quite impressive.

Oman began building its entire educational system, as well as its civil social structures, in the early 1970s. Therefore, despite the fact that the country lags behind in many aspects, it has come a long way. In 1975 the Government of Oman drew up successive five-year-plans for formal education, which included building schools, importing teachers and skilled education personnel from other Arab countries and developing a curriculum. Aiming at a homogenous educational system in a distinctly non-homogenous tribal society of ethnic minorities and large non-urban populations was one of the greatest challenges. The educational system also aimed at educating women (unheard of before 1970), modernizing society, addressing technological challenges, providing professional skills for exploiting the country’s natural resources, and achieving national unity.

The Omani educational strategy to achieve literacy was firmly based in the principles of lifelong learning, and was considered a priority for achieving social and economic development. Therefore, literacy activities involved, and still does to this date, a wide range of actors, namely: the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Information (education via mass media was started in 1980), the Omani Women’s Association. It also represented one of the major examples of regional cooperation, in that the Omani government sought help in training, curriculum development, and administration from Egypt, Bahrain, Sudan and Saudi Arabia.

Since 1970, Oman has gone from a less than 20% literacy rate country-wide to close to 70%, and is steadily narrowing the gender gap. Literacy centers remain the main training facilities for combating illiteracy. They have flexible timetables and scheduling, and provide either gender segregated classes or co-educational ones depending on the students’ preference. Courses typically

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24 Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001

25 http://www.literacyexchange.net/oman
last for two years and cover reading, writing, mathematics, Islamic studies, general education, and family skills offered to women only. General education includes geography, history, national matters, simple sciences, and environmental education. Family skills courses include such subjects as maternal health, hygiene, nutrition, early childcare, family health, dressmaking and running a household.

Although women’s attendance at these classes remains high, recently men have begun to drop out and lose interest in literacy. A national commission has been set up to investigate the reasons and deal with the problems.

Palestinian Territories

In Palestine, according to a brief submitted to UNESCO Beirut by the Palestinian National Authority, there is no national programme specific to adult education as yet, although there is a National Illiteracy Reduction programme. However, adult education is an integral part of the Palestine Education for All National Plan. Policies concerning adult education have not been unified or centralized under one authority or body, but are part of the Ministry of Education and Higher Learning’s priorities.

Additionally, the adult education programme in Palestine dates its inception to the Hamburg conference. Before 1997 there were very few adult education efforts apart from literacy, which was handled by civil society and non-governmental education. The development of specific programmes and curricula for adult learners was started in 1999. After Hamburg the Ministry of Education and Higher Learning attempted to incorporate all the 10 theme areas into adult education planning and curriculum development.

Adult Education in Palestine is seen as social responsibility and the need to collaborative action is considered of utmost importance. It is currently dealt with by, in addition to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with labour unions, universities and women’s organizations.

Priorities in adult education in Palestine include reduction of illiteracy, dealing with school drop outs, providing skills and vocational training to workers, upgrading the skills and knowledge of university graduates and professionals in keeping with the changing labour market, empowering women through life skills and rights education.

The National Illiteracy Reduction Programme priorities include basic education, literacy, women’s education, and information technology for adults and targets refugees, people with special needs, people in rural areas. Depending on the needs of the targeted groups other issues are added to the curriculum, such as environmental education, health education, life skills, and citizenship education.

As for youth and school dropouts, (15-18), programmes include, in addition to literacy where needed, basic education and life skills. The curriculum and books have been prepared and the teachers have been trained and implementation is expected to begin in September 2003, the situation permitting.

Teacher training for adult education and literacy includes topics such as the psychology of adult learners, communications skills, using information technology and measuring and evaluating of learners achievements, the curriculum, teaching methods. Teachers receive a stipend or honorarium but no salary.

28 Oman Information Center, http://www.omaninfo.com
Generally speaking, monitoring and evaluations takes place through visits to the centers, the monthly reports sent by center administrators to the Ministry, regular phone contact between the Ministry and centers to keep abreast of the developments and needs. Additionally, both teachers and learners are given questionnaires to evaluate the teaching and learning process and make suggestions for improvements.

However, there remains one major hurdle to improving and developing adult education and education as a whole in the Palestinian territories, and that is the unstable political and often explosive military situation, which has resulted in school and road closures, curfews and the threat of danger.

**Saudi Arabia**

The government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has set a number of policies and strategies for adult education both in accordance with international trends and to meet national priorities; hence the emphasis on women’s education and literacy for the 15 years and over population. Post-CONFINTEA, Saudi Arabia began to encourage civil society, charitable organizations to play a more prominent role in those two areas; while at the same time encouraging the private sector to play an active role in professional skills training and upgrading.

The National Literacy Programme of Saudi Arabia is estimated to reach 102,411 people a year of the over 15 population. Part of this Programme is a ten-year plan in which implementation began early in 2003. The plan targets primarily the 10-45 age group, while also trying to reach older adults and ensuring that all those under 10 years of age are enrolled in school. The ultimate goal of the ten-year plan is to make the Kingdom virtually illiteracy-free by 2013—which coincides with the United Nations Literacy Decade. The strategy specifies the right to literacy for all those living on Saudi soil.

The Saudi strategy is based on targeting illiterate populations per geographical area, starting with a study of the area, its illiterate population, their gender, their literacy needs and ways of responding to them.

Parallel, equivalency programmes for literacy programme graduates and for school dropouts are offered in night schools throughout Saudi Arabia. These programmes aim at integrating this population into the formal education system depending on their levels of attainment. Additionally, post-literacy includes vocational and technical training programmes run by the General Association for Technical and Vocational Education and Training in collaboration with the private sector in order to meet the needs of qualified technical and vocational labour forces and to increase the contribution of the private sector in meeting the educational priorities of the Kingdom.

The government has been working on expanding literacy programmes and enhancing their quality. No age limit has been imposed on those who wish to take advantage of literacy classes offered. This has removed the stigma and embarrassment particularly for those older adults who are illiterate. The full programme is three years long by the end of which learners receive a basic education certificate. This certificate entitles the graduates to continue their education in the formal education system in special night classes for men and day classes for women.

Radio, television, mosques and community centers are also being used to deliver literacy in Saudi Arabia. Financial incentives and promises of employment are used to encourage people in remote areas to join literacy classes.

Since the beginning of 1999, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and the Saudi armed forces have joined together in an effort to eradicate illiteracy in the Kingdom. The Ministry
of Defense and the Air Force have also been active in some areas, and within certain remote communities, in providing more flexible times and relevant programmes, which have resulted in almost 100% attendance at literacy classes, according to the Ministry of Education.

**Sudan**

More specifically directed at women is the Sudanese Open Learning Organization’s (SOLO) REFLECT approach to literacy, which is primarily targeting refugees in Kesla.

The approach involves community members in the development of the literacy lesson through activities related to their development needs. REFLECT is an acronym standing for Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques. The REFLECT approach uses a combination of the theory of Paulo Freire and the group methods of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to combine the literacy process and the empowering process through people-centered grass roots development. Some of the key points of the approach are:

- Literacy is a process, not a skill to be developed.
- The adult learners are active participants, not passive recipients.
- The PRA techniques are the tools to enable a group of people to assess their felt needs, and investigate a theme of interest to the group of learners.
- Focus is on learner-generated materials (not prepared primers and other materials). Emphasize writing rather than passive reading of fixed texts.
- The literacy events relate to the wider environment rather than simply a classroom activity.
- A group facilitator (rather than a teacher) helps develop learner-generated ideas from graphic forms to written records of what they themselves have discussed.

**Box 10**

**Sudan’s Post-literacy success story (SOLO)**

The Distance Education post-literacy programme in Sudan has been described as “one of a kind”. It has been in effect since 1999 and will be due for evaluation by 2004.

“The Distance Education infrastructure is being used to deliver a participatory post literacy programme in Sudan. In 1998 the International Extension College (IEC) formed a partnership with the Sudan Open Learning Organisation (SOLO), to develop, raise funds for and implement an ambitious post literacy programme.

The aim of the project is to provide educational services to refugees and displaced people in Sudan. It does this using distance education and includes in its provision both formal and non-formal courses, ranging from primary health care campaigns to teacher education and from literacy to O levels. The headquarters is in Khartoum with a regional office in Gedaref, in the East, which serves the Ethiopian and Eritrean refugee populations.

It was designed to meet the need for reading materials suitable for adult learners in the refugee, displaced and local Sudanese communities. It aims ‘to have several thousand more people who live in Sudan (refugees and displaced people, women and men) reading on a daily basis than were doing so’ in 1999. The programme illustrates some of the potential of the distance education infrastructure.
It is being accomplished through the following activities:
- Upgrading SOLO’s existing print shop equipment
- Expanding SOLO’s staff by the addition of a Commissioning Manager, a Post-Literacy Coordinator and 28 Community Liaison Workers
  Training new and existing staff in the skills and knowledge needed to run a successful educational publishing house that contributes to building literacy skills
- Producing 50 titles, which provide both a focus for on-the-job training for the staff of SOLO and a tangible contribution to the work of post-literacy in Sudan in essence the project divides into two discrete parts, which are mutually dependent, and is only possible because it builds on SOLO’s distance education infrastructure.

The first part is the development of the Press. SOLO already had an experienced and relatively well-trained cadre of individuals able to design and print educational materials in a variety of languages. By adding equipment with a greater capacity and recruiting someone with business experience, it has been possible to build on SOLO’s reputation and network to the point where the Press has the capacity to fulfill not only its own printing needs but those of a number of large clients. The income from SOLO Press is being put back into SOLO’s educational programming, helping to secure SOLO’s financial future and making it possible to plan longer term for some of the most disadvantaged and underserved populations in Sudan. Even now, in the third year of BLSP, the Press is funding 50% of the in country costs of the programme and is on schedule to contribute 75% in year 4, as well as making significant financial input to SOLO’s other costs.

The second part, the development from scratch and production of a range of books, manuals, newspapers, magazines and other materials, in Arabic, Tigrinya and other local languages, is being undertaken in the following way.

Twenty-eight reading and writing circles, with approximately 1800 participants in total, are distributed in camps for the internally displaced in Khartoum and Gezira States and for refugees in Gedaref and Kassala States. Each circle is facilitated by a Community Liaison Worker and managed overall by the Post-Literacy Coordinator.

The project is enabling the newly literate refugees and displaced Sudanese who make up these circles to write and publish their own stories. The volume and range of writing produced in the groups has been impressive. A comprehensive commissioning process enables project staff and beneficiaries to choose which stories/articles go on for publication.

A recent review (Barnett et al, 2001) of the project indicates that a high level of community activity has occurred as a result of the group writing activity. The review shows that having a forum within which to write has enabled people to raise issues which are of concern and importance to them and their community.

On occasion whole circles have mobilised to create change such as building drainage systems, carrying out income generating activities and raising awareness of health issues. At an individual level people are writing letters to family, reading to children, reading newspapers and teaching family and friends how to read and write.

The geographical spread of the programme is enormous for what is essentially a face-to-face rather than distance education undertaking. It takes 8 hours to drive from Khartoum to Kassala on metalled roads; the camps themselves are usually another hour or two drive into the desert. SOLO has been able to reach out over this distance only because it has the regional office and local study centres from which to do it. To be able to move in these areas of Sudan official permission and documentation must
be sought — as it has become more or less routine over the years such permission, though time consuming and at times costly, has been relatively easy to get. Journeys are planned to be multipurpose so that various SOLO programmes can piggyback and keep costs down.

One of the most critical stages in the operation was the establishment of the circles within the communities—not so difficult for SOLO, being part of the local network made it relatively straightforward to recruit Community Liaison Workers from the local community.

SOLO has been able to call on its writers, editors, printers, transport and delivery system, tutor and monitoring visits, face-to-face centres, sports, sewing and computer equipment, library resources, audio equipment and plans to use the radio expertise it gained doing health campaigns to broadcast some of the stories. In effect it is mobilising all the distance education resources it has at its disposal for the benefit of a participatory programme based in the local community.  

Syria

An impressive record in combating illiteracy is in Syria. In the early 1980s, according to Syrian Ministry of Education sources, the illiteracy rate in Syria was close to 58%. By 2000, literacy among the 15 years old and over had reached an estimated 80%. This success is attributed to the implementation of a government policy aimed at “binding the educational process to global development issues in order to meet the challenges…” Therefore, the approach was to emphasize technical and scientific skills training along with basic literacy.

Based on this policy, a ten-year plan was prepared. The main targets of this plan were the 13 to 45 year olds. Literacy programmes were delivered through media (radio and television), cultural (or community) centers and were aimed at teaching “reading, writing and calculation skills in order to produce efficient members of society.”

Although books specifically designed for adult literacy were produced, along with teachers’ guidebooks and teacher training, much of what was being taught drew heavily from the Quran, while some of it was ideological in nature.

One of the main factors of the success of literacy programmes in Syria is the strong post-literacy component included and which is based on the Arab Literacy and Adult Education Organization (ARLO) post-literacy strategies. In addition to the newly literate, semi-literate and vocational skilled- and semi-skilled workers were included in the post literacy programmes. Additionally, literacy programmes for the girls and women between the ages of 13 and 29 (including mothers) were compulsory, with each course lasting from three to nine months.

At the legislative level, the Syrian government is being very strict about enforcing the compulsory basic education laws and in ensuring that as few as possible students drop out of the formal education system.

Research conducted by the Syrian University has shown that 40% of those who complete literacy programmes in Syria revert to illiteracy in less than three years either through disuse of

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27 Dr. Felicity Binns, Executive Director, International Extension College, Cambridge, UK, described the project in a paper presented at the Pan Commonwealth Conference, Durban, July 2002.

28 www.literacyexchange.net

their learned skills or due to the absence of a supportive environment. Many do not experience an appreciable change in their social or economic status and therefore become discouraged.

Therefore, in addition to ensuring professional teacher training for adult literacy teachers and improving the quality of books and teachers’ guides, the Syrian government has extended ensuring quality education to the post-literacy stage. Reading centers have been established, ensuring a comfortable and appealing environment for the newly literate. Books of all kinds are being adapted for newly literate readers.

In the early 1990s, the Syrian Ministries of Education and of Culture redefined the aim of adult education as more than the achievement of basic literacy, but as a first step toward each individual’s opportunity to participate in social and economic growth. A new strategy was developed to include a component of vocational education within the literacy and basic education curriculum for adults, both male and female, as well as a component of science and technology.

Literacy programmes were thus revised, updated and upgraded in 1998. Literacy programmes came to include reading, writing, mathematics, health and environmental education, basic demographics and geography, social issues and economy.

An evaluation of the literacy programmes in 2000 revealed the following data. For those aged 10 and above, a decline of illiteracy rate from over 21.5% in 1990 to 17.4% in 1995. The male illiteracy rate then was 9.4%, falling to 7.1% in 1998. In the same 1995-1998 period, female illiteracy rate decreased from 25.9% to 22%. In urban areas the male/female rates sank to 5.7 and 15.7%, while in rural areas the 1998 figures were 8.5 and 28.4%.

It is important to point out that despite the improvement in literacy rates, the Syrian government has declared these results far from satisfactory, according to Minister of Social Development and Labour, Mrs. Ghada al-Jabi. (Al-Jabi, 2000).

The qualitative development of adult literacy and post-literacy courses has turned towards the linking of reading and writing skills with vocational issues and culture, in order to achieve better results.

**Tunisia**

The Tunisian government’s adult education strategy was based on the commitments it made at the CONFINTEA 1997 conference and later revised in light of the evaluation that took place in 1999 and the Dakar meeting in 2000. The Tunisian EFA National Plan included adult education and literacy after the 1999 evaluation revealed the 1997 strategy unsuccessful due to the following aspects:

- The lack of partnerships and collaborative relationships with parties concerned with education;
- The weakness or lack of awareness raising about the importance of literacy which resulted in a lack of enthusiasm among illiterate populations to join literacy programmes;
- The extreme poverty of some of the illiterate populations which rendered any learning irrelevant in comparison with earning a meager living;
- The incompatibility between the human and financial resources devoted to literacy and adult education programmes and the goals and targets set;
- The lack of sufficient training among those responsible for literacy and adult education.

In light of these results, and taking advantage of the work being done on the EFA National Plan, more realistic, achievable and measurable goals were set. These included reducing illiteracy
from 27% in 1999 to 20% in 2004; giving priority to those under 30; concentrating on girls and women; targeting rural areas; giving priority to the 10 provinces identified in 1999 evaluation as having the highest concentration of illiterates.

In addition, the Tunisian government established the General Authority for Literacy by presidential decree. The Authority was given the status on ministry in decision making, funding and exercising political will in order to achieve the most promising results in reducing the levels of illiteracy in Tunisia.

United Arab Emirates

A study to determine the size of the problem of illiteracy, the success of efforts undertaken so far, as well as to evaluate programmes and identify follow-up actions was conducted in the United Arab Emirates in 2000\textsuperscript{30}.

Some of the main issues examined by the study were the high rate of drop out and how to deal with it, and the reasons behind the lack of motivation among literacy learners, as well as the issue of teacher training.

The study resulted in a number of measures being taken. These include designing programmes for the reduction of functional illiteracy among skilled and semi-skilled workers, and tying these programmes to the overall vocational training curriculum. Eventually, both literacy and vocational education programmes would be integrated into a comprehensive educational programme to ensure more productive participation in the labour market.

Another measure taken as a result of the study, was the design of an educational and literacy curriculum for hard-to-reach populations, including those living in remote areas and nomadic tribes that are on the move, which would include the use of innovative techniques and new technologies.

The first programme has been put into practice in cooperation with the adult education commission and under the supervision of a special committee headed by the Minister of Education and Youth, and with participation from women’s and civil society organizations to help in the delivery of programmes.

The second, however, has not yet been implemented as the mechanisms and techniques for reaching these hard-to-reach populations have not yet been determined.

Yemen

The department responsible for adult education and illiteracy eradication in Yemen developed a five-year plan (2000-2005) based on a national strategy for eradicating the illiteracy of 4,450 million Yemeni citizens. The plan included developing a new curricula and books dealing with Islamic studies, Arabic language, mathematics, and general education. The limited number of books was printed in the first year of the plan, piloted, and evaluated.

There is no information available as to the results of the pilots or the evaluation criteria and mechanisms used. However, a larger printing and wider distribution of the books has been under way and they are being used nation-wide.

The Adult Education and Literacy organization of the Yemeni government was established in 1992 with the primary responsibility for the eradication of illiteracy. It came to define adult education in broader terms after CONFINTEA 1997, to include all aspects of cultural, social,

\textsuperscript{30} Non-Formal for Girls in the Arab Region, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001
economic, political and professional education. From this definition, the organization drew up a long-term national strategy for adult education. Literacy, however, remained the focal point of this strategy, with both quantitative (4,867,545 illiterates aged 10-45, targeted in 20 provinces) and qualitative (tying the illiteracy eradication programmes to the over all social and economic development plan of the Yemeni government). This strategy was officially adopted by the government in 1998.

Both Yemen and Oman had very much the same starting point where literacy and general education are concerned. However, the illiteracy rate for men in Yemen is over 50% and for women over 65%, while only 17% of the population over 10 years of age has completed primary education. Although there has been considerable expansion in education over the past decade, the educational system still suffers from shortfalls in enrolment, absorption and retention of students, and favours males and urban areas to females and rural and agricultural areas. It is estimated that, if the deficit of 80,000 classrooms is not dealt with immediately, some 3 million children aged 6 to 13 will not have a place in schools by 2020. Enrolment rates vary from 75% in some governorates to less than 37% in highly populated, poor and rural governorates. Overall, however, Yemen has the lowest enrolment rate in the Middle East and North Africa, standing at 56%, combined with the highest population growth in the world.31

There are a number of factors responsible for this, economics and deeply rooted traditional and cultural beliefs being chief among them. In terms of economics, Yemen does not have the natural resources and wealth of Oman. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the region, although there has been some improvement in the mid 1990s with onset of oil production.

Another factor is that there has been little attention given to educational infrastructure, which has affected access to education. Moreover, although a UNESCO Education Survey 1997-1998, found that the pool of teachers available is not adequate to service the population, there are less than 20% female teachers which is an important consideration when sending girls to school in a traditional conservative society, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, teacher training is inadequate, teacher absenteeism very high, and supervision and administrative support for teachers is irregular at best. Add to that the low number of schools, which result in exceptionally large class sizes and increased pressure on teachers. This has greatly affected the quality of education in Yemen32.

IV. Adult Education after CONFINTSEA V

The examples included below deal with only a few of the countries about which some detailed information is available. This in no way means that policies and national action plans are restricted to only those countries in the region, but that this was the information accessible at the writing of this report.

United Arab Emirates
In the United Arab Emirates, legislation has included curriculum development and the quality of adult education, as well as legislating programmes for the development of adult education administration within the ministry of education. The comprehensive 20-year plan for education in the UAE includes both formal education and non-formal adult education. Implementation of the plan began in 2000 in five-year increments. The comprehensive plan has been named 2020 Vision for Education.

In a five-year plan (2000-2005), the Ministry of Education and Youth adopted the following programmes and projects:

- Developing a comprehensive curriculum for the completion of intermediate and secondary education for adults who have not had a chance to join or who have dropped out of the formal education system. The curriculum includes Islamic studies, Arabic and English languages, mathematics, general education and life skills for women.
- Adopting a plan for curriculum evaluation and improving the books and educational materials for adults, as well as improving evaluation mechanisms.
- Improving the administrative structures governing adult education programmes and delivery in the Ministry. This includes:
  - the development of specific national educational indicators, mechanisms and measures;
  - the development of research and studies into education;
  - the development of educational guidebooks for teachers and teacher training;
  - a programme for developing and strengthening the capacity of human resources working in adult education;
  - a programme for improving the educational environment at adult education centers.

A. Learning and Democracy

Some countries in the region have recently begun to include concepts of citizenship, freedom of expression, tolerance and political participation in a select number of literacy materials. These countries include Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria and United Arab Emirates to some extent. However, any treatment of democracy and citizenship rights has been restricted to lessons “embedded” in general educational materials.

When asked about “Learning and Democracy” in adult education, many NGOs responded by describing their own relationships with governments in terms of participation in the decision-making process regarding adult education policies, strategies and the implementation of programmes.

It is clear from those responses that these concepts have not yet become crystallized in the adult education agenda in the Arab region.

B. Improving the Conditions and Quality of Adult Learning

The Hamburg Agenda for the Future defined the above priority theme area as “creating conditions for the expression of people’s demand for learning”, and provided a number of actions aimed at fulfilling this condition, such as enacting legislation and policies ensuring people’s right to education and taking into consideration the critical role of the learning environment; and improving the quality of learning by ensuring the relevance and appropriateness of teaching materials.

At the governmental and policy level in the Arab region, the majority of countries considered this theme one of the top priorities in their adult programmes. Countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen have combined EFA Goal number 3 dealing with ensuring equitable access to quality education for all and CONFINTIEA themes on ensuring universal access and improving quality of adult education into their policies and activities on quality education.
Egypt
In Egypt, the improvement of the quality of adult education was part of the government's strategy in creating the General Authority for Adult Education and Eradication of Illiteracy. The Authority's mandate on this issue was to coordinate with adult education university departments in matters of research into quality education, and engage experts in planning curricula, organizing seminars and conferences, designing books and teaching materials.

In the area of access, one of the major successes has been in using the media and specialized TV channels to reach as many people as possible.

Lebanon
The national adult education programme in Lebanon, concentrated on building and strengthening the capacity of staff at educational service centers to enable them to play a more effective role in illiteracy eradication.

Teacher training and curriculum development to meet the needs of various target groups according to their priorities and social and economic needs formed an important element of ensuring quality. Additionally, new mechanism for short term, periodic assessment and evaluation of programme, as well as comprehensive evaluation of all programmes activities were put in place.

A plan is underway to make evaluation a core element of every teaching, training and learning activity.

United Arab Emirates
Ensuring quality education in the United Arab Emirates takes into account teachers, learners and the learning environment. Literacy teachers are encouraged to find new and innovative ways of delivering the material to learners, and to determine the required mastery levels of the materials depending on the learners' needs. Teachers are also encouraged to participate in curriculum development and suggest extra-curricular activities that will encourage learning. Evaluation of adult literacy programmes and curricula is based on learners' attainment of mastery levels set by the teacher.

In terms of the learning environment, the government has built independent adult education centers rather than the school buildings of the formal education system. These centers have been provided with equipment and facilities suitable for adults as well as trained staff members.

C. The right to Learning and Literacy: Basic Education

In the context of the right to education countries in the region had adopted and committed themselves to this concept prior to CONFINTEA 1997. As evidenced by the Arab Framework for action in 2000—the past two decades have witnessed an expansion of primary education to absorb the increasing numbers of school-age children. Enacting legislation for the universalization of compulsory basic education has also proven the depth of the region's commitment to education.

However, expanding and universalizing education has not solved the problem of school drop out. (An issue that has a great deal to do with the quality of education and its inability to respond to the needs of all learners.)

Within the general framework of the Education for All National Plans, countries in the region have included lifelong learning, the education of women and girls, as well as strategies for providing equivalent and parallel educational services for dropouts and out of school youth.
Algeria and the UAE are two countries that have combined literacy and basic education to absorb the numbers of illiterates and school drop outs into educational programmes. The strategy behind this policy of tying literacy to basic education is an attempt to open up opportunities to allow both groups to continue their education after attaining basic literacy and completing their primary education. It is also an attempt to tie the non-formal education system to the formal education system in order to allow a greater chance for the newly literate and those who have regained lost reading, writing and mathematics skills to rejoin the formal education system and continue their education.

Lebanon

In Lebanon, although the law on universal, compulsory basic education has come into effect, enforcement mechanisms are not yet in place. A collaborative research project is currently underway between the Ministry of Education and the National Center for Educational Research and Development to identify the factors that lead to the high rate of drop out.

Preliminary information suggests that the drop out has increased in the past few years due to the deteriorating economic situation in the country, which has forced many youths to join the labour market. Additionally, although basic education is universal, free and compulsory, it is free only in theory, as parents still have to assume the cost of books and registration fees, which many have become increasingly unable to afford. Adult education programmes are targeting out of school youth in an attempt to help them catch up to and rejoin the formal education system.

Palestine

In Palestine, too, adult education and literacy programmes are targeting dropouts and out-of-school youth. An intensive parallel curriculum, mirroring that of the formal education system, with special emphasis on some subjects, has been developed. At the end of this intensive programme, learners are required to sit for an exam. The certificate gained allows learners to rejoin the formal education system at the 10th grade. An age limit of 18 has been imposed on those who wish to rejoin the formal system. Those over the age of 18 are channelled toward vocational and technical education.

Sudan

A pilot programme for the education of children from 8 to 14 years has been implemented in Sudan. This includes school dropouts and children who had never attended school. The programme was devised to respond to the growing number of out-of-school children, particularly girls in rural areas, and the inability of formal basic education to absorb these numbers. In addition to basic literacy, this programme includes life skills, nutritional, environmental and health education, as well as practical skills by which youth will be able to make a living and respond to the growing need for skilled labour in Sudan.

Syria

A similar attempt is being made in Syria to integrate vocational training into the literacy programmes and to ensure that those who are interested, ready and capable are then integrated into the formal education system post-literacy.

\[33\] Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO, Beirut, 2001
D. Empowerment of Women

In some Arab countries there has been an attempt to take advantage of work already being done at the national level as part of the Education for All initiative. Having established that literacy, and especially literacy and education for girls and women, are a priority for all Arab countries, although to varying degrees, many countries have seen that tying in with goals of EFA included in their National Plans is an effective way of achieving results.

Of particular relevance are goals 4 and 5 of the Dakar Framework for Action, which were recognized as priorities for the region and emphasized in the Arab Framework for Action resulting from the Cairo 2000 Assessment.

- Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement of basic education of good quality.

Egypt

In keeping with above EFA goals and in an attempt to ensure adult education is accessible and available to women and girls, particularly in rural areas, the Egyptian government, along with the General Authority for Adult Education and Literacy, and in collaboration with UNICEF, has established “community schools”. The aim of community schools is to provide educational services in rural and remote communities, particularly literacy, basic education and life skills education to women and girls. The establishment of community schools within traditional communities and in the areas of concentration of women’s illiteracy, has allowed for, not only direct access for women and girls to educational services, but also for overcoming some of the barriers that impeded girls’ education in poor and traditional societies.

These barriers include the fact that primary education in Egypt is free in theory only rather than in practice. A primary school child costs at a minimum the equivalent of $10 upon entering school. Since most families cannot afford this amount, their limited expenditure on schooling favours boys. Another reason is the need to travel some distance away from home to attend school, which hampers female enrollment. Families would rather keep girls close to home fearing for their personal safety, and where they can be useful in domestic chores. There are a number of cultural factors involved as well, such as early marriage of girls and need to segregate girls and boys.

Community schools and one-room schools in which girls and women are able to learn together have helped provide women with a variety of skills as well as literacy, including embroidery weaving, sewing, painting on glass, hand crafts, animal husbandry, food preservation, dairy production. This has enabled women to contribute to their families’ income, which has been looked upon favourably by the community at large.

Lebanon

A new programme targeting women has been established by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which includes women’s rights issues, violence against women and ways of dealing with domestic violence. To date 1,200 women have made use of the programme, either as part of a comprehensive literacy programme or as a separate course entitled “How to Stand Up to Aggression Against Women”.

34 Girls Education in Egypt, UNICEF; http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/action
Morocco
The Ministry of Education in Morocco and UNESCO have cooperated in providing the appropriate environment and curriculum for girls in rural areas. Schools have been rehabilitated and refurbished, supplied with running water and electricity. Gardens in which the girls can plant vegetables and other produce have been created, and special pens for domestic animals. Additionally, girls have been provided with safe and supervised transportation to these schools. The curriculum includes agriculture, carpentry, sewing, and electrical work, pottery.

Teachers have been trained to deal with the needs of learners and apply the new curriculum; schedules have also been modified to accommodate rural life. Market day in the villages has become part of the learning experience, in that learners are taught to market and sell their produce and crafts.

These programmes have been enthusiastically embraced by the entire community and would not have been possible without the close cooperation of the government, civil society institutions and UNESCO.

Yemen
The national report presented by Yemen at the regional meeting in Hammamat, Tunis, indicates a number of ministerial decrees in 1998, 1999, 2000 dealing with women and girls’ right to education, the social status of women, women’s economic rights, as well as a national strategy for the advancement of women (2003-2005). The focus of most of these decisions has been on closing the gender gap in education, concentrating on women's literacy in rural areas, and designing literacy and educational programme specifically for women. In this context, therefore, the Adult Education and Literacy body has so far established 44 literacy and adult training centers for women. The aim of the programmes delivered at those centers, in addition to providing women with basic literacy, is to provide them with the necessary skills to improve their economic status through a number of vocational and life skills training programmes. Also in response to the national strategy for women, an adult education curriculum specifically for women was designed and books published dealing with basic literacy in two stages: post-literacy; health and disease prevention; family planning, pre- and post-natal health; women’s health and nutrition.

Syria
During the 1990s, the Ministry of Culture in Syria implemented a series of experimental literacy projects for women in co-operation with the General Women's Union, ALECSO, and UNESCO. The projects focused on literacy and vocational training for rural women and took place in five major cities.

The curriculum comprised a combination of basic literacy, life skills training, vocational training, general and cultural education. Part of the effects was that women were able to use their new literacy skills in furthering their vocational training, which in turn increased their motivation to participate in more advanced literacy courses.

The components of the projects were as follows:
Pre-sessions training
  - Awareness raising about the importance of the education and training opportunities being offered and their effects on women’s lives.
  - Training sessions for male and female teachers in adult education.
  - Training sessions for teachers in subject matter.

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24 Non-formal Education for Girls, Rafika Hammoud, UNESCO Beirut, 2001
For women learners the curriculum included:
- Effective field application of the skills learned.
- Field cultivation, growth stages and follow up.
- Preparation of dairy products.
- Appropriate conservation methods
- Production of dairy product derivatives
- Fruits dehydration and conservation methods
- Households economics, commercial calculations, and cooperatives.
- First aid.
- Child care from infancy to adulthood.
- General education and culture seminars, which include health education, social, economic and monetary issues (bookkeeping, banking…etc), and legal awareness.
- Vocational education, which involves free, individual reading of booklets dealing with subjects directly related to the women’s daily life. These booklets are published within adults’ education series” (Ministry of Education 2000).

In the early 90s two pilot centers for women vocational training were established in Busra and Al-Rastan, implemented by a coalition of the General Women’s Union, AGFUND, UNICEF, and UNDP.

The Supreme Committee for Literacy’s National Plan aimed at eradicating illiteracy by the year 2001. In short, this overall strategy targeted males and females aged 13-45, with special efforts made in highly illiterate provinces. Young illiterate girls between 13 and 19 years and young mothers aged 20 to 29 were considered a priority. Participation in the programmes was made compulsory and lasted between three (post-literacy only) and nine months (basic literacy plus post-literacy), depending on the individual’s skills and level of literacy. The plan also included strategies for promoting independent ongoing learning, and to encourage neo-literates to join further education activities.

E. World of Work

Lebanon
In Lebanon, “learning for the world of work” has been an fairly recent inclusion on the adult education agenda developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs. It has included vocational education for both men and women, focusing on skills training for both literate and illiterate adults and out-of-school youths. Additionally, since 1998, programmes focusing on Computer Training and Information Technology, and English Language have become part of adult education programme. “How to Establish Your Own Business” has trained and graduated 600 women in the last two years.

Qatar
Adult education for women in Qatar has been focusing increasingly on the world of work and lifelong learning. The reason for this is the substantial increase in the number of women with post-secondary and university degrees, but the lack of work opportunities open to them within the country. This is partly due to traditional values and customs that have restricted women’s education to a limited number of disciplines and their work opportunities to a small number of professions. Adult education programmes targeting women, have been aiming at making up for this by training women in modern technologies and preparing to join the changing labour market.
Yemen
In Yemen, the provision of quality adult literacy has meant the inclusion of various forms of vocational education and training within the literacy curriculum such as carpentry, mechanics, construction, metal work and welding, agriculture, and computer literacy for men. For women, the adult literacy curriculum includes home economics, family education, sewing and embroidery, and leather crafts.

F. Environment, Health, Population

Greater awareness has emerged regarding the environment and the necessity of preservation and protection of environmental resources, however, there is no evidence of non-formal education programmes that focus on environment, health or population in the region.

As mentioned in the section on literacy, many of these themes are included in literacy materials. The focus on environment and health targets to a large extent illiterate populations in rural areas. Health education, in particular, is directed at women and focuses for the most part on pre- and neo-natal health, childcare, prevention, and nutrition. The same goes for population, where the focus has been narrowed down to family planning and is very much part of family and women’s health issues.

G. Media, Culture and Information Technology

Media has been used as a tool for literacy and awareness raising in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates.

Computer courses at the post-literacy level are being offered in Lebanon, Egypt and a number of Gulf countries. A recommendation by the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education and Ain Shams University, to borrow and adapt the Indian experience of “computers for the poor” is currently being studied. The recommendation proposes using inexpensive computers and specific software for self-directed literacy for adults and youth.

H. Groups with Special Needs

At a Conference on disability held in Beirut in October 2002, major trends causing increased instances of disability in the region were identified. Chief among these was the violent conflict shattering people’s lives across the region. The Conference report stated:

“We have an increase in the number of disabled people as a result of violence in Algeria, Sudan, Iraq and Palestine. Disability is also growing as a result of poverty and malnutrition. This can be found in Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Yemen. A third source of disability is blood marriage, a very common tradition in most Arab countries, which is leading to an increase in mental disability across the Arab world.”

The Conference made a number of recommendations on actions required for the development, advancement and integration of people with disability. Education ranked at the top of those recommendations. Although educational, recreational, developmental and health programmes for disabled children have been on the increase in the region, adults have remained, to certain extent, excluded from these.

Of the national reports received from the 17 countries that attended the Hammamat preparatory meeting, only four mentioned the education of adults with special needs as a priority. These are Egypt, Oman, Palestine, and United Arab Emirates.

36 http://disabilityworld.org Official report of the conference, by Nawaf Kabbara, President of the Arab Council for Disability
All four countries indicated special programmes for people with physical disabilities, including an accessible learning environment, especially trained teachers, adult literacy books printed in Brail, and integration into schools and higher education institutions.

**Palestine**
In Palestine, close cooperation between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs, civil society and non-governmental organizations have led to greater understanding of the needs of people with disability particularly in connection with the learning environment. In 2000 350 schools were made accessible for those with physical disabilities, including evening schools in which adult education classes take place.

The Ministry is currently working on a strategy for the integration of deaf students into the regular classes by providing sign language translation for them. To date there have been only a few experiments in this type of integration.

**United Arab Emirates**
The United Arab Emirates strategy includes training for teachers in First Aid and familiarization with the physical and health difficulties faced by the disabled. Also prominent in that country’s strategy are awareness-raising campaigns at the national, community and family levels about the importance of education for disabled adults.

### I. Economics of Adult Learning

In response to questions on funding for adult education, NGOs from 17 countries responded overwhelmingly that funding for literacy is adequate, and support for the production and printing of literacy materials is also satisfactory.

Moreover, over the past two decades, the majority of countries in the region have increased their funding to the formal education system in an effort to expand and universalize basic education. Whereas funding for non-formal education, apart from basic literacy and post-literacy, is still lacking.

The basic problem here has been the interest at the policy-making levels, in the issues of lifelong learning as separate from the formal higher education system. However, the problems of illiteracy in the region have been so overwhelming, and governments and NGOs have been struggling to deal with it that other issues have either fallen by the wayside or have been viewed as luxuries that only countries that have achieved acceptable literacy levels can afford to deal with them.

In short, the above few examples illustrate that many of the official institutions and government departments responsible for adult education and literacy have been active in developing strategies and setting policies to deal with the often overwhelming problem of illiteracy in the their countries. Curriculum development and improvement have also been a major part of their strategic plans. However, as is clear also from the above-mentioned examples, although most actions taken have come under the broad title of Adult Education, they concentrate mostly on Literacy and Post Literacy programmes.

Greater awareness of the consequences of such a narrow focus needs to be although its reasons are understood,
Annex 1:

The NGO point of view

A. Introduction

In preparation for the Mid-Term Review on Adult Education that will be held in September 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand, the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education (ANLAE) prepared the following report on Arab NGOs and civil society organizations in collaboration with the UNESCO Offices in Paris, Beirut and Cairo, and the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) in Hamburg.

The aim of this report, therefore, is to look critically at the following issues:
- To what extent have adult education policies, strategies and programmes of governments and NGOs changed in response to the recommendations resulting from CONFINTREA in 1997, Hamburg;
- To what extent has this change been reflected in the policies and work of NGOs;
- To what extent have NGOs responded to the CONFINTRE recommendations;
- To what extent has the concept of partnership been achieved between governmental institutions dealing with literacy and adult education, NGOs, and networks specialized in adult education in the region;
- To what extent have adult education programmes been able to meet the challenges and difficulties facing adults such as health, poverty, malnutrition, environment, pollution, the needs of women, refugees, migrants, special groups, and literacy in the poorest communities in accordance with the Hamburg recommendations;
- Relevant research, studies, programmes and best practices in adult education in the region;
- The challenges and difficulties encountered and how to overcome them;
- The future vision for adult education at the regional level.

In order to achieve this aims, the Arab Network developed an action plan for the preparation of the report. A research questionnaire was prepared, and two workshops were held, a regional one and an Egyptian one. The questionnaire was distributed to 120 NGOs in 13 Arab countries. The proposal for the Arab report on NGOs and adult education was presented to a large number of Arab institutions for consultation and to get their feedback.

A number of agencies and organizations supported the preparation of this report. These are the UNESCO Offices in Paris, Beirut and Cairo; the UNESCO Institute for Education (Hamburg); the Arab Network for Education for All (Beirut); 120 Arab NGOs dealing with adult education; 12 national coordinators representing NGOs in 12 Arab States; Arab experts and specialists who participated in the consultation.

The report is based on the following main documents:
- National plans and policies on literacy and adult education in the region;
- The recommendations of CONFINTREA V (1997);
- The UN Declaration on Literacy and Adult Education (2000-2010);
- The Dakar Framework for Action (2000-2015);
- The objectives of the CONFINTREA mid-Term Review (Hamburg + 6);
- The results of the research questionnaire distributed in the region;
- The outcomes of the regional and Egyptian consultative workshops.
B. Methodology of writing the report

The report takes two approaches. The first vertical and includes eight guidelines, and the second horizontal and includes the themes of the CONFITEA V.

The following guidelines were used in the vertical approach:
1. Organizational structures and the institutional frameworks.
2. Increased interest in adult education.
3. Increase in the number of participants.
4. Studies and research on adult education.
5. Status and training of teachers and facilitators of adult education programs.
6. Assistance for and empowerment of adult learners
7. Examples of best practices.
8. Future visions and specific objectives that will form the basis for the Sixth World Conference on Adult Education that will be held in 2009.

The horizontal approach considered the ten CONFINTEA themes:
2. Improving the conditions and quality of adult learning.
3. Ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education.
4. Adult learning, gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women.
5. Adult learning and the changing world of work.
6. Adult learning in relation to environment, health and population.
7. Adult learning, culture, media and new information technologies.
8. Adult learning for all: the rights and aspirations of different groups.
10. Enhancing international co-operation and solidarity.

C. Results of the Report

In presenting the results, the report deals with each one of the guidelines first, then the achievements made by government institutions and NGOs with respect to the specific themes of CONFINTEA V.

1. Organizational structures and institutional framework

a. Adult education and democracy: challenges of the 21st century

Government institutions dealing with adult education in the Arab countries have adopted new policies and strategies aimed at developing new programmes, and have modified the administrative structures and issued new laws and legislations governing adult education and the relationship between governments and NGOs.

To find out the extent of partnership between the government institutions and NGOs in putting national policies and strategies, and designing programmes, participants at the regional workshop were asked the following questions:
- Is there a governmental institution dealing with adult education in your country? 96% responded positively.
- Do you participate in developing national policies on adult education? 50% of the NGOs responded that they do not, 35% do but only to some extent, while 15% responded that they do participate in the elaboration of national policies.
These results indicate that governmental concerned with adult education in the countries represented at the workshop draw up their adult education policies, strategies, plans and programmes without effective participation by NGOs. This means that there is a gap between government institutions and NGOs that should be dealt with in order to face the challenges of the 21st century.

In spite of this gap, NGOs responded that they are benefiting to a great extent from the opportunities provided for them by government institutions as follows: 77% indicated that they make use of the literacy textbooks produced by governments; 59% said that post-literacy textbooks were adequate; 74%, 50% and 52% respectively, responded that they collaborate with government institutions in the following areas: providing NGOs with qualified literacy teachers; providing them with access to new publications in the field of adult education; providing them with the opportunity to participate regularly in seminars and conferences.

b. Improving the quality and conditions of adult learning

Government institutions dealing with adult education tend to apply the principles and methodology of formal education to the teaching of adults. That is to say, they use formal classrooms, the same books, teaching and learning methods, and the curricula for all members of society regardless of demography, age, cultural and social differences.

NGOs are becoming more aware of current approaches to and methodologies of adult education, and are attempting to provide educational programmes suitable to the needs and requirements of adults as asserted by 75% of the NGOs participating in the workshop.

c. Ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education

Government officials have resorted to different means in achieving this goal. These include dealing with the problem of dropouts from the formal education system; preparing teachers’ guide books; integrating vocational training into literacy programmes; enforcing the laws and legislations relating to mandatory basic education; establishing parallel education classes and centers. The results of the questionnaire revealed that both governmental and non-governmental organizations have the same objectives, i.e. to achieve universal right to literacy and basic education. It is worth mentioning, however, that NGOs work within more diverse socio-economic areas and deal with a variety of educational needs and target groups, which requires more coordination, integration and flexibility in achieving their objective.

d. Adult learning, gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women

Government institutions have been working on promoting women's empowerment through adult education. Women-centered programmes have occupied the third position in the list of priority areas and programmes for governments. On the other hand, these programmes occupied the second position in the list of priority areas when NGOs were asked to define their priority objectives. In addition to women being a priority area, NGOs also listed the dropout rate of 53% for girls and 39% for women as an important issue on their list of priorities.

e. Adult learning and the changing world of work

Government strategies and programmes indicate that adult literacy is closely linked to the nature of learners' work and should integrate issues of labour and micro enterprise with a developmental aim to benefit workers.

The role of NGOs in the changing world of work is clear when we see that vocational training programmes in general occupy the third position in their list of priorities while training for the
new labour market occupies the seventh position in the list of priorities at 22%. This can be explained by the following factors:

- i. The emphasis placed on literacy;
- ii. The fact that NGOs are new to field work;
- iii. The lack of experience among NGOs in these kinds of programmes;
- iv. The scarcity of financial resources available to NGOs.

**f. Adult learning in relation to environment, health and population**

Only one government institution in the Arab countries was concerned with this theme and produces post-literacy booklets on these topics. For NGOs, the role of environment, health and population in adult education occupies the sixth priority position for 23% of NGOs.

**g. Adult learning, culture, media, and new information technologies**

Government institutions have a great interest in the role of media and new information technologies in adult education, such as the use of various means of information, electronic networks and websites, media information campaigns, and the establishment of mass communication centers, the production of tapes and booklets for the newly literate, and the encouragement of self-learning.

The importance NGOs place on the role media and information technology in adult education was clear from their responses to the questionnaire. They participate in local, regional and international networks at the rate of 91%, 35% and 28% respectively. Thirty percent also indicated that they engage in active collaboration in a number of networks and 56% indicated that they deal with media institutions: print, radio and television.

**h. Adult learning for all: the rights and aspirations of different groups**

It was apparent from this study that only three government organizations among the participating countries dealt with the most disadvantaged groups, through the establishment of a database and related programmes for these groups.

As for the NGOs, it was apparent that they are interested and are playing an efficient role in providing opportunities to disadvantaged groups in deprived areas and to different social and economic groups in those areas as well.

**i. The economics of adult education**

NGOs have stated that they deal and cooperate with the following institutions:

- United Nations agencies;
- International and foreign agencies;
- Arab and local NGOs and agencies.

Cooperation most often takes the form of project funding.

**j. Consolidating international cooperation and solidarity**

NGOs tend to promote cooperation and solidarity at the international level through their membership in regional and international networks. Their main objective is project funding, training programmes, and cultural programmes. They also indicated that these joint programmes achieved their goals.
2. Increased interest in adult education
3. Increased participation in adult education programmes

These two guidelines were merged because many of the participating countries did not produce statistics on these issues. Statistical data from some countries indicates an increase in the number of learners, literacy classes and adult education centers, which has led to a decrease in illiteracy rates. There is also an increase in the number of newly literate with an appreciable percentage joining the formal education system and continuing their education.

4. Studies and research on adult education

- Two research studies for evaluating adult education and democracy undertaken by the United Arab Emirates and Tunisia
- Research and action aimed at improving the conditions and quality of education undertaken by the UAE, Tunisia and Algeria.
- Research undertaken and measures implemented aimed at ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education by UAE, Algeria, Lebanon and Egypt.
- Studies and research aimed at implementing the empowerment of women through education undertaken by the UAE and Yemen.
- Two research studies on adult education and changing world of work undertaken by the UAE.
- Only Egypt has undertaken one research study on Adult education and culture, media and the new information technologies and the economics of adult learning.

5. Conditions of teachers, facilitators and training programmes

Reports and responses to the questionnaire indicate that progress made in the areas of Improving the conditions and quality of adult learning and Ensuring the universal to literacy and writing and to basic education is closely linked to teacher training.

6. Assisting and empowering adults

NGOs stressed that they are working on achieving this aim through the evaluation of their programmes. Two of the issues tackled in the evaluation process were the following:
- Supporting literacy through the integration of development programmes;
- Maintaining the relationship between the target groups and the education providers.

7. Examples of programmes undertaken by NGOs

a- Algeria: Association Iqra’,
   Project: Literacy campaign in correctional institutions.

b- Algeria: Forum of University Graduates for the Eradication of Illiteracy Among Blind Algerians.
   Project: Education for the Blind

c- Sudan: Sudan Open Learning Organization (SOLO)
   Project: Open learning for literacy and adult education

   Project: capacity building and support for women and children through educational, technological and vocational education.

e- Yemen: Women's Association of Yemen,
Project: Linking literacy to loans for small enterprises in the province of Apeen.

8. Future vision and prospects

Understanding the future prospects and forming a vision requires a quantum leap compatible with the current changes and rapid developments in all aspects of life, along with a comprehensive understanding of the values and principles that govern educational development.

The future prospects suggested by this report are based on a number of considerations including the themes presented at CONFINTEA such as the right to life-long learning, the empowerment of women, awareness of the transformations taking place in formal, non-formal education; the social economy, the culture of peace, the establishment of bridges of cooperation between formal and non-formal education…etc. It is also based on the opinions, perceptions and orientations of the participants in the Egyptian and regional workshops, and the results of the responses to the questionnaire by 12 Arab countries.

D. Vision and Future Prospects

Following are the basic issues that govern the future vision and prospects for adult education in the region:

1. Coordination and cooperation
   a) Strengthening the relationship between the ANLAE and governmental associations dealing with literacy and adult education through the promotion of partnerships;
   b) Ensuring coordination and cooperation between NGOs and governments in undertaking precise surveys of illiterate people in order to have a clear idea of the current situation;
   c) Activating partnership between the ANLAE and government institutions in the areas of planning, policy-making, follow-up and evaluation.

2. NGOs
   a) The need for NGOs to adopt new concepts pertaining to adult education;
   b) The need to develop the knowledge and skills of NGO leadership;
   c) Setting up a database for NGOs dealing with adult education in collaboration with research and academic institutions and Arab information centers, as well as the ANLAE;
   d) Unifying the NGO vision on programmes, means and activities by defining common concepts and perspectives;
   e) Ensuring that health centers and women’s clubs offer literacy and adult education activities, and coordinating those activities with NGOs;
   f) Promoting and encouraging the concept of donation and voluntarism by paying tribute to volunteers in order to supplement the lack of resources among NGOs;
   g) Finding new funding sources and supporting such activities as sponsoring of illiterate individuals by entrepreneurs, and any individual inclined to offer in-kind donations, pay for educational expenses, or make a suitable donation of time, money or material;
   h) Setting up a fund to provide for the education of girls who wish to continue their education;
   i) Equipping libraries within NGOs to encourage reading.
3. **Integration between informal and public education institutions**
   a) Achieving integration between education offered by ministries of education and that
      offered by other institutions such as community schools, one-classroom schools, rural
      education…etc.
   b) Linking education to sustainable human development and promoting the concepts of
      security, justice and peace, which would lead to the improvement of education in
      occupied Arab countries such as Palestine and Iraq.

4. **New approaches to adult learning**
   a) Benefiting from India’s experience with the "computers for the poor" project, to overcome
      barriers to learning such as embarrassment, the social and cultural taboos, irregular
      attendance in class…etc.
   b) Studying the needs of the labor market, preparing micro credit projects for literacy
      programmes.

5. **Programmes and concepts**
   a) Promoting values and concepts related to the culture of peace, tolerance, justice,
      equality and dialogue to deal with the double standards reflected in the situations of
      Palestine and Iraq;
   b) Designing new curricula and programmes according to social and demographic
      specificities;
   c) Integrating environment, health and population issues into adult education programmes
      and linking them to income generation and the improvement of the quality of life;
   d) Creating a sense of belonging among learners while keeping in mind their and cultural
      and social diversity;
   e) Including theoretical and practical skills into the programmes and creating awareness of
      the rights and responsibilities of citizens;
   f) Enriching creative programmes in Arabic, English, Mathematics in order to bridge the
      gap between the post-literacy stage and formal education;
   g) Creating programmes to meet the needs of special groups;
   h) Creating innovative and diversified programmes to meet the rapidly changing
      requirements of the labour market within the framework of life-long learning.

6. **Incentives**
   a) Creating attractive slogans to serve as incentives to education, (such as ending the
      practice of fingerprint signatures for official transactions);
   b) Offering permanent jobs to temporary workers in governmental institutions upon
      receiving their literacy certificates;
   c) Providing a library for the literacy learners with educational resources ranging from
      audiovisual to printed materials;
   d) Offering loans for micro enterprises according to learners’ commitment to the literacy
      programme.

7. **Rehabilitation and training**
   a) Preparing programmes for the professional development of teachers including
      rehabilitation for new teachers and in-service training programmes;
   b) Organizing professional development programmes for education supervisors;
   c) Stressing the theoretical as well as the practical aspects in all teacher-training
      programmes.

8. **Networks**
   a) Encouraging regional and international networks in adult education;
   b) The ANLAE should complete the survey of NGOs experiences and disseminate the
      findings and follow up on them.
9. **Information**
   a) Adopting the "Media Against Illiteracy" project by mobilizing the media and providing them with data, photos and information on illiteracy;
   b) Preparing direct and indirect information campaigns in order to mobilize community forces and raise awareness about the need to eradicate illiteracy;
   c) Honoring distinguished individuals who have received certificates and have continued their education in the field of information;
   d) Cooperating with different types of media to broadcast drama highlighting the importance of education to human beings;
   e) Benefiting from the experiences of other organizations (such as the programme of the Adult Education Center at Ain Shams University and Egyptian Television in which illiterate people talked about their experiences and problems and found solutions).

10. **Scientific research in adult education**
    a) The need to find intellectual directives for NGOs from which adult education programmes can be drawn to respond to the diverse needs of learners in different areas;
    b) Cooperating with Arab centers in preparing studies and research undertaken by NGOs or the ANLÆ:
        Disseminating copies of the studies and research to the NGOs for their own
Annex 2:

Evaluation of Literacy Materials in the Arab Region

A study commissioned by UNESCO and undertaken by Dr. Fawzi Ayoub to evaluate existing literacy materials used in the Arab World was presented at the Regional Preparatory Meeting in Hammamat, Tunis. The study, in two parts, presented a descriptive and diagnostic content analysis of literacy books, materials, teachers’ guides, and curricula. Part two concentrated on the theory and practice of the creation and development of literacy materials.

The study also presented a qualitative and quantitative diagnosis of existing books and materials, as well as a comparative exploration of books used in different countries, and offered suggestions and recommendations on best practices. Two best practice examples were presented and analyzed, one for teaching Arabic language and the other for the teaching of mathematics.

The study used five major qualitative indicators to measure the appropriateness and effectiveness of 277 literacy books used in 16 countries as follows:
- Relevance
- Coherence & Progression
- Balance
- Functionality
- Flexibility

The study ended with 16 recommendations, not all of which will be mentioned here. Copies of the published study can be obtained from the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States in Arabic. The study will be translated into English and published on the website of the UNESCO Institute for Education in Hamburg.

Qualitative Comparative Study of the Content of Literacy Books Used the Arab Region

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Table 8, Page 39, Volume I, Evaluation of Content of Literacy Books in the Arab Region
Relevance refers to

- how relevant the material, themes and ideas expressed in the books to the lives and realities of learners;
- how relevant the questions and exercises are to the interests of the learners;
- the degree of difficulty of the material, the questions and exercises to the level of the learners;
- the degree of appeal the material would have to the learners.

Coherence & Progression refers to

- the coherence between the content, subject matter and presentation of the material and the objectives of the lessons;
- the coherence and logical progression between one lesson, the one before it and the one after it, as well as between the different parts of the book;
- the progression in degree of difficulty from one lesson to the one after it.

Balance refers to

- the degree of balance within the content between the intellectual, the emotional, the psychological and the practical aspects of learning;
- the degree of balance between the length of each lesson, the level of difficulty and the time allotted for its mastery;
- the degree of balance between the theoretical and the practical in each lesson.

Functionality refers to

- the functionality and practicality of the skills learners are expected to gain from each lesson and whether the lessons meet the goals of functionality.

Flexibility refers to

- the degree of adaptability of the content to different classroom situations, and the degree of flexibility the material allows in eliciting interest and discussion.

Recommendations

The study concluded with 16 recommendations. For the purpose of this report several recommendations will be collapsed into one or two points.

- Imagery, symbolism, ideas, concepts, practical applications, exercises have to be drawn from the environment and the realities of the learners.
- When a literacy class is made up of a homogeneous group (i.e. all are farmers, all live in the same or neighbouring villages…etc.), literacy materials should mirror as close as possible their lives, interests and concerns.
- All literacy materials produced should take into consideration the five indicators of relevance, coherence, balance, functionality and flexibility.
- Any literacy and adult education curriculum should contain a built-in component for conducting ongoing formative evaluations and flexible, adaptable teaching methodology.
- Every curriculum should contain time lines, schedules, and desired levels of mastery for each lesson.
- In addition to the Islamic and Arab values contained in most of the literacy materials in the Arab world, books should also contain universal values and be open to diversity and variety.
- As most illiterate populations in the Arab world are women, and because producing one set of materials for women and another for men is costly and encourages segregation, female educators need to be involved in setting the curriculum, writing and revising the materials and evaluating its relevance to the female audience.
Conclusion
The study emphasizes the fact that this work is based on 277 of the existing and widely used books in the region, but is not an assessment of all literacy materials and programmes in the region. It is a study that needs to be repeated periodically and an assessment that needs to be made of any new books, materials, guide books and workbooks as they are produced and used.

It draws attention to the importance of this study only in that it is one way of systematizing the process of evaluation so that it forms a framework for future evaluation.
Annex 3:

Gathering Information on Adult Education
The following 15 questions made up the questionnaire sent to all Arab countries and a number of civil, non-governmental, official educational bodies and UNESCO Commissions in the region. Of the 30 questionnaires sent out 17 responses were received which have served to clarify the picture in terms of policies, programmes, priority areas, obstacles and targets in the region. Although statistical information and accurate numbers are hard to come by the responses do provide a better idea of what is happening in the area of adult education, and certain conclusions can be drawn from the information provided.

Questionnaire
1. Is there a specific national plan for adult education or are adult education issues incorporated within the EFA National Plan? How so?
2. Are there specific policies dealing with adult education and what are they?
3. Have there been any changes to the policies since Hamburg 1997?
4. Is there a specific governmental body with responsibility for adult education?
5. What is it and what are the responsibilities?
6. Are there national programmes that deal with literacy and adult education?
7. What are the priorities of adult education?
   - Literacy
   - Basic education
   - Lifelong learning
   - Women’s education
   - Information technology
8. Are there specific policies on education for the following groups?
   - Refugees
   - People with disabilities
   - Populations is rural and remote areas
   - Migrant workers
   - Prisoners
   - Poor people and particularly women
9. Do these programmes include the themes of Hamburg?
   - Environmental education
   - Life skills
   - Health education
   - Human rights and citizenship education
10. Are there specific programmes for youth and out of school children?
11. Do teachers in such programmes receive special training?
12. Are there incentives to encourage people to join these programmes?
13. What are the barriers that prevent people from participating in adult education programmes?
14. What are the improvements that have been made to adult education programmes since 1997?
15. How are adult education programmes monitored and evaluated?
Responses to the Questionnaire

The countries that responded to the questionnaire are as follows:
Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen. Some countries chose to enclose documents and reports about their national programmes while others chose not to include details preferring to wait until the Regional Mid-Term Review to provide more data during the meeting.

Four non-governmental and semi-governmental organizations have also responded to the questionnaire.

In general, the responses to the questionnaire indicated that:
1. Both governments and NGOs have increased their interest in adult education as a whole since the Fifth World Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) in Hamburg in 1997.
2. The majority of governments have either drawn new policies governing adult education or have reformed and amended existing ones in accordance with the themes and recommendations of CONFINTEA V.
3. All countries that responded to the questionnaire indicated the existence of a specialized authority or body to deal with adult education. Responsibilities of these authorities were expanded or amended in accordance with CONFINTEA V themes and recommendations.
4. Despite the new approaches to adult education expressed in policies, these have not been translated in comprehensive programmes. Adult education in the region remains dominated by the staggering problem of illiteracy in the region.
5. New approaches to literacy and innovative programmes in distance and community education have been successfully implemented in the region.
6. Women, girls and school dropouts are priority target groups in the region’s adult education programmes.
7. Four countries included among their priority groups, the education of prisoners, including the Palestinian Authority, which provides literacy and other adult education programmes to Palestinians in Israeli prisons.
8. Four countries count among their priority areas the education of people with special needs. However, all four only target people with physical disabilities.
9. Most countries in the region began developing and producing curricula and books specific to adults in the area of literacy in the past seven to 10 years.
10. Responses to the question on assessment and evaluation indicated that all countries suffer a weakness in evaluation mechanisms and follow up.
11. Environment, life skills and health education emerged as priority themes included in the majority of literacy programmes.
12. Five countries indicated that women’s literacy programmes include vocational and small enterprise training.
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Annex 4:

**Much progress is being made in the Arab States in the area of girls’ and women’s education, particularly in the growing awareness of the importance of educating this segment in order to achieve overall, balanced development in the region. Many countries have been designing adult education curricula specifically for women and literacy classes targeting women. However, in order to highlight how much more needs to be done in this area, it seemed important to include these pieces of information.**

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**Five Million Girls Still Denied Access to School in the Arab States**

14-05-2003 12:30 pm Paris - Some eight million primary school-age children remain out-of-school in the Arab States and five million of them are girls, according to a new report published by UNESCO. However, it finds that when given the opportunity to go to school, girls tend to repeat less than boys and to complete their primary and secondary schooling more often. Prepared by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the Arab States Regional Report surveyed education in 19 countries - Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, as well as the Palestinian Autonomous Territories – with a total population of 270 million people, 39 percent of whom are under the age of 14.

It covers the 1999/2000 school year and consequently does not take into account the damage to education systems resulting from the conflicts in the Palestinian Autonomous Territories and Iraq, both of which, the report found, had reported relatively high levels of participation in schooling.

The report recognizes that “considerable investments” were made in education throughout the region over the past four decades and, as a result, many countries were close to the objective of getting all children into school. However, it also finds that gender parity had only been achieved in the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon and United Arab Emirates. Compared to other regions, the Arab States had better gender parity in terms of access to primary school than countries in Francophone Africa.

According to the report, 35 million children, 54% of them boys, attended primary school in the 1999/2000 academic year. This leaves nearly one child in five of primary age (one girl in four) still out-of-school. Djibouti was at the bottom of the ladder for enrolment, with only 30% of its primary-age children in school. It also had the biggest gap between enrolment rates of boys and girls in primary school, with only slightly more than 35% of primary age boys in school and just over 26% of girls.

On the other hand, the report shows that in all countries except Sudan, girls are less likely to repeat grades than boys in primary school. Regionally only 6% of girls repeated a year, as against 9% of boys, although these figures mask big differences between countries. Jordan, for example, had the lowest overall rate of repetition (1%), and Tunisia the highest (16%).

More than 90% of primary pupils throughout the region completed the primary cycle, however, girls had a slight edge in most countries except in the United Arab Emirates, where 93% of boys completed primary school compared to 92% of girls.
At the secondary level, states the report, some 22.5 million students of all ages, or 60% of the population of secondary school age (approx. 12-18 years), were enrolled in the survey year. Of this total just under 10.6 million, or 47%, were girls. Once again, these figures masked substantial differences between countries, and the report notes that participation rates in secondary education were considerably lower than primary schooling.

According to the report, primary pupils were most likely to make the transition to secondary school in Bahrain (98%), Jordan (97%), the Palestinian Autonomous Territories (96%), United Arab Emirates (96%), and Oman (95%). In Algeria and Tunisia, the report found that only two out of every three pupils made the move from primary to secondary school.

The report found that proportionally more girls than boys of secondary school age were enrolled at this level. For example, 87% of secondary school-age girls were enrolled in Bahrain, as against 77% of secondary school-age boys. In Jordan, 78% of girls in this age group were enrolled, compared to 73% of boys in the same category.

As with primary education, girls also outshone the boys in all 13 countries that provided the relevant data, although the report signals that repetition rates at secondary level were generally high for both sexes. In Algeria, 31% of boys repeated compared to 24% of girls. In Tunisia, 20% of boys repeated against 17% of girls. And in Saudi Arabia, 12% of boys repeated and only 6% of girls.

Each of the countries involved has at least one institution of tertiary education. The report noted though, that “a great many students [...] go abroad to complete their training,” either to Europe and North America or in other Arab States.

During the survey year, some five million students were enrolled in tertiary courses, of whom just over two million, or nearly 40%, were women. Women’s participation in tertiary education was markedly less than that of men in Iraq, Djibouti, Morocco and the Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

Social Science, business and law are the most favoured subjects, and accounted for one third of students in the Palestinian Autonomous Territories. In Saudi Arabia, 50% of tertiary students chose education as their field of study, compared to only 2% in Morocco and Lebanon. Least favoured subjects were agriculture and services.

According to the report, a large proportion of the teaching staff throughout the region are women. They account for three-quarters of teachers at pre-primary level and 52% of primary teachers. Their numbers fall considerably at the tertiary level: data were not available for the survey years, but in 1998/99, they made up only 25 percent of the tertiary teaching force.

The majority of these teachers, according to the report, were qualified. The only country where this was not the case was Lebanon, where, for example, only one primary teacher in five met nationally-defined pre-service qualification standards.

Pupil teacher ratios vary greatly throughout the region, ranging from a low of 12 primary pupils per teacher in Saudi Arabia to 45 in Mauritania. The median for the 15 countries that supplied data is 23 pupils per teacher.

Private enrolments are very low in the majority of countries, except in Lebanon (66% in primary and 53% in secondary) and the United Arab Emirates (45% and 32%, respectively).

Public spending on education varies greatly from country to country. With 9.5% of its GDP devoted to education, Saudi Arabia is the region’s biggest investor in education, followed by Tunisia (7.5%). On the other hand, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and Mauritania allocate
only two to 3% of GDP to education. Percentages for the other countries range from 3.4% in the Syrian Arab Republic, to almost 5% in Morocco.

These figures represent a big increase in education spending throughout the region over the past four decades. This investment “has paid off”, states the report: between 1960 and 1985 the time children spent in school increased by an average two and a half years.

The report also notes the number of women participating in the labour market greatly increased over the past 20 years, “although in general they have lesser-paid jobs than do men.”

Nonetheless, it found that one man in three and one woman in two was still illiterate in the Arab States. Iraq had the highest overall illiteracy rate (61%) and Jordan the lowest (12%). The countries where female illiteracy rates were highest were Iraq (77%), Yemen (76%), Mauritania (71%) and Morocco (65%).

UNESCO Media Services http://www.learningchannel.org/cgi
Annex 5:

**Southern (Lebanon) literacy program targets women**

*SCHEME HAMPERED BY SOCIAL CONFINES AND LACK OF FUNDING*

Paul Cochrane  
Special to The Daily Star  
Wednesday July 2, 2003

Struggling against the odds and facing an uncertain future, a literacy program in the Southern village of Toulin has been set up to teach women how to read and write. Abbas Awali, a UNIFIL staff member, independently initiated a literacy project two years ago, realizing the need for women to have education.

“When you educate a woman, you educate a whole family,” he said, “but many women did not get a school education, as men were given the priority, and there were few schools in the area.”

The village of Toulin only got a school 25 years ago. Economic factors and the Israeli occupation caused women’s education to suffer. To counter this a class was set up to teach women how to read and write, but before the class could start a “psychological barrier,” as Abbas expressed it, had to be crossed.

“The first step was a visit to each house to talk to the husband to emphasize the worth of education, and gain permission for his wife to attend the classes. All the men agreed,” he said.

A great deal of encouragement was needed to convince the women to attend the classes, for the women “needed to be brave enough to be seen by their children holding an exercise book, and not to be embarrassed by studying at the same time,” Abbas said.

“The first month was needed to emphasize the importance of learning and how you can create a new woman through education.” The first “shock” the women experienced was finding how hard it was to learn, Abbas explained, as the women had never received formal education.

“So a great deal of patience was needed by the teachers, who had to understand that some women would have different learning abilities, and that aside from studying, the women have a lot of responsibility in the home,” he said.

The class was organized twice a week for two hours, but had to be at different times to fit into the women’s family life, and in the summer, around the tobacco-picking season. Initially, funding came from the Humanitarian Medical Development (HMD) NGO, and the Irish Battalion affiliated with UNIFIL.

However, the funding that was needed to pay for the teachers, books and stationary, dried up not long after the Irish Army withdrew from Lebanon, so the classes stopped for three months.

“This was disheartening for the women, and hard to convince them to return to the program when it restarted. I had to provide my own personal assurances that it would continue indefinitely, and go around the families again,” Abbas said.

A lot of the women had forgotten most of what they had learned, as to reach a reasonable standard, to read a newspaper or write a letter, a mastery of grammar and classical Arabic is needed, which can take up to two years.
“We could not charge the women for the classes, as they would not come, so providing the teaching and materials is an incentive,” Abbas said.

Doctor Victoria Firmo-Fontan, a lecturer at the University of Limerick in Ireland, took 13 students of the university’s Irish Peace Society to Lebanon in February for a conflict resolution course. Part of the trip was to donate money to worthy causes, such as the literacy project. “The reason I got the group involved was for the students to realize that education is a progressive process, not a privilege,” she said.

“Education is highly polarized in Lebanon, and it is important to have projects that can give hope to a component of society that has been neglected in the reconstruction of the South,” Firmo-Fontan said.

On visiting a literacy class, held in a dark, scarcely furnished classroom in the local village hall, there were 12 women aged between 30 and 50, along with some young children who could not be left alone at home.

“I have learnt a lot, and am happy at the progress I am making in the class. I do not want it to end,” one of the women said, proudly showing her exercise book filled neatly with Arabic script.

To fund such a class, around $400 a month is needed to pay a teacher and provide educational materials, with a certain amount donated to cover the maintenance of the building.

Recently, the program has been gaining ground, with the women in a two to three month period, “learning the alphabet and how to write their names from scratch,” Abbas said.

“There are many requests in the three surrounding villages for classes, but we do not have the funding. Already, we are using volunteer teachers and one is paid a half salary. For the long term, this cannot go on, for we need continuous financial support. When the Irish Army was here there was more hope, but now financial and humanitarian aid in the area is very limited,” he said.

Firmo-Fontan said that “there must now be an emphasis on Lebanese financial support, which should be nonaligned with any political group. Continued, external financial donations are often hard to sustain, and equally, to keep donators involved in the long term.”

Abbas has also set up a library for the village in an attempt to encourage people to read more, gaining a $1000 grant a year ago from UNIFIL. “People are borrowing books and we ask for a donation of 1000LL, but with limited income, and the expense of books, the development of the library is very slow,” he said.

Abbas also invites teachers and professors to give lectures on certain topics at the village hall.

“They discuss current affairs, education, history, and doctors come to talk about medical issues like HIV, for anyone who wants to come and participate.” The main concern for Abbas is to increase the two classes, of around 10 women per session, expand the project to other villages, and find a secure financial source.
Annex 6:

**A Society Free of Illiteracy:**

**A Saudi Plan for al Madinah al Munawara**

As a way of eradicating illiteracy the Saudi Ministry of Education has adopted a number of plans rather than a single plan to fit all. One of these plans is the Illiteracy-free Madinah al Munawara Plan. One of its most outstanding characteristics is that it includes reading, writing, numeracy and the fundamentals of religion. At the end of two years, students will be ready to join an intensified version of basic education in the formal education system.

The High Committee of Illiteracy Eradication and Adult Education has widened its educational scope. Instead of presenting these educational programmes in schools, it has chosen to carry them out anywhere there are illiterate people, be it the mosque, the market, the street.

A number of projects have emerged under this plan, such as literacy programmes for workers at their worksites, or literacy programmes aimed at entire villages or cities. The Illiteracy-free Madina al Munawara is one such project.

**Aims of the project:**
- Deepening the love of Allah among the learners
- Providing them with the basics of religious teaching
- Spreading knowledge among the target group through sermons, lectures, seminars, formal programmes, distribution of leaflets, or other appropriate means
- Eradicating illiteracy in Madinah of both the native population and foreign residents, male and female, and declaring Madinah illiteracy free by the end of two years
- Contributing to lowering the rate of illiteracy in the entire Kingdom by expanding this programme to other cities

**Target population:**
The programme is aimed at illiterate natives and foreign residents, males and females between the age of 15 and 45. However, illiterate people of different age groups who wish to join will be given a chance to do so.

It will also be aimed at both the employed and the unemployed. Those employed will be reached at their worksites and those who are unemployed will join centers in the areas where they live.

**Teachers:** teachers fall into four groups
1. Those who are already taking part in literacy programmes or other areas of education
2. Those who are retired and still have the ability and willingness to participate
3. Educated citizens who wish to take part in the programme provided they have at least a General Secondary Certificate
4. Qualified volunteers and those capable and willing to work on the project

**Curriculum:**
The curriculum is entitled "Awareness and Illiteracy Eradication Programme". It will include the following broad topics:
1. The Holy Qur’an, Monotheism, and Islamic Jurisprudence
2. Reading and writing
3. Mathematics

The Curriculum has been designed to meet the following criteria:
1. Islamic Jurisprudence; the Holy Qur’an; the Prophet’s Traditions; the biographies of the Prophets companions
2. Culture and conduct that conform to Islamic Jurisprudence and will offer learners life experiences closely related to their own lives and interests
3. Social issues as they relate to the needs and demands of life in Saudi society
4. Reading, writing and mathematics

**Study Plan:** to achieve the desired goals of the programmes, the study plan is divided into 366 hours or nine months, i.e. 36 weeks of 10 hours a week at the rate of 2 hours a day, distributed as follows:
1. 2 hours x 36 weeks: Islamic science and culture
2. 7 hours x 36 weeks: reading and writing
3. 1 hour x 36 weeks: mathematics
4. 6 hours devoted to sitting for exams
Locations:
Classrooms play an important role in creating a stable learning atmosphere. Classrooms should take the following conditions into account:
1. The location should be accessible to the student and should contribute to the learning and teaching process
2. The size of the classroom should be appropriate to the number of learners
3. They should be well equipped and comfortable

A number of other locations can also be used: Clubs, voluntary societies, state and private schools, work places, public libraries, mosques, training centers.

Support for the programme:
Every sector of society will be asked to support this programme through awareness raising, lectures, seminars, guidance, and cultural meetings.

Stages of Implementation:
The preparatory stage will take 36 weeks in which the following tasks will be accomplished:
1. Identifying, classifying and informing participants
2. Providing them with incentives to join
3. Identifying the executive offices overseeing the programme
4. Identifying the volunteers and training them
5. Preparing the curriculum
6. Training the employment organization
7. Preparing and furnishing the locations
8. Starting classes and instruction

Assessment and Evaluation
- Target students will be evaluated continually according to a form designed for that purpose
- Education supervisors from the school system will supervise the project on an ongoing basis
- Supervisors from the Ministry of Education’s Adult Education Trusteeship will conduct occasional supervisory visits to the project
- Adult education specialists will prepare assessment and evaluation forms for the project
- National and international organizations will take part in the assessment and evaluation process in preparation for applying it throughout the Kingdom.

Final Report
- Every work team will submit a periodic progress report
- Every participating sector will submit a detailed report on the activities done, the achievements gained from each activity, the number of people who benefited
- A committee will be formed to prepare the final report
- The comprehensive report will detail activities, achievements, results, benefits, problems faced, difficulties at each level and how they were overcome.