Mobilizing higher education and distance learning assets, capabilities and networks to help accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the Agenda 2063 literacy targets in sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-regional Workshop
13 to 15 June 2017
Hilton Nairobi, Kenya

Jointly organized by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and the University of Nairobi in collaboration with the UNESCO Multi-sectoral Regional Office in Abuja and the UNESCO Multi-sectoral Regional Office in Nairobi
CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

THE UNFINISHED EDUCATION FOR ALL AGENDA

Despite considerable progress over the past 15 years, not all of the Education for All (EFA) targets have been met. Nowhere is this more evident than in the area of adult and youth literacy and basic skills. This is particularly true in the developing world, where the situation, as documented in the UNESCO Institute for Statistics’ Adult and Youth Literacy: National, regional and global trends, 1985–2015, is of great concern. Although adult literacy rates have gone up in all regions, progress has been slow and uneven, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

YOUTH AND ADULT LITERACY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The adult literacy rate in SSA grew by four percentage points, from 53 per cent to 57 per cent, between 1990 and 2000, falling by 2 per cent, from 57 per cent to 59 per cent, in the following 10 years. The progress of youth literacy has been equally disappointing, increasing by just 2 per cent in each of the past two decades. The latest data and projections to 2015 show that SSA is home to over 197 million adults (15 years and above) who lack basic literacy skills, including 47 million youth (15–24 years). SSA also lags behind other regions in key indicators pertaining to quality and equity. Disparities in terms of gender, location and income have been endemic, deep and persistent, with the poor, girls, women and those in remote rural areas disproportionately disadvantaged.

Only in South and West Asia, where populations are much larger, are more adults and young people illiterate. Africa has one-seventh of the population worldwide. Yet it accounts for nearly half of all youth illiterates and more than a quarter of adult illiterates worldwide. Furthermore, 50 per cent of illiterate youth and illiterate adults in SSA live in just six countries. These countries are home to 105 million of the 197 million adult illiterates and 25 million of the 47 million youth who lack basic literacy skills in SSA. In fact, with regard to youth illiteracy, the six countries account for a quarter of all illiterate youth worldwide.

ADULT LITERACY IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4 AND AGENDA 2063

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which captures the overarching aim of the Education 2030 agenda, encapsulates an expanded and more ambitious vision of education for all, guided by the principles of equity, quality and inclusion at all levels of schooling within the context of lifelong learning. It is clear that the issue youth and adult literacy has received more recognition and greater attention this time around. An indication of this is the inclusion of the specific and measurable Target 4.6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy. The African Union’s Agenda 2063 sets an equally ambitious target. In this context, the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL) within the Framework of Lifelong Learning, launched by the Director-General of UNESCO on 8 September 2016, aims to mobilize and coordinate collaborative efforts and collective action at global and regional levels to help countries make demonstrable progress towards SDG4, Target 4.6 in particular.

For SSA, meeting Target 4.6 means making 50 million youth (all those aged 15–24 classified as illiterate in 2015) and at least 177 million


adults (90 per cent of the 197 million aged 15 years and above classified as illiterate in 2015) functionally literate and numerate by 2030. At the same time, it will be important to ensure that no new illiterate youth and adults join the ranks of the existing illiterate population over that period.

WHY HIGHER EDUCATION AND DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS?

Given the profound and persistent challenges confronting SSA and the ambitious targets for the coming 15 years, there is an urgent need for new approaches and new ways of thinking. An important element in any new approach would be to explore all the resources that are available locally in each country and in the sub-region as a whole. In this connection, the higher education sector could serve as a good entry point. The potential of higher education institutions in Africa to serve as a critical vehicle for economic and social transformation has been recognized and documented. The higher education system represents a huge resource of assets, capabilities, and networks that could play a critical role in moving the literacy agenda forward. Most countries in SSA have well-established higher education systems, including a large number of universities. In some countries, there are myriad higher education institutions in each region, and even at district level. In addition, there are 63 UNESCO Chairs in higher education institutions in 24 countries in sub-Saharan African, focusing on a wide range of subjects, including peace, human rights and democracy; environment; health; food security and nutrition, renewable energy; sustainable development; women empowerment; teacher education and training; marine resources; and ICTs and distance learning.

However, this potential remains largely untapped with regard to addressing the literacy challenges. The proposed workshop represents a unique opportunity to bridge this gap in a manner that engages higher education and distance learning institutions, especially universities, to contribute to the strengthening of the adult literacy agenda in their respective countries.

It is against this backdrop that the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and the University of Nairobi (UoN) have, together with UNESCO offices in Abuja and Nairobi, organized a workshop titled ‘Mobilizing higher education and distance learning assets, capabilities and networks to help accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Agenda 2063 literacy targets in sub-Saharan Africa’.

OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the workshop is to strengthen cooperation between ministries of education and higher education and distance learning institutions, with a view to addressing adult literacy challenges. More specifically, the workshop aims to:

- Identify and discuss the key issues, priorities and critical areas of concern regarding youth and adult literacy in Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria.
- Discuss and share information and experiences on the status, size, distribution and core functions of higher education and distance learning institutions in SSA and their potential role and capacity in contributing to the realization of the SDG 4 and Agenda 2063 literacy targets.
- Identify specific and relevant higher education and distance learning assets, capabilities, and networks, which could underpin national efforts towards achieving the SDG 4 and Agenda 2063 literacy targets.

• Propose indicative strategies to mobilize and strategically deploy identified higher education and distance learning assets to address specific adult literacy challenges.

EXPECTED RESULTS

• Key issues and priorities regarding youth and adult literacy in sub-Saharan Africa discussed and identified.
• The potential and role of higher education and distance learning in advancing youth and adult literacy in SSA discussed.
• Relevant higher education and distance learning assets, capabilities and networks identified to help accelerate progress towards literacy targets.
• Indicative strategies proposed to mobilize and deploy identified higher education and distance learning assets to address specific adult literacy challenges.

The knowledge, experiences and insights generated by the workshop will be shared with other countries facing similar challenges in the area of youth and adult literacy in SSA.

PARTICIPATION AND FORMAT

The workshop will bring together a wide range of participants, representing ministries of education, departments of youth and adult literacy, commissions for higher/university education, the International Association of Universities, the African Association of Universities, selected universities, UNESCO Chairs, and distance learning centres.

The workshop will combine three working modalities. Plenary sessions will focus on keynote addresses and presentations, as well as reports from working groups. Deeper discussions and reflections on key issues and challenges will take place in roundtable sessions. Working group sessions will be devoted to the discussion and formulation of recommendations and indicative strategies for the mobilization and deployment of higher education and distance learning assets and capabilities in support of quality and inclusive youth and adult literacy in sub-Saharan Africa.

LANGUAGE

Working language will be English.
# AGENDA

## AGENDA DAY 1: TUESDAY, 13 JUNE 2017

### 09:00 – 11:00  Inaugural session

#### Opening
Moderator: Professor Peter M.F. Mbithi, Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi

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<td>UNESCO Regional Office for West Africa</td>
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<td>Remarks – background to and objectives of the Workshop</td>
<td>UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)</td>
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<th>Keynote address: Higher education assets and capabilities in Africa</th>
<th>Professor Paul Zeleza</th>
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<td>Vice Chancellor, United States International University (USIU), Nairobi, Kenya</td>
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<td>Secretary General, Kenya National Commission for UNESCO</td>
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<th>Official opening Address</th>
<th>Professor Collette Suda</th>
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<td>Principal Secretary, State Department for University Education, The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Kenya</td>
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### 11:00 – 11:30  Coffee/Tea Break

### 11:30 – 13:00  Plenary session 1

#### Higher education/university assets, capabilities and networks in Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria
Moderator: Professor Judith Bahemuka, University of Nairobi

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<tr>
<th>Higher education assets, capabilities and networks in Ethiopia</th>
<th>Dr. Zerihun Kebede Wudie</th>
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<td>Director General, Higher Education, Research &amp; Academic Affairs</td>
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<th>Professor Chacha Nyaigott Chacha</th>
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Higher education assets, capabilities and networks in Nigeria

Ms. Fatima Jiddum Ahmad
Director, Tertiary Education, Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria

Mr Olufemi Aloba
Senior Research Innovation and Information Technology Officer
National Universities Commission (NUC), Nigeria

Comments, questions and answers

13:30 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00 Plenary session 2

Mapping youth and adult literacy challenges in Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria

Moderator: Mr. Saidou Jallow, Senior Education Specialist, UNESCO Regional Office for West Africa

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<th>Mapping youth and adult literacy challenges in Ethiopia</th>
<th>Mr. Eshetu Kebede Eshete</th>
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<td>Senior Expert, Adult and Non-Formal Education Directorate</td>
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<th>Mr. Irreneous N. Kinara</th>
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<th>Mapping youth and adult literacy challenges in Nigeria</th>
<th>Professor Abba Haladu</th>
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<td>National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education</td>
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16:00 – 16:30 Coffee/Tea Break

16:30 – 17:00 Comments, questions and answers

19:00 – 20:30 Dinner hosted by UNESCO and the University of Nairobi
AGENDA DAY 2: WEDNESDAY, 14 JUNE 2017

09:00 – 10:30  
**Session 3**  
Round Table Discussion: Role of higher education/universities and distance learning centers in improving youth & adult literacy  
Moderator: Mr. Hassan Keynan, Senior Programme Specialist, UIL

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| University of Nairobi | **Professor Winston J. Akala**  
Dean, School of Education  
University of Nairobi College of Education and External Studies |
| University of Ibadan  | **Professor Rashid Adewumi Aderinoye**  
Department of Adult Education  
Ibadan University |
| Jimma University      | **Dr. Desalegn Beyene Debelo**  
Assistant Professor of Education Policy and Leadership  
Department of Educational Planning and Management  
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences  
Jimma University |

10:30 – 11:00  
Comments, questions and answers

11:00 – 11:30  
Coffee/Tea Break

11:30 – 13:00  
Le Centre interdisciplinaire pour la recherche et le développement sur l’éducation et la formation (CIRDEF), University of Quebec at Montreal (UQAM)  
**Dr. Marguerite Wotto**  
Associate Professor, CIRDEF – Université de Québec

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<th>Location</th>
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| National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)        | **Professor Grace Esrom Jokthan**  
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National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) |
| Hawassa University                                | **Dr. Abraham Tulu Mekonnen**  
Assistant professor on Educational Research and Evaluation  
Dean, College of Education, Ethiopia |

13:00 – 13:30  
Comments, questions and answers

13:30 – 14:30  
Lunch
14:30 – 16:00 Bahir Dar University
Ms. Genet Gelana Kabela
Assistant Professor, Adult Education & Community Development Department
Head, Center for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, Bahir Dar University

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee/Tea break

16:30 – 17:00 Comments, questions and answers

AGENDA DAY 3: THURSDAY, 15 JUNE 2017

08:30 – 11:00 Session 4
Working groups
(Each country team comprising higher education/universities, adult literacy and UNESCO, will work as a team to develop indicative strategy proposed to mobilize identified higher education and distance learning assets to address specific adult literacy challenges)

Working Group 1: Ethiopia UNESCO Addis Ababa
Working Group 2: Kenya UNESCO Nairobi
Working Group 3: Nigeria UNESCO Abuja

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee/Tea Break
11:30 – 13:30 Group Work continues
13:30 – 14:30 Lunch
14:30 – 16:00 Plenary: Working Groups’ reports and discussions UNESCO Abuja

16:00 – 16:30 Closing
Moderation: University of Nairobi, UIL
Concluding remarks University of Nairobi, UIL, KNATCOM, UNESCO Abuja, UNESCO Nairobi
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