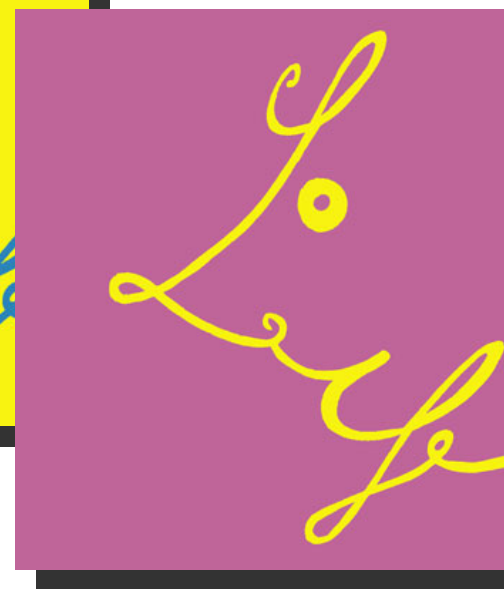
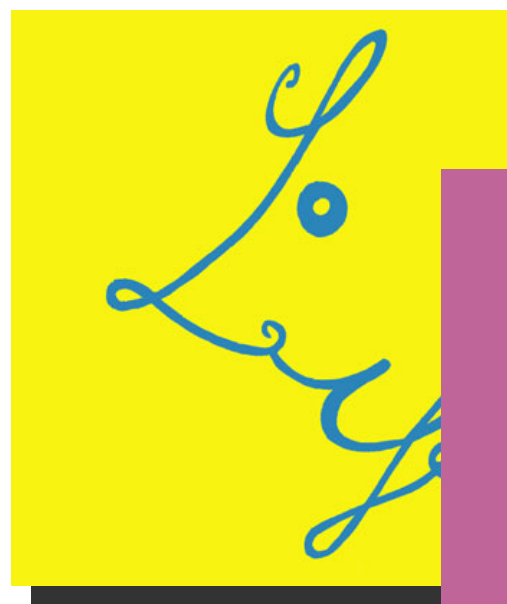


Progress & challenges with implementation of the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE)



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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What is LIFE all about?

- A ten-year framework of collaborative action (2006-2015) for enhancing and improving national literacy efforts in the areas **of policy, advocacy, capacity-building and innovations**
- Contribution to the achievement of **EFA, UNLD** and **MDGs**
- Focus on **35 countries** with literacy rates **< 50%** and/or a population **> 10 million** who cannot read or write
- **85%** of the world's non-literate population resides in these 35 countries (8 of them are E-9)

LIFE aims

- to reinforce national and international **commitments** to literacy,
- to support the articulation of sustainable literacy **policies**,
- to strengthen national **capacities**,
- to enhance countries' **innovative** initiatives in providing literacy learning opportunities, and
- to foster **cooperation** and **solidarity** among countries.

Progress assessed in relation to the four strategic objectives of LIFE

- Evidence of renewed **commitment and political will** (new ministries, budget increases, first ladies' involvement, etc.)
- Contribution to the development of **capacities for the design of policies** and (most visible in the case of six LIFE countries receiving extra-budgetary grants)
- Improved **capacities in delivery** of literacy programmes of good quality (gender mainstreaming, curriculum, training of trainers, use of ICTs, multilingual literate environments, etc.)
- Experience-sharing, peer review, online discussion forum are examples of how knowledge has been generated and disseminated to promote **innovation**

What has been achieved so far?

- Major literacy programmes or campaigns are going on in a number of LIFE countries
- LIFE has become well known, many Member States have expressed their interest in being included into this initiative
- Literacy policy and strategy reviewed or improved in a number of countries
- Capacities strengthened for design, implementation and management of good quality literacy programmes
- Better understanding of literacy as the foundation of lifelong learning

Challenges

- Challenge of creating a common understanding of what LIFE actually entails
- Diversity of country and baseline situations
- Limited capacity to include more countries in the initiative
- Key challenge: to continuously mobilising and pooling resources
- Challenge to maintain the momentum and to further strengthen ongoing South-South cooperation initiatives
- Evidence on the real size of the literacy challenge, participatory action-research, in-depth studies giving more accurate account of results and impact of innovative approaches

Lessons learned

- Upstream-oriented activities should strive for a clear, sector-wide and cross-sectoral focus within a right-based and lifelong learning perspective
- Existing national policies, strategies, initiatives and development frameworks in LIFE countries need to be the starting point for and should continue to lead literacy-related activities
- Partnerships at all levels have played a critical role in establishing ownership and making interventions sustainable

Lessons learned (cont.)

- There is a need to capitalise more on the convening power of the LIFE framework by creating relevant coordination and networking mechanisms among stakeholders.
- The cascade strategy applied to LIFE capacity-development paired with participatory, reflective and practice-oriented processes has proven to be (cost-)effective. It reinforces the local ownership and continuity of such developments.
- To be effective, gender policies need to be paired with clear advocacy messages, measurable indicators and concrete action.

Lessons learned (cont.)

- Some other issues clearly need to be emphasised more:
 - addressing the needs of vulnerable groups
 - creating multilingual literate environments
 - developing minimum standards & assessment tools
- LIFE should work more strongly towards achieving (at least) a minimum level of quality before gradually expanding literacy provision.
- Capacity-development processes must be given top priority

Lessons learned (cont.)

- Within the support through the CapEFA Programme:
 - LIFE framework could be better capitalized with the aim to achieve a more sustainable impact and by bringing „on board“ the relevant players and new partners
 - Activities should be addressed from a longer-term perspective and better harmonized with each other
 - Legal frameworks and policies must be established and approved by governing bodies
 - Institutional and organisational structures should be developed or strengthened
 - Need to draw on existing capacities at national universities, institutes and organizations

The way forward

- More efforts to articulate policies for sustainable literacy with a longer-term and cross-sectoral perspective
- More efforts to build a long-term commitment and ensure sustainability of literacy and NFE work at different levels
- More and better-qualified financing for literacy and NFE programmes – and this investment must prioritise the poor and disadvantaged

