

**Report of the
Second Meeting of the
Consultative Group in Preparation of CONFINTEA VI**
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)
21-23 November 2007



The meeting at UIL was the second of the CONFINTEA VI Consultative Group (CG), which serves as an advisory committee to give guidance on the preparation of the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI). The group had met for the first time in Helsingør, Denmark, in March 2007, hosted by the Danish Government.

Members of the CG represent UNESCO Member States, UN Agencies, development agencies, inter-governmental bodies, international or regional non-governmental organizations, academics, the CONFINTEA VI host country and UNESCO (Headquarters, Regional Bureaux and UIL). *Detailed list of participants is attached.*

Objectives of the meeting were as follows:

1. The broad objective was to review the overall progress in the CONFINTEA VI preparation, including the developments in the host country and the possible contributions from members of the CG.

More particularly, the meeting aimed at:

2. Finalizing the guidelines to be sent to UNESCO Member States for the preparation of their national reports;
3. Discussing an overall thematic structure, plans for research-based preparatory activities, and the development of adult education/learning benchmarks; and
4. Planning the regional preparatory conferences.

This report, while attempting to mirror individual inventions of participants, summarizes the main outcomes of the discussions under the four objectives.

1. Overall Progress towards CONFINTEA VI, Related Challenges and Stakeholder Contributions

UIL reported the new developments emanating from the 34th UNESCO General Conference and presented the current road map towards CONFINTEA VI. Following the resolutions, four major international UNESCO conferences will be held in 2008/2009:

- November 2008: the International Conference on Education (ICE) in Geneva,
- March/April 2009: the International Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Bonn,
- May 2009: CONFINTEA VI in Brazil
- July 2009: the International Conference on Higher Education in Paris. *Road map as of January 2008 is attached.*

To help clarify the complex preparatory process, UIL reiterated the fact that CONFINTEA VI will be an official inter-governmental UNESCO-led conference (category II). This will have to be observed at all levels and has a number of implications:

- The UNESCO Executive Board will have to approve the list of invitees, the invitation letter and programme of CONFINTEA VI. The invitation letters will be signed by UNESCO's Director-General.
- For the regional preparatory conferences, which will also be inter-governmental conferences, the convening power rests with the respective UNESCO Regional Office.
- Invitations will be addressed to UNESCO National Commissions in the Member States. The Commissions will be responsible for the composition of their national delegations to take part in the conferences. In addition, UIL will attempt to gain approval to send invitations to selected non-governmental organizations working in education and having official relations with UNESCO.
- As the National Commissions will be responsible for the composition of their national delegations, one of the critical aims of the CONFINTEA VI process is to encourage and help to build partnerships at national, regional and international levels between governments, universities, civil society and the private sector. The aim is to ensure that both the regional preparatory conferences and the global CONFINTEA VI conference itself are integrated and inclusive, instead of being divided into separate gatherings for different categories of participants.
- In the past, UN conferences often have had two parallel stages: a closed governmental conference and a separate meeting for civil society groups. CONFINTEA V in 1997 was a turning point in that it provided a combined forum within the official conference, and the intention is to have the same arrangement for CONFINTEA VI. This could be jeopardized if civil society organizations hold their own separate consultations beforehand.
- However, in the event of a vote or a disagreement, either at the regional conferences or at CONFINTEA VI, only governmental delegations will be entitled to vote or to resolve the disagreement. To date, this has not been necessary because decisions have been reached by consensus.

Unfortunately, the CG member representing the CONFINTEA VI host country, Brazil, suffered an accident right before the meeting and had to cancel his participation at very short notice. A brief report forwarded to UIL was presented to the CG. It gave an account of the preparatory steps carried out in Brazil, including:

- the official launch of the national process in Brazil, on the occasion of National Meeting of Adult and Youth Education in September 2007;
- creation of two Brazilian preparatory working groups, one within the Ministry of Education and the other inter-ministerial;
- preparation and exploration of proposals from various cities in Brazil to act as the venue for the CONFINTEA VI conference (possibly Belém, Fortaleza or Salvador);
- initiation of a national process of mobilization, culminating in a national conference planned for May 2008;
- finalization of the date for CONFINTEA VI by the last week of May (25 – 29).

It was pointed out by the representatives of UNESCO that it will be important for CONFINTEA VI to contribute to the recently adopted Medium-Term Strategy of UNESCO and to the priorities for the biennium 2008-2009. With a view to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008 *Will We Make It?* which describes some progress in EFA but criticizes the increasing focus on primary education, it will be crucial for CONFINTEA VI to ensure:

- regained attention to adult education;
- integration with other international initiatives such as EFA, MDGs, UNLD, and DESD;
- coordination between the global, national and local levels;
- synergies between basic education, literacy, TVET, formal, non-formal, informal as well as between the different international conferences on education.

It will be equally crucial for CONFINTEA VI to provide an answer to the overall question: education for what? Evidence needs to be gathered to show that it is worth investing in education.

Other CG members reported on recent related work and their potential contributions to the CONFINTEA VI process as follows:

- ILO is currently producing a report on the skills needed for employability and productivity. This report will analyse what other factors, besides education, have an impact on productivity, and it will be a useful contribution for the research on adult learning skills and competencies in preparation of CONFINTEA VI.
- For UNICEF one of the key functions of CONFINTEA VI is to bring together the different worlds of learning within the concept of lifelong learning. UNICEF could contribute its life-cycle approach and experiences in family literacy.
- The European Commission will be an important partner and co-funder of the European Preparatory CONFINTEA VI Conference. In their recently finalized action plan for adult learning, *It is Always a Good Time to Learn*, key messages and key actions up to 2012 are indicated. A similar focus would be beneficial for CONFINTEA VI: What are the two to three priority areas that need to be tackled in the adult education in the future (up to CONFINTEA VII), such as quality of education, learning outcomes and recognition of prior learning?
- The International Council for Adult Education and its regional branches will pay attention to the involvement of civil society in the CONFINTEA VI process, in particular in the coming national reporting process, for which ICAE will provide information to its members so that they are prepared. ICAE will focus on developing and contributing to the following thematic areas: (a) literacy and basic education; (b) adult learning and the world of work; (c) adult learning in the context of migration/cultural diversity/intercultural exchange; (d) policy/financing/legislation in relation to adult learning; (e) adult learning for poverty eradication; (f) removal of barriers to learning. In May 2008, ICAE members will meet to analyse these areas further.
- In addition the Asian South-Pacific Bureau on Adult Education can make a contribution to CONFINTEA VI through their experiences in the pilot initiative

“Education Watch”, which aims to grassroots level data, for example on adult literacy.

- The European-Asian Research Network will be explore specific areas of adult learning, such as the development of ICT skills, the professionalization of adult educators, and a comparative analysis of lifelong learning policies and frameworks.
- It was also pointed out that several countries, such as Brazil and Uruguay, have already formed national committees for the preparation of CONFINTEA VI.

2. Guidelines for the Preparation of CONFINTEA VI National Reports

As CONFINTEA VI will be an inter-governmental conference (category II), national reporting is mandatory for all Member States. The reports will provide the basis for the following CONFINTEA VI documents:

- The regional syntheses to inform the Regional Preparatory Conferences;
- The Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) (*see section 3.2*);
- The working document for the CONFINTEA VI conference.

It is recognized that countries are overburdened by reports demanded of them in relation to various agendas, such as EFA, MDGs, UNLD, LIFE etc. Thus, whereas the previous requests to Member States for CONFINTEA reports were in the form of detailed questionnaires, those for CONFINTEA VI are intended to be more focused and mainly to address questions such as:

- What has happened in the adult learning and education field since CONFINTEA V?
- What are the new issues and concerns that have emerged?
- What are the cross-cutting issues that can be discussed globally?

Providing Member States with guidelines, rather than a questionnaire, should give them the flexibility and space for more substantial information.

Following the presentation of UIL’s draft guidelines, there was a long and fruitful discussion during the CG meeting on the guidelines themselves. Some of the points that were made included the following:

- The guidelines should not only be retrospective but should also include forward-looking and analytical questions to increase the value of the reports.
- The means of data collection used by countries may be insufficient, and this could affect the quality of data that they can produce. Ideally, alternative sources from within or outside the countries would be also used so as to ensure a comprehensive assessment.
- In order to produce good quality national reports, both technical and financial support would be helpful at the national level.
- Treating adult literacy as a separate element might seem to imply that literacy is not part of adult learning or that adult learning is only about literacy. Questions were raised as to whether literacy should not be a transversal issue rather than a separate one. The final position, however, was that as adult literacy is one of the most neglected EFA goals, and the CONFINTEA VI process needs to make sure that it is given more attention.

- The national reports should not be written by one ministry or the National Commission; rather, they should be the result of a process which involves all the important adult learning and education stakeholders in the country, including civil society.

It was agreed that the guidelines should provide clear recommendations for countries to involve stakeholders (government ministries, civil society, university and the private sector), and to encourage national debates as well as a national validation, e.g., through a concluding workshop. In this sense, the preparation of the report should be a mechanism for mobilisation and open debate.

In order for the process to be genuinely inclusive and to be based on partnerships, three months might not be sufficient. However, the results of the national reporting will be central for the regional preparatory conferences, which are scheduled from the summer of 2008 onwards. The deadline for the submission of national reports to UIL was set for the end of March 2008. *Final version guidelines are attached.*

3.1 Thematic Structure for CONFINTEA VI

In the discussion on the thematic structure, the goals of CONFINTEA VI were reiterated, namely to draw renewed attention to the importance and social benefits of adult learning and education, ensure implementation of related policy recommendations, and to have adult learning and education feature more strongly within EFA, the MDGs and other international development frameworks. The overall idea is for CONFINTEA VI is to make a difference.

Hence, CONFINTEA VI will approach the field of adult learning and education (ALE) from a structural and political perspective, and not attempt to explore the full range of areas related to adult learning and education in the same way as CONFINTEA V did in 1997.

The discussion generated a thematic structure to guide CONFINTEA VI and the preparatory phase. It comprises a set of lenses with which to explore and analyse the field of adult learning and education and to provide answers to related questions:

- **Context and Challenges:** How has ALE evolved, and what are the major issues it is confronted with in the contemporary world? Why is ALE of key importance in addressing these challenges?
- **Policies, Conditions and Structures:** What has to be put in place in order to ensure good quality ALE?
- **Participation and Inclusion:** How can the mobilizing and integrative potential of ALE best be tapped?
- **Quality:** What are the factors which determine ALE of good quality?
- **The way forward:** What are the key messages and benchmarks for ALE that CONFINTEA VI will produce? *CONFINTEA VI Guiding Thematic Structure is attached.*

Nevertheless, a few selected thematic areas of adult learning and education will be focused on, among them adult literacy as one of the priority areas. Other possible thematic areas include migration and cultural diversity, democracy and civil society, life chances and the world of work. The analysis of national reports might generate additional specific themes, while regional priority areas are expected to emerge from the regional assessment processes and conferences. Within the themes, it will be crucial to highlight key objectives of adult learning and education, namely poverty eradication, social inclusion, justice, sustainable development, employability/career development, productivity, etc.

3.2 Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)

Key results from the national reports will also be a source for the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE), the production of which was suggested by the CG during their first meeting in March 2007. Apart from the findings of the national reports, GRALE will also contain specific and focused studies which will be commissioned to support the evidence. After the presentation of UIL's draft concept paper for GRALE, the discussion resulted in the following points:

- The structure of GRALE should correspond with the structure of the guidelines for national reporting, as well as with the guiding thematic structure for CONFINTEA VI.
- GRALE should include lessons learnt, success stories and good practice, but should also be forward-looking and visionary. GRALE should fulfill three key functions: it should be a reference, a standard for accountability, and an advocacy document.
- In terms of content, GRALE should also explore the educational role of media and provide an advocacy tool for them. A section should be included in which the different international initiatives and decades are summarised and analysed in relation to their similar goals and in terms of learning.
- The further elaboration of adult learning and education benchmarks will be pursued in the framework of GRALE or as one of its research components.
- To avoid creating another committee, the CG should function as the GRALE editorial board.
- Ideally, GRALE would not be a one-time report but the beginning of a continuous global reporting (monitoring and evaluation) mechanism on adult learning and education, complementary to the EFA Global Monitoring Report. *Revised GRALE concept paper is attached.*

3.3 Title/Motto for CONFINTEA VI

A brainstorming on a possible title for CONFINTEA VI ensued, based on the attempt to generate a visionary and stimulating motto which captures the complex background and objectives of CONFINTEA VI. The following new options were produced:

- "Connecting the different worlds of learning"
- "One world of learning"

- “MDGs: Mind the development gaps”
- “Knowledge – a gateway to development”
- “Learning – a gateway to productivity, growth and peace”
- “A gateway to a sustainable and just world”
- “World of learning for peace and sustainability”
- “Bringing adult learning back”
- “We cannot reach the MDGs if we don’t give due attention to adult learning”
- “One world of learning for a second chance and sustainable development”
- “Adult learning: one world of learning for sustainable development”
- “Adult learning: from rhetoric to action”
- “Investing in adult learning – a gateway to a sustainable and just world.”

However, none of these options was deemed satisfactory. It was decided to sub-contract a professional marketing firm in order to proceed.

4. CONFINTEA VI Regional Preparatory Conferences

The regional preparatory conferences are a key element of the CONFINTEA VI process. These conferences, together with the national reports, will help to filter thematic issues to be addressed during the global CONFINTEA VI conference. Following UIL’s consultation and negotiation with Member States, preparations for the following regional conferences have been undertaken:

Africa: Kenya, first week of August 2008

- An informal meeting was held with the Kenyan Permanent Delegate to UNESCO to discuss conditions and the possibility of holding the conference in Nairobi.
- Informal consultations have taken place with the Ministry of Culture, Gender and Social Services (hosting the Department of Adult Education) since March 2007, when it was suggested during the first meeting of the Consultative Group that Kenya could be the host for the African Regional Preparatory Meeting.
- Informal discussions have started with several regional NGO associations based in Nairobi, including DVV-International.
- A preparatory committee will be put together in early 2008, which will be composed of representatives from a wide range of Kenyan stakeholders.
- Regional priority themes are beginning to crystallize.
- It is important to approach the African Union (AU) and the Conference of African Ministers of Education (COMEDAF) to ensure that they are involved in order to make the conference truly regional and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). ADEA’s Biennial Conference 2008 will be held in Maputo, Mozambique, in May with a focus on post-primary education.
- UNESCO’s Regional Bureau for Education (BREDA) was requested to take the lead in the preparation.

Latin America and the Caribbean: Mexico, 10 – 13 September 2008

- In the LAC region, the preparatory conference for CONFINTEA VI will be combined with the regional Global Literacy Conference. This decision is due to the fact that three major conferences in the region during the same year would otherwise take place. Thus, merging two of those for which UNESCO will be responsible was deemed the best solution.
- The regional assessment resulting from the national reports will be a key document for the conference in Mexico.
- A formal confirmation from UNESCO's Director-General (in response to Mexico's letter of proposal) is very important.

Asia and South Pacific: South Korea, 17 – 22 November 2008

- Following a number of informal discussions with the UNESCO National Commission for UNESCO, the Ministry of Education has forwarded an official proposal to host the regional CONFINTEA VI preparatory meeting in November.

Pan-European Region: Hungary, December 2008

- France and Hungary submitted formal proposals to UNESCO to host the regional conference in Europe. Portugal gave an informal indication of its interest.
- For reasons of regional balance, the Director-General of UNESCO decided that Hungary should host the regional conference, while France is asked to prepare the development of the literacy theme and/or the theme of recognition, validation and accreditation of prior, informal and non-formal learning for CONFINTEA VI, including a respective international meeting.
- Although UNESCO's Pan-European region includes the entire continent and even Canada, USA and Israel, the EU Commission will be an important partner and co-funder for the regional conference, as will the European Association for Adult Education (EAEA).

The Arab States: January 2009

- The host country for the Arabic region has not yet been selected. It is expected that all the countries in the region will be consulted before the decision is made, possibly before the end of the year 2007.
- It will be very important to involve regional partners such as the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) as well as Arab NGO and CSO networks.
- As the Arab region is the last to hold the preparatory conference, it will also benefit from the other experiences.

Next Steps

- The third meeting of the CG will be held from 18 to 20 June 2008 at UIL, Hamburg. It will assess the (draft) analysis of the national reports and review the preparations for the regional conferences starting in August.

- The attached guidelines for national reporting can be used by all members of the CG to support the national mobilization.
- Any suggestions for the list of invitees for either the regional preparatory conferences as well as for the CONFINTEA VI global conference should be sent to UIL as soon as possible. This includes also high profile people who should be invited (former heads of state, public figures etc.)