

**Report of the
First Meeting of the Consultative Group in
Preparation of CONFINTEA VI**

The International People's College
Helsingor, Denmark
1 – 2 March 2007



A. Background

The Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) will be part of the series of global platforms for policy dialogue and advocacy on adult education and learning which have been organized by UNESCO every twelve to thirteen years since 1949. The first CONFINTEA took place in Helsingor (Denmark) at the International People's College in 1949, followed by conferences held in Montreal (Canada) in 1960, Tokyo (Japan) in 1972, Paris (France) in 1985, and finally in Hamburg (Germany) in 1997.

In November 2006, the Executive Board of UNESCO requested the Director-General of UNESCO during its 175th session to make the necessary arrangements for the organization of CONFINTEA VI in 2009. Reaffirming its leadership role in literacy, non-formal education, adult and lifelong learning, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) was entrusted with coordinating the preparation of the conference, in cooperation with UNESCO Headquarters and Regional Bureaus and the CONFINTEA VI Host Country.

Given the cross-sectoral nature of adult education and learning and in line with the tradition of previous UNESCO-led CONFINTEA conferences, the preparation of CONFINTEA VI will be based on a broad consultative process and partnerships with education stakeholders from UNESCO Member States, sister UN Agencies and international development partners, civil society, research institutions, the private sector and learners.

One critical element in the consultation process will be the **Consultative Group**, which will function as the key conceptual unit and advisory committee during the preparatory phase for CONFINTEA VI. The Group:

- Is composed of approximately 10-15 persons with an education expert profile, reflecting an institutional, geographic and gender balance;
- Represents UNESCO Member States, UN Agencies, development agencies, international or regional non-governmental organizations and academicians, the CONFINTEA VI host country and UNESCO (Headquarters, Regional Bureaus and UIL); and
- Is expected to convene twice a year in 2007 and 2008, and once in 2009.

The meeting in Helsingor at the International People's College was the first get-together of the Consultative Group. It was hosted by the Danish Government through the Danish National Commission.

B. Objectives of the Meeting

The main objective of the first meeting of the Consultative Group was to discuss and collect **suggestions and recommendations for the vision, overall orientation and focus on CONFINTEA VI.**

Furthermore, the meeting was meant to meet the following objectives:

- To spell out what difference CONFINTEA VI should make, and what the expected outcomes will be,
- To outline strategies for the preparation and organization of CONFINTEA VI, To determine the next steps and contributions in the process, and
- To clarify the role and function of the Consultative Group.

I. Vision, Overall Orientation and Focus of CONFINTEA VI

As discussed and agreed upon by the Consultative Group members, the CONFINTEA VI preparatory process and the conference as well as the follow-up will be based on three major principles:

First, CONFINTEA VI will push forward the recognition of **adult learning and education as an important element of and factor conducive to lifelong learning**, of which literacy is the foundation.

Secondly, CONFINTEA VI will highlight **the crucial role of adult learning and education for the realization of current international education and development agendas (EFA, UNLD, LIFE, DESD, and MDGs)** by creating the respective articulation and constituting a “meeting point” for the other agendas.

Thirdly, CONFINTEA VI will take implementation at its heart: it will create political momentum and commitment and come up with the tools for implementation in order to move **“from rhetoric to action”**.

Overall, the Consultative Group confirmed the importance of inter-sectorality and partnerships: While CONFINTEA VI will be a “UNESCO-led” conference, it will be based on the participation of stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds and the inclusion of a broad range of concerns and issues relevant to adult learning from their perspectives. The initial collection includes:

Contextual concerns and issues:

- the right to adult learning,
- democracy, conflict resolution, peace-building and respect for diversity,
- migration and integration,
- gender-related barriers, rural-urban divides and marginalization, and
- building “learning societies”.

Programmatic and content-related concerns and issues:

- literacy, as one of the central issues,
- recognition of informal learning and previous qualifications,

- learning at work, re-training, upgrading, employment-related issues,
- the quality of adult education (access, participation, indicators, benchmarks, technology), and
- structures and regulations of adult education (policy, legislation, financing/funding schemes, professionalization of adult educators).

Concerns and issues with a view to specific target populations:

- women,
- out-of-school youth,
- rural populations, and
- marginalized populations.

However, while applying a holistic perspective which aims at convergence and respects diversity, **CONFINTEA VI will prioritize and be selective**, both in the thematic focus (e.g. not taking up again the ten themes of CONFINTEA V but identifying priority themes and main challenges) as well as in the procedure. At the same time, CONFINTEA VI will capitalize on the lessons learnt from recent developments and from the (systemic and economic) barriers and blocks to implementation.

II. What difference and outcomes will CONFINTEA VI generate?

The Consultative Group reiterated the need for the **overall outcome** of CONFINTEA VI to be **moving from rhetoric to action**. Concretely this will entail the following results and products:

- advocacy, political momentum and commitment for adult learning and education generated,
- synergies with the EFA, UNLD, LIFE, DESD agendas and the MDGs ensured,
- links and interfaces with other areas (e.g. health, agriculture) created,
- cooperation (between governments, bi-lateral organizations and UN agencies) increased,
- new financing possibilities (e.g. commitment of international development organizations and south-south cooperation) developed and applied,
- professional growth and quality in adult education improved, and
- a final conference document (e.g. “framework for action”) adopted, with tools (e.g. benchmarks) to measure progress and to ensure implementation.

Empowerment, understood in a holistic way, will be pursued as an additional central outcome, namely:

- the empowerment of all actors: policy makers (giving them the right tools and understanding and possible solutions), professionals/practitioners, researchers, and the private sector, and adult and out-of-school learners (through having their voices and needs taken into consideration and discussed),
- empowerment as a result of the learning experience through exchanging on policies, practices and new approaches, and through further disseminating/highlighting the expanded vision of literacy.

III. Strategies for the Preparation and Organization Of CONFINTEA VI

The preparatory strategy for CONFINTEA VI will be based on several pillars:

- 1) **national reporting** (on the basis of questionnaires and selected benchmarks),
- 2) **regional preparatory meetings** (ideally with national reports already prepared for the meetings),
- 3) **thematic consultation and reviews** (coordinated as well as independent),
- 4) a **communication and advocacy strategy** (possibly mobilizing journalists to write articles), and
- 5) **partnerships** between UN Agencies, international development partners, civil society, research institutions, the private sector and learners.

Central elements in the preparatory and follow-up strategies will be the development of **benchmarks** to measure progress and barriers, advocate and create commitment, and the collection of research-based **evidence** to highlight why adult learning and education are of key importance, which will include:

- the national and regional reports and thematic reviews,
- selected cases of successful/effective practice,
- commissioned studies (e.g. by UN agencies and other organizations/actors) to help understand barriers and to highlight options,
- commissioned studies summarizing and disseminating already existing research results to practitioners and policy makers,
- the preparation of a Global Adult Education Report, and
- stories and voices of adult learners and out-of-school youth, and their participation in the consultation as well as in the analysis.

IV. Next Steps and Contributions in the Preparatory and Organizational Strategies

Subsequent to the first meeting of the Consultative Group and in response to the candidacy presented by the Brazilian Minister of Education, the UNESCO Director-General confirmed in April 2007 during the 176th UNESCO Executive Board session that **Brazil will host the CONFINTEA VI conference in May 2009**, and invited UNESCO Member States to contribute and participate in all consultations pertaining to the process.

Regarding the **CONFINTEA VI Regional Preparatory Meetings**, various proposals have been informally made for the venue. In Latin America, the UNESCO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC) suggested to organize the meeting in conjunction with the Regional Literacy Meeting in Costa Rica in May 2008 (as part of the Global Literacy Campaign and LIFE), while Mexico has been put forward as another option. Proposals regarding the venue for the regional meetings in the other regions include South Korea for Asia/Pacific in September 2008, Kenya for Africa, and Norway, Hungary, Portugal, France or Ireland for Europe.

The Consultative Group suggested tapping other international and regional meetings as **advocacy** venues for CONFINTEA VI, such as all the Regional Literacy Conferences currently organized in the framework of the Global Literacy Campaign

and LIFE. They could be used as an opportunity to raise the profile of CONFINTEA VI and to reinforce the CONFINTEA VI process by highlighting the relation between literacy and adult education. The UNESCO Director-General will be requested to incorporate a reference to CONFINTEA VI in his welcome addresses during the meetings; this has meanwhile been done in the case of the Regional Meeting in the Arab States (Doha, Qatar) in March 2007.

A special Round Table will be organized by UIL during the next UNESCO General Conference in October 2007. Another major education conference to be tapped for advocacy and the inclusion of CONFINTEA VI concerns is the next International Conference on Education (IBE in 2008), which will focus on “inclusion”. Furthermore, the EFA High Level Group Meeting (December 2007) would be an appropriate forum to highlight CONFINTEA VI.

Partnerships between UN agencies in preparation of CONFINTEA VI are equally evolving. The Consultative Group members representing UNICEF, ILO, FAO and the Swiss Development Corporation indicated their interest to collaborate on identifying good practices in reaching out to rural people through extension.

One important partner from the UN family still to be mobilized and involved in the CONFINTEA VI process is UNDP (possibly via the UN representative at country level), in particular if the central role of adult learning and education for the MDGs is to be highlighted.

The South Korean Consultative Group member will be part of the core group to develop **benchmarks**, on behalf of Asia/Pacific.

Several Consultative Group members indicated that their respective institution could contribute to the compilation of research-based **evidence**. OECD, following its country studies on adult learning policies and practices conducted in seventeen countries (“Beyond Rhetoric” and “Promoting Adult Learning”), could be helpful in extending this review approach to other countries in preparation of CONFINTEA VI. A study on adult learning indicators in Africa could be carried out by the Swiss Development Corporation. FAO is ready to produce a case study on adult education and agriculture, while the International Council for Adult Education will contribute a study on a specific theme, which will be decided later.

UIL, being a member of the Editorial Board of the Global Monitoring Report, will explore whether the upcoming GMR issue which will assess the EFA goals 3 and 4 can be linked to or used for CONFINTEA VI.

With a view to the **formal UNESCO process**, the UNESCO Director-General will be requested to invite the heads of UN Agencies to take part in the CONFINTEA VI. A letter will be sent from the UNESCO Director-General to Member States before autumn 2007, informing them about the CONFINTEA VI process and indicating what is expected of them in the national and regional reporting process. For this as well as other official communication, the official entry points for UNESCO will be the National UNESCO Commissions; they will decide on who will write the national report and on the composition of the delegation to the regional preparatory meetings as well as to the CONFINTEA VI conference in 2009.

A few **tentative titles and mottos** for the CONFINTEA VI conference brainstormed by the Consultative Group included:

- “Adult Learning – Shaping the Competencies for the Future”
- “Adult Learning – a Key for the MDGs”
- “Sustaining Learning, Sustaining Development”
- “Adult Learning – Shaping the Active Participation of People in the Millennium”.

V. Role and Function of the Consultative Group

Following the key principle of CONFINTEA VI moving “from rhetoric to action”, the Consultative Group will assume a central role in providing guidance on how to shape the entire CONFINTEA VI preparatory and follow-up process (including advocacy, communication, mobilization of partners, and monitoring).

The Consultative Group will also provide conceptual clarity and guidance for the priority themes, while ensuring the connection/synergy with other international education and development agendas. It will propose key actors (and possible speakers) and ways of how to incorporate them into the preparatory process. Through its Norwegian member, it will be the link with the UNESCO Executive Board. The overall frame elaborated by the Consultative Group will be inputted into the regional meetings; however, the regions will come up with their own agenda.

However, since CONFINTEA VI will be a “UNESCO category II conference”, a formal **Steering Committee** will be set up for the Conference itself (as well as a more technical drafting committee). In line with the tradition, the President of the Steering Committee will be from the host country, with ministers from different regions acting as vice-presidents. The exact composition of the Steering Committee will be determined as a result of the preparatory/consultative process.

Annex I: Preliminary Road Map leading to CONFINTEA VI

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	September	October	November	December
2007			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st meeting of the Cons Group • Regional Arab Global Literacy Meeting (Doha, Qatar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board of UNESCO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing Board of UIL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCNGO/EFA (Dakar, Senegal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First meeting of the benchmark team (UIL) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional African Literacy Meeting (Bamako, Mali) • International Adult Learner's Week (Manchester, UK) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Conference of UNESCO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd meeting of the Cons Group (at UIL) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Level Group Meeting on EFA (Senegal)
2008				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board of UNESCO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Latin American Global Literacy Meeting (San José, Costa Rica) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tentative: Regional CON-FINTEA VI Meeting in Africa (Kenya)</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tentative: Regional CON-FINTEA VI Meeting in Asia/Pacific (South Korea)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Conference on Education (IBE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tentative: Regional CON-FINTEA VI Meeting in Europe</i> 	
2009			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tentative: Regional CON-FINTEA VI Meeting in the Arab States</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board of UNESCO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONFINTEA VI Conference (Brazil) 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Conference of UNESCO 			

Annex II: Members of the Consultative Group

The following individuals took part in the first Consultative Group meeting, representing:

The Danish Hosts:

- Ms Hjørdis Dalsgaard, General-Secretary, National Commission for UNESCO
- Ms Irene Holse, Head of Education, Ministry of Education
- Mr Nils-Georg Lundberg, Headmaster, Teachers' College

Member States:

- Mr Einar Steensnaes, Director, Oslo Centre for Peace and Human Rights, Member of UNESCO's Executive Board, Norway
- Ms Joyce Kebathi, Director, Adult Education, Ministry of Gender, Culture and Social Services, Kenya
- Mr Timothy Ireland, Director, Youth and Adult Education, Ministry of Education, Brazil

UN Agencies:

- Mr Cooper Dawson, Senior Education Advisor, UNICEF
- Ms Lavinia Gasperini, Senior Officer for Agricultural Education, FAO
- Mr Vladimir Gasskov, Senior Training and Skills Development Specialist, ILO

Multi-lateral Agencies:

- Mr Jean-Marie Byll-Cataria, Senior Advisor, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Member of UIL's Governing Board
- Mr Abrar Hasan, Head of Education and Training, OECD

Non-Governmental Organizations:

- Mr Paul Bélanger, President, International Council of Adult Education
- Mr Heribert Hinzen, Director, Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association, Vice-President of the European Association for the Education of Adults

Academicians:

- Mr Ki-Seok Kim, Professor of Education, Seoul National University, Alternate Member of UIL's Governing Board, South Korea
- Mr Arne Carlsen, Vice-Rector, Danish University of Education, Denmark

UNESCO:

- Mr Abdel Moneim Osman, Director, Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States
- Ms Ann-Therese Ndong Jatta, Director, Division of Basic Education (Headquarters)
- Mr Clinton Robinson, Senior Programme Specialist, Division of Coordination of UN Initiatives, (Headquarters)
- Mr Adama Ouane, Ms Carolyn Medel-Añonuevo, Ms Madhu Singh, Mr Werner Mauch, Ms Laura-Maria Rinta and Ms Bettina Bochynek (Director, Deputy Director and Professional Staff respectively), UIL

The following individuals were invited to the Consultative Group but could not take part in the first meeting:

- Ms Vandana Jena, Director-General, National Literacy Mission, India
- Ms Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan, Secretary-General, Asian South-Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPAAE)
- Ms Marta Ferreira, Directorate A- Lifelong Learning, European Commission