The United Nations Literacy Decade in Asia and the Pacific:
Progress to Date

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C O N T E N T S

Introduction

In December 2001, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution to establish the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), which would begin in 2003 and end in 2012. This action occurred in response to the major global challenge posed by illiteracy in a world characterized by the rapid - but uneven - development of information and communication technologies. The goal of the UNLD is to enable people everywhere to communicate effectively within their own communities and with the outside world. The motto is "**Literacy for All: A voice for all, learning for all.**"

The Literacy Decade was established for three reasons. First, in the age of "globalization," there are still an estimated 800 million adult illiterates (two-thirds of whom are women), not to mention the over 100 million school-age children who are not in any classroom. Second, these figures indicate the inadequacy of literacy efforts at both national and international levels. Third, basic education, of which literacy is a key learning tool, has been recognized as a human right for over fifty years. In response to these factors, efforts undertaken during the UNLD are to target the poorest and most marginal social groups (including women) and to accompany initiatives to reduce poverty. These efforts will also contribute to the Education for All (EFA) goal to increase literacy rates 50% by the year 2015.

According to the draft proposal and plan for the UNLD (Annex 1), "Literacy policies and programmes today require going beyond the limited view of literacy that has dominated in the past. Literacy for all requires a renewed vision of literacy…." In order to survive in today's globalized world, it has become necessary for everyone to learn new forms of literacy and to develop the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use information in a variety of ways.

The International Plan of Action for the Literacy Decade (Annex 2) identifies six areas of emphasis in activities to achieve literacy for all:

1. Policy change that encourages local participation and links literacy promotion with strategies to reduce poverty;

2. More flexible literacy programmes, adapted to local conditions, that enable learners to move on to more formal learning opportunities;

3. Capacity-building to help literacy instructors, managers and programmes to function more effectively;

4. More empirical research to support policy change (for example, the long-term impact of literacy and improved local community participation;

5. Community participation and ownership of literacy programmes; and

6. Monitoring and evaluation of programmes to determine more reliable indicators of progress, both in terms of numbers of participants and overall impact.

The vast Asia-Pacific region still has large numbers of illiterates, especially in South and West Asia, where there are also pronounced differences between the literacy rates of men and women. Thus, this region will be a major focus of attention as the Literacy Decade advances. Activities in a number of countries have already gotten under way.

On 8 September 2003, International Literacy Day, UNESCO and Thailand's Ministry of Education organized the Asia-Pacific regional launch of the UNLD. To celebrate the occasion, there were approximately 100 international participants from UNESCO Member States, as well as a number of Thai citizens working in non-formal education. This event was organized in conjunction with the CONFINTEA V Review Meeting and EFA Coordinators Meeting for East and South-East Asia.

UNLD Regional Launch, Bangkok, 8 September 2004

This report intends to provide information about the various UNLD initiatives in the region to education personnel, particularly those working in literacy and non-formal education. It documents the activities carried out by some countries in the region, profiles members of the UNESCO regional resource team for Asia and the Pacific, and highlights the key issues to be considered during the UNLD.

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Contact details for UNESCO offices in the region and partner organizations are provided in Annex 4.

A number of Asian countries with programmes targeting their illiterate populations are actively participating in the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD). For example, **Mongolia** has initiated a number of programmes and activities related to the areas of literacy and non-formal education. The country officially launched the UNLD on 28 April 2003 during EFA Week. The launching ceremony took place during a roundtable meeting attended by members of parliament and representatives of government agencies and NGOs working in education and development. The ceremony was supplemented by a nationally broadcast appeal by the President of Mongolia and the preparation of a booklet and posters promoting the Decade and its activities. These materials were distributed to provincial boards of education, related UN agencies and other stakeholders.

In October 2003, the launch was followed up by a national seminar on non-formal education (NFE) and literacy. The purpose of this meeting was three-fold: 1) to provide participants with concrete knowledge about the UNLD and the International Plan of Action; 2) to share evaluation results concerning already existing lifelong learning and community learning centre projects in the country; and 3) to identify priority issues to be addressed during future activities. This seminar has contributed to the development of new initiatives for increasing literacy and the availability of educational opportunities. Also in October, the National Non-Formal and Distance Education Centre organized a workshop on NFE capacity-building and materials development. This workshop was attended by NFE facilitators from all over the country, who have benefited significantly from the knowledge and skills they have obtained.

A literacy class in Mongolia

In addition, with the support of UNESCO and other agencies, NFE authorities in Mongolia have implemented a number of activities and programmes, some of which are still in progress. These include an assessment of the learning needs of illiterate girls and women, a national seminar on gender disparities in education, participation in the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), a nation-wide survey of out-of-school children, the provision of basic literacy skills to nearly 9,000 learners (Summer 2003), and the production of textbooks, kits and other materials for equivalency and life skills training programmes.

In South Asia, **Pakistan** – a country with a large number of illiterate people – formally launched the UNLD in Islamabad on 23 May 2004. However, preparations to further the goals of the Decade were under way long before this date. During the previous year, the Ministry of Education, with support from the UNESCO Islamabad office and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), drafted guidelines for the Strategic Framework of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012). These guidelines were the result of an assessment of the literacy activities in the country and consultations with various stakeholders. The document was finalized during a national policy seminar in September 2003 and presented to the Federal Education Minister one year later on the occasion of a large rally organized to celebrate International Literacy Day. The guidelines were subsequently published and distributed throughout the country.

Also in 2003, the UNESCO Islamabad office developed and published more than 3,000 information kits about the UNLD, with a special focus on literacy issues in Pakistan. The kit – packed in a colourful folder with the Decade logo and the slogan "Literacy for All" on the cover – contains leaflets (in both English and Urdu) on the background and objectives of the Literacy Decade, literacy statistics, and areas of proposed action. (Copies of these kits were available for the official launch in 2004.) Also published was a sourcebook titled *Literacy Trends and Statistics in Pakistan*, which contains a section on the UNLD.

UNESCO and JICA subsequently supported a series of seminars in all four provinces of the country to familiarize provincial education ministers, district governors, district education officers, NGO workers and representatives of the media with the objectives and significance of the UNLD. During these seminars, the participants made recommendations for the implementation of relevant literacy activities. UNESCO, JICA and the Ministry of Education incorporated many of these recommendations into their revision of the Strategic Framework of Action.

Finally, the UNESCO Islamabad office is providing technical assistance to literacy programmes at the state and provincial levels. The purpose of such assistance is to improve existing teaching and learning materials, develop new training materials and textbooks, enhance the skills of district-level programme facilitators, and arrange workshops for the training of trainers.

Turning to South-East Asia, we find two countries with relatively high rates of literacy nevertheless contributing full support to the UNLD through literacy and basic education activities. In **Thailand**, the Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission has assumed responsibility for overseeing literacy programmes throughout the country, with community learning centres (CLCs) an important vehicle and ethnic minority groups a major target.

The official launch of the UNLD in Thailand took place during the First Bangkok International Book Fair from 27 March to 7 April 2004. The Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission, joined by UNESCO and others, arranged a number of activities during this event. These included an exhibition on literacy programmes in Thailand, a skit promoting literacy and non-formal education, an opportunity for children to display their drawing skills, and the screening of a promotional video for the UNLD. In addition, on 5 April 2004, the Thai National Commission for UNESCO organized an essay competition for children and youth.

As a follow-up to the national launch, on 24 May 2004, the Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission held a committee meeting on literacy promotion in Thailand in order to identify strategies for improving and expanding literacy programmes and activities. In addition to considering ways to increase the literacy rate among adults (especially women), committee members identified activities to promote greater equity and access to basic education.

Mr. Abeysekera (UNICEF), Ms. Savitri (Thailand NatCom), and Mr. Shaeffer (UNESCO) at the UNLD launch

Other activities in Thailand during 2003-2004 included: (1) research and materials development concerning bilingual approaches to increasing literacy among minority groups, (2) a research study on the provision of basic education equivalency programmes to promote lifelong learning among out-of-school children and adults, and (3) a capacity-building workshop on material development and NFE facilitators in the northern provinces.

Viet Nam is another South-East Asian country with an impressive literacy rate (in 2000, 94% of the population age 15 and above). But there are pockets of illiteracy among disadvantaged and ethnic minority populations in remote areas of the country. Moreover, the newly literate sometimes lack opportunities to practice and to reinforce what they have learned. Thus, the UNLD provides the impetus for Viet Nam to strive toward becoming a totally literate society by the year 2015.

As in Thailand and elsewhere, literacy activities in Viet Nam are channeled through a network of CLCs. At present, there are more than 3,400 CLCs established throughout the country, and the Ministry of Education and Training plans to set up many more – by 2010, around 9,000 CLCs, or roughly one for each community or ward. The purpose of these centres is to conduct literacy programmes, mobilize community resources, and initiate activities in the areas of agriculture, health and social development in order to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty. In regard to literacy, the Ministry's target is to achieve a 100% literacy rate among those age 15 and above for the entire country by 2015 (96% in 2005, 98% in 2012). Priority regions are the northern mountains, the Central Highlands, the southern coastal area, and the Mekong River delta.

In addition to an awareness-raising campaign and advocacy among education managers and planners at the local level, the Ministry of Education and Training has strengthened its primary education system in order to reach out more effectively to the illiterate. Recently, the Ministry has revised the curriculum and conducted a number of training workshops for teachers at Continuing Education Centres. Technical workshops are planned for 2005 as Viet Nam implements the EFA National Action Plan and continues to establish more CLCs.

The UNLD was officially launched in Viet Nam on 25 May 2003. Activities during 2003-2004 have included regional meetings on CLC development, literacy surveys of the entire country, training workshops on gender mainstreaming in literacy programmes, and meetings in the country's three regions to assess ongoing literacy activities.

In addition to these four countries, others all over Asia have seized the opportunity offered by the UNLD to reinvigorate their literacy and NFE efforts. In **Nepal**, which launched the Decade a year later than other countries (5 November 2004), the Government has expressed a strong interest in being included among the 33 countries to participate in UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for the Excluded (LIFE) to begin in 2005. In **Bangladesh**, the launch of the UNLD on International Literacy Day, 8 September 2003, has spurred the Government and NGOs to renew their commitment to the reduction of illiteracy and to increasing educational opportunities for adults. In **Cambodia**, literacy activities are part of the Non-Formal Education Action Plan formulated in 2003 by the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sports. In 2004, this plan was distributed to NFE staff in all provinces. A number of workshops were held in regard to implementation of the plan. Expansion of NFE and adult literacy programmes was also included as a policy priority in the Education Strategic Plan for 2004 – 2008.

On 1 September 2004, education officials from four Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) met to discuss the UNLD strategy and goals. They also came up with national action plans for their respective countries. Taking into account the high literacy rates in the region, these plans will emphasize non-formal education and life skills training. The participants agreed to develop national action plans for UNLD promotion, hold annual meetings to report on progress, prepare and develop advocacy materials, annually commemorate International Literacy Day at national and regional levels, and convene a Central Asian regional conference on literacy once every three years.

In Kazakhstan, a survey of 2,500 pupils and their parents carried out by the Forum for Education in Central Asia and Kazakhstan revealed that the young people, themselves, understood the importance of literacy. For example, in answering the question "How do you understand the notion 'literacy?' "only 12.3% thought that it was the ability to write without errors and to read. Most of the respondents (84.5%) answered that it was the general intellectual development of a person, while 10.7% indicated the ability to hold a conversation, to formulate ideas correctly and to explain a point of view, and 23.4% chose computer skills and foreign languages. Here are some specific responses:

A Classroom in Kazakhstan

- "Literacy is not the knowledge of school literature, but the knowledge of life." (*age 15)*
- "Literacy is the striving for perception, and the growth of mental and cultural standards especially for youth." (*age 16)*
- "Literacy is the summation of intelligence, self-possession, culture and intellectual development."

(Source: *Human Development Report, Education For All: The Key Goal for a New Millennium. Kazakhstan, 2004)*

Lastly, **the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan (NFUAJ)** has been actively involved in activities to promote the UNLD through its support of literacy and continuing education programmes throughout the region. For example, the NFUAJ World Terakoya Movement – an international cooperative endeavour to provide adult illiterates and out-of-school children with appropriate learning opportunities – is continuing to improve learners' quality of life through basic and continuing education, income generating programmes and health care programmes. The World Terakoya Movement is an energetic supporter of the UNLD, as demonstrated in countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal and Viet Nam.

In **Japan**, a number of events co-sponsored by NFUAJ have served to heighten public awareness about the UNLD and its goals. For example, from 18-29 August 2004, NFUAJ and corporate co-sponsors mounted the World Terakoya Movement KURURIMBA Charity Exhibition in Tokyo. In addition to publicizing the goals of the Literacy Decade and the World Terakoya Movement, this event featured an exhibition of optical illusion paintings, as well as workshops to show children how to produce these fascinating works of art.

Between May and December 2004, NFUAJ and the Sony Corporation held a series of promotional events to introduce the public to Sony's "entertainment robot," QRIO, a recent example of cutting edge technology in the field of artificial intelligence. The purpose of these events was to make children more aware of current developments in science, as well as global issues related to science and education. These exhibitions took place at three sites in Japan and two in India.

The most ambitious series of events to celebrate the Decade occurred in connection with the Mitsubishi Impression Gallery Festival of Asian Children's Art. Festival activities took place in 27 countries of the region between September 2003 and August 2004. The Festival of Asian Children's Art was first held in 1990 in honour of the International Literacy Year declared by the United Nations. Ever since, the festival has been advancing the cause of mutual understanding and international exchange among the children of Asia through the production and display of illustrated diaries (*E-nikki*) that describe the daily lives of children. During the past five years, there have been 229,485 entries from 23 countries and territories. Grand prize winners were invited to Japan to participate in the awards ceremony and in exchange programmes with Japanese children. In order to promote literacy and non-formal education, learning materials containing selected children's diaries were published in the local languages of participating countries for distribution to schools, libraries, community learning centres, and other institutions.

Illustrated diaries (*E-nikki*) Grand Prize Winners
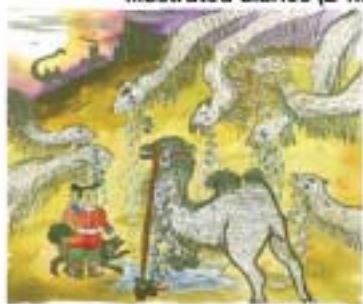
Mr. Lhamjav Nergul, Mongolia	**Ms. Kanokwan Manee, Thailand**

To assist the efforts of governments and NGOs toward "**Literacy for All**" in various countries during the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), UNESCO has established a resource team for Asia and the Pacific drawing upon existing networks and resources in the region. The following networks and bodies have been invited to serve on the resource team during 2004-2005 to provide technical assistance to activities under the UNLD, at the request of countries in the region. The membership of this team will be reviewed every two years.

- Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)
- APPEAL Resource and Training Consortium (ARTC)
- Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE)
- Christian Blind Mission (CBM)
- SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) International

This section will highlight some of the contributions of these organizations. Contact details for these organizations are in Annex 4 for further information about possible cooperation and technical assistance.

I. Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)

This Japanese NGO, working with local partners in countries all over Asia, has set up a regional network of Literacy Resource Centres (LRCs) dedicated to the promotion of literacy for girls and women. Each LRC is managed by the ACCU partner literacy organization. The aims of each LRC are 1) to collect and provide information and materials to other NGOs and field workers; 2) to develop innovative literacy learning materials and strategies; and 3) to offer training opportunities to literacy workers in various fields.

As of 2003, there are 18 LRCs in the Asia-Pacific region. For the names and locations of these centres, please visit: <http://www.accu.or.jp/litdbase/literacy/lrc/index.htm>.

So far, there have been three major activities undertaken by ACCU related to the UNLD.

The first one has been the publication of a poster named "The ACCU-LRC Network for the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012)." The poster briefly explains the efforts of the network to help achieve the Decade's goals. The poster content has also appeared as the back cover of *Asian-Pacific Book Development*, a magazine published by ACCU (Volume 33, Number 4, 2003).

LRC Regional Workshop (Chongqing)

Second, ACCU and its LRC in China, the Research and Training Centre for Literacy Education, organized a regional workshop for LRCs, which took place during 8-14 April 2004 at the Southwest China Normal University in Chongqing. The theme of this workshop was "Literacy and Gender," which is a special emphasis of the UNLD during its first two years. Participants discussed possible contributions of the resource centre network to the UNLD and also attended a special session on ways to improve gender sensitivity in literacy programmes.

Third, ACCU is preparing to publish a special issue of the quarterly *Literacy Grassroots Breakthroughs*. This newsletter reports on the latest projects, news and trends in the field of literacy and non-formal education (NFE) in the Asia-Pacific region. Its regular columns include "Challenges for EFA," "Voices from CLCs" featuring case studies from community learning centres, and "Tips on ICT" focusing on the uses of information and communication technology in literacy promotion activities. The special issue on the UNLD, now in preparation, will showcase articles on the Decade's origins, current activities, and contributions by the LRC network.

II. Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) Resource and Training Consortium (ARTC)

The ARTC is a network of institutions dedicated to providing technical support and assistance to APPEAL in its efforts to reach the goals of Education for All (EFA) and lifelong learning in the Asia-Pacific region. The consortium was founded in 1997 during a meeting of government and NGO representatives concerned with promoting literacy and basic education.

The ARTC network consists of the following institutions in the member countries:

- Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), Japan
- Bunyad, Pakistan
- Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Bangladesh
- Indian Institute of Education
- Indonesian Department of National Education
- Institute for Rural Advancement, Ministry of Rural Development, Malaysia
- The International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (INRULED), China
- The Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI)
- Literacy Resource Centre, National Resource Centre for Non-Formal Education, Nepal
- National Observatory of Kazakhstan/Association of "Education for All in Kazakhstan"
- The Northern Territory University (NTU), Australia
- SEAMEO Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology (INNOTECH), Philippines
- Sirindhorn Institute for Continuing Education and Development, Thailand

The following main functions of the ARTC are in the spirit of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD):

- To provide education professionals with the technical expertise they need for the effective promotion of EFA and lifelong learning in the region
- To serve as the resource and training base for undertaking collaborative programmes
- To conduct action research and case studies, with an emphasis on grassroots participation, focusing on critical areas of EFA and lifelong learning
- To promote the sharing and exchange of experiences among member institutions of the consortium

During the UNLD, the consortium will continue its programmes and activities such as research studies, training, advocacy, conferences and publications. Moving beyond the provision of basic literacy, programmes will focus on fostering community participation and ownership, improving the relevance and quality of education services, and contributing to the alleviation of poverty. Specifically, members of the consortium will be involved in the following activities during the course of the Decade:

- Preparing a document summarizing the principal strategies of the UNLD International Plan of Action for dissemination among NFE institutions in the member countries

- Sharing and disseminating country experiences in developing National Action Plans on the UNLD and integrating them with EFA National Action Plans

- Preparing summaries of innovative projects on literacy in the rural areas of member countries for dissemination among national and local-level NFE professionals

- Designing and developing programmes and materials for the self-education of rural adults in essential life skills

- Supporting community learning centres (CLCs) in their activities related to knowledge management, project management, training and needs assessment

- Training NFE trainers to teach others how to 1) collect information on the number of child and adolescent dropouts, and 2) monitor and assess the learning outcomes of NFE programmes

- Initiating research studies to aid in forecasting literacy needs in the member countries

- Conducting a comparative case study among rural and urban adolescents on the topic, "What does being literate mean to me?"

III. Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE)

The ASPBAE is a regional association of organizations and individuals engaged in both formal and non-formal adult education, working with and through government agencies, universities, NGOs, community groups, trade unions, indigenous people's and women's organizations, the media, and other institutions across the Asia-Pacific region. Established in 1964, the network currently comprises around 640 organizations and individuals as members, and operates in 30 countries of the region.

In addressing problems in areas related to adult literacy and education, the ASPBAE membership relies on three strategies: (1) policy research and advocacy for adult learning; (2) building strategic partnerships and collaboration; and (3) capacity-building and leadership development.

The ASPBAE is one of the few networks in the Asia-Pacific region working on policy advocacy for education, in general, and adult learning, in particular. The ASPBAE has also been committed to ensuring that different development and education policy frameworks are attentive to issues of adult education and learning, particularly for the most marginal groups in the region.

Over the years, the ASPBAE has organized study exchanges, workshops and conferences, training of trainers, research on adult education, and documentation of innovative practices, including the publication of case studies on adult literacy. In 2004, the Bureau continued to carry out these activities, many of which are related specifically to the promotion of adult literacy and, thus, contribute to progress during the UNLD.

As an example, from 29 September to 3 October 2004, the ASPBAE helped organize a regional training workshop in Chiang Mai, Thailand for adult education facilitators and trainers. The purpose of the training was to equip participants with simple tools to enable them to track progress on policy commitments to girls' and women's education and literacy. Although the programme involved both men and women, women trainers and facilitators at the country level were targeted as part of the focus to strengthen the leadership capacities of women and to expand the pool of women leaders in the ASPBAE.

The ASPBAE is also working with the UNESCO New Delhi and UNESCO Bangkok offices in coordinating a project titled, "Ensuring the Integration of Literacy and Continuing Education in EFA Programmes: Policy Dialogue among South Asian Countries." The objectives of the project are to review literacy and NFE policies and practices, to train researchers to recognize relationships between gender, literacy and other variables, to publish and disseminate country case studies, to assist countries in developing policy related to literacy and NFE, and to develop indicators for tracking progress toward EFA goals.

Another project with ASPBAE participation has to do with information technology and NFE. A partnership between the ASPBAE and UNESCO, the project (supported by the Italian government) involves setting up a website for NFE practitioners. The site will have three main components: a

virtual library, an online NFE directory, and a forum to exchange views. The ASPBAE is contributing workshop reports, case studies and other materials to the virtual library, and will moderate electronic discussions among community service organizations throughout the region.

In addition, the ASPBAE is updating a 1998 publication useful for describing measures to promote the access of girls and women to education and literacy in South Asia. This publication, *Bridging the Gap Between Intention and Action*, will have more recent information included in the regional overview and country study sections. The Bureau is also preparing an "advocacy brief," a booklet for facilitators based on the outcomes of the country studies. This booklet is intended to help community service organizations in South Asia to draw the attention of governments and donors to the 2005-2015 gender targets for girls' and women's literacy.

Finally, the ASPBAE organized the "Festival of Learning" held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, during 11-16 December 2004, in commemoration of its 40th anniversary. Emphasizing the theme, "Learning **is** Freedom," the festival showcased innovative adult education practices in the Asia-Pacific region, and served as a forum for discussion and debate about adult education issues, concerns and new forms of action.

IV. Christian Blind Mission

Christoffel Blindenmission Christian Blind Mission eV (CBM) is an independent aid organization of Christians of various denominations dedicated to serving eye patients and vision impaired individuals as well as other people with disabilities in developing countries throughout the world, regardless of nationality, race, gender or religion. It has its roots in Germany, where it was founded by Pastor Ernst Jakob Christoffel in 1908.

CBM's activities are concentrated in the areas of: (1) prevention and cure of blindness; (2) education, rehabilitation and reintegration of persons with disabilities; and (3) training national staff. Its major projects include eye hospitals/mobile eye clinics, education of blind and deaf people, rehabilitation programmes and orthopedic clinics.

During 2003, the CBM supported 1,015 projects and programmes in more than 110 countries with approximately 700 partners. To ensure the quality of work and the development of guidelines and policies, the CBM has Advisory Working Groups in each of its fields of service, including groups for the education of the visually impaired, and education of the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind.

In 2003, the CBM supported 273 projects for the education and/or rehabilitation of the visually impaired in 87 countries. These projects included schools, integrated education programmes, teacher training centres, and nursery schools. Altogether, CBM activities for the visually impaired served 15,234 schoolchildren and 9,865 pupils in integrated education. The CBM also provided support for the production of special materials and equipment such as Braille textbooks, low vision devices, and teaching aids, including a standard education kit. In addition, the CBM helped organize teacher-training courses to improve the quality of education services, and worked to transform special schools for the visually impaired into resource centres in order to serve a larger population. The emphasis in these activities is on inclusive education for every student.

In Asia, a number of projects promoting integrated education are making an impact. For example, in the South-East Asia and Pacific region, the number of visually impaired children supported by the CBM rose from 297 in 1998 to 2,149 in 2002. The highest number of these children benefiting from inclusive education is in the Philippines, thanks to close cooperation with the Department of Education. Nevertheless, only about 13% of all visually impaired children are currently being served, and greater efforts to promote inclusive education are needed. In Papua New Guinea, the development of integrated education for the visually impaired is continuing, with an emphasis on early identification and prevention, training teachers in inclusive methods, and strengthening support for current programmes.

In South Asia, the CBM continues to support the training of special education teachers and community-based rehabilitation workers, as well as upgrading residential schools to become comprehensive resource centres for the visually impaired. In the northern part of the region, the

CBM currently supports six projects in the field. The number of CBM-supported blind children in school increased from 991 in 1999 to 1,436 in 2002, whereas the total number of blind children in inclusive education went up from 373 to 636 during the same period. One priority in this region is the inclusion of girls.

In regard to the hearing impaired, in 2003 the CBM supported 130 projects in 60 countries, including schools, teacher training centres, integrated education centres and nursery schools. Altogether, CBM activities benefited 13,281 schoolchildren and 3,763 pupils in integrated education. In this field of service, CBM activities have three aims: (1) to implement a variety of education programmes to meet the needs of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind people, including NFE, home-based programmes, outreach, integrated and inclusive programmes, residential schools, and units in mainstreamed settings; (2) to encourage schools for deaf children to be used as resource centres for the development of outreach services (i.e., units attached to regular schools); and (3) to help teachers become more sensitive to the needs of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children.

In South Asia, programmes for the education of the hearing impaired continue to promote inclusive education. Medium-term objectives include encouraging the use and application of sign language, early identification procedures combined with intensive preschool programmes, more opportunities for the deaf-blind population, and more active programme monitoring and advocacy. Specific projects are preparing young people who are incurably deaf to enter higher education, or are focusing on children with hearing aids who are ready for integration into regular upper primary classrooms.

In the South-East Asia and Pacific, the number of deaf or hearing impaired children supported by the CBM went up from 524 in 1998 to 1,168 in 2002. In the Philippines, there is now a summer (in-service) training course for teachers of the deaf, supported in partnership with the Department of Education. The CBM also supports sign language training and national congresses for educators, school administrators and local education officials. In Papua New Guinea, a one-year course in "Deaf Education" has been developed and adopted as part of the teacher training curriculum. The country's national special education plan also recommends that special units for deaf children be included in regular schools. The existence of a national policy and continuing close cooperation with education authorities, as well as support at the local level, strongly facilitate CBM deaf education activities in this country.

Clearly, the activities and projects of the CBM go beyond the provision of basic literacy to the individuals they serve. Nevertheless, children and youth with visual or hearing disabilities are no less deserving of opportunities for basic education than other young people. The CBM's efforts to serve this often-neglected population in developing countries are very much in line with the objectives of the United Nations Literacy Decade.

V. SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) International

SIL International is involved in a number of activities to promote and support basic education and literacy, especially in language minority communities. These activities, which fall into four main categories, contribute to the objectives of the UNLD, and are continuing and expanding throughout Asia.

First, SIL International conducts training workshops at local, provincial, national and international levels. Training focuses on the following areas:

- Conducting preliminary research, which is necessary for planning community-centred programmes
- Developing writing systems for previously unwritten languages
- Developing graded reading materials
- Developing curriculum and instructional materials
- Programme evaluation

Second, SIL experts serve as consultants for minority language communities, governments, multilateral agencies and NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region. For example, they work with language minority communities in developing orthographies in their languages, as well as in producing reading and instructional materials for their minority education programmes. More specifically, SIL International is collaborating with the Asian Development Bank and the Philippines Government in conducting a study on the feasibility of expanding the Government's "Regional Lingua Franca" programme to cover various minority languages in the country. With the support of the World Bank and the Government of Viet Nam, SIL specialists are assessing the progress of the Government's primary education project among the J'rai people of the Central Highlands. A similar project in Cambodia involves assessment of a non-formal bilingual education programme for speakers of four minority languages in Ratanakiri Province. SIL experts are also working with UNICEF in Lao PDR and Viet Nam to clarify policy issues related to language in education, while in Bangladesh, SIL International has joined a leading NGO-BRAC-in planning its "Education for Indigenous Children" programme as part of a nationwide NFE initiative.

The third area of SIL International activity is the publishing and dissemination of information. Publications include resource materials and articles in academic journals on innovations in language development and multilingual education.

The fourth major activity is also effective for disseminating information: holding conferences, symposia and workshops. In November 2003, SIL International, UNESCO and Mahidol University (Bangkok, Thailand) organized the "Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Asia." Its purpose was to bring together policy makers, academics and practitioners from minority language communities to learn about current practices and to explore possible cooperative future efforts. In May 2004, SIL International joined with the Ministry of Education and Sports (Nepal) to hold a symposium on community-based inclusive education for language groups in Nepal.

The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) is a response to the perceived shortcomings of previous literacy efforts focusing mainly on the 3Rs — reading, writing and numeracy. Both policy makers and practitioners in the field of literacy need to seriously consider a number of issues that programmes must address in order to achieve the goals set for the Decade. These issues are related to programme effectiveness, community participation, gender equality and important target groups – people with disabilities and speakers of minority languages. In an effort to go beyond the limited view of literacy as only the 3Rs, members of the regional resource team have contributed the following sections of this report.

3

Issues During the UNLD

I. Programme Effectiveness | *Ms. Maria Khan, ASPBAE*

In order to make their literacy programmes better serve the aims of the UNLD, planners and practitioners have to think about matters related to rationale, funding, coordination, data collection, and the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Improvements are clearly needed in all of these areas.

Rationale

The notion that education is a basic right - one that enables people to best exercise and advance their other rights - is a major premise of the UNLD. Taking full advantage of this right requires basic literacy skills. Therefore, arguments for the importance and value of literacy programmes and adult education efforts, in general, acquire moral force when stated interms of a framework of justice. Literacy practitioners must also emphasize the usefulness of literacy skills for adults who apply them to bolster their livelihoods, not to mention the benefits to newly literate women in terms of improved self-image and contributions to the household family well-being.

In addition to a rights perspective, the demand for universal access to literacy must be backed up by good quality programmes that take into account learner needs in a long-term perspective. Literacy programmes should be designed to ensure that skills are applied and sustained over the course of a person's lifetime. Thus, in addition to providing creative and relevant learning materials, programmes have to see that community learning centres, libraries and reading rooms are in place to serve people's lifelong learning needs.

Funding

Well-designed, good quality programmes such as these obviously require secure financing. Although donors have responded to calls for the financial support of primary and girls' education, funding for adult literacy has fallen short of expectations. There is an urgent need to address the issue of inadequate financing in this area. In addition to strengthening the rationale for literacy programmes, literacy advocates should ascertain the

financial requirements needed to achieve EFA targets. These calculations should be based on what is needed to operate programmes of good quality. Therefore, debate and discussion on the benchmarks for adult literacy are also in order.

Coordination

Although the state takes primary responsibility for adult education, the actual response to adult learning needs involves the participation of a number of stakeholders – government agencies, NGOs, teachers, employers, unions, communities, schools and other institutions, not to mention adult learners, themselves. In addition, adult learning occurs in a variety of contexts not directly concerned with imparting literacy skills, but which require their constant application – for example, programmes in community health, early childhood education, environmental education and job skills training. This mutual involvement calls for effective mechanisms for coordinating the efforts of the different stakeholders. Better coordination results in better service delivery, data sharing and planning, and avoids a wasteful duplication of effort. This coordination is crucial for efforts targeting educationally marginal groups, where strategies need to be implemented in concert for optimum gain.

In addition, the international players on the literacy stage – UN agencies and others – need to work together and pool their resources to enable the UNLD to fulfill its mandate.

Data Collection

A severe constraint on policy and planning related to adult literacy is the lack of reliable data. Statistics on adult literacy do not take into account quality or impact indicators. In addition, the data are not always disaggregated by gender, nor do they differentiate among categories of people with different access to education (indigenous people, ethnic minorities, rural or displaced communities, etc.). Data collection methods often fail to recognize local needs or to build local capacities for research, monitoring, data gathering and analysis that benefit local community initiatives.

Therefore, adult education specialists should develop and validate alternative evaluation techniques and indices based on small samples that result in data which is of high quality. The aim should be to enable frequent updating of valid and reliable data in order to reduce dependence on large-scale sample surveys or censuses, which are undertaken by governments, themselves, and subject to bias. NGOs and community service organizations should be encouraged to take on the duties of data collection and analysis in cooperation with other stakeholders.

ICT

This technology has a great potential to open up the world's treasure of information and knowledge for everyone. However, this potential is stymied by widespread commercialization and by uneven access to the most basic communication infrastructure, since more than 80% of the world's population is without telephones. (As for the Internet, according to the Digital Divide Network, in 2004 are 6% of the world's population, or some 429 million people, were actively

online). In addition to better infrastructure, there is an urgent need to come up with ways to use ICT effectively to further the aims of adult education and literacy for all. These will require new hardware and software, as well as methods such as Open Distance Learning. Effective strategies in this area may help to bridge the growing digital divide between information "haves" and "have-nots."

II. Community Participation   *Mr. Kazi Rafiqul Alam, Dhaka Ahsania Mission*

One of the areas of emphasis identified in the International Plan of Action for the UNLD is community participation and ownership of literacy programmes. Local interest and activity are essential for the success of any kind of community-based literacy programme. The emphasis on community participation needs to be maintained and reinforced in spite of the obstacles to social transformation and empowerment at the local level. These include the untrammeled power of central bureaucracies, the lack of skills and experience of community members, and class divisions and conflict within the community, itself. These obstacles must be overcome or used to advantage in building and sustaining community institutions for adult education and literacy.

As we have seen in the cases of Viet Nam, ACCU and ARTC, many literacy programmes in Asia have adopted some version of the "community learning centre" (CLC) as the standard bearer of literacy in local communities. These centres, located in villages or in urban enclaves, have multiple functions in that they serve the needs of local constituencies in a number of ways, in addition to providing basic literacy. They are venues for acquiring employment and handicraft skills, for initiating health and sanitation projects, or for joining in local cultural or social activities. Thus, literacy and basic education are linked with a variety of additional activities to promote community development and poverty alleviation.

CLCs in Bangladesh

The *ganokendra* found throughout Bangladesh is one example of a CLC offering a wide scope of activities in addition to basic literacy instruction. Literacy and continuing education are the tools required for efforts to improve economic conditions and the quality of life within the community in response to the needs of its members. The *ganokendra* and its programmes are accessible to all, especially to out-of-school children and youth, and to women and men with limited reading skills. Literacy is not an end in itself, but the beginning step in a journey of lifelong learning. Thus, the *ganokendra* is also an information centre stocked with daily newspapers, magazines and other reading materials for community members.

Community Learning Centre in Narsingdi District

The *ganokendra* serves as a launching pad for development programmes run by local government agencies and NGOs. Micro-credit and income generating programmes frequently use it as a venue for their activities. Many of these multifunctional community centres have contributed to local health and sanitation through projects focused in better primary health care, child nutrition, safe drinking water, tube-wells, sanitary latrines, smoke-free ovens and other innovations.

A management committee, made up of members of the local community, is typically responsible for the overall management of the *ganokendra*, while day-to-day activities are in the hands of a facilitator who is also from the community.

Ganokendra interventions have inspired local people in Bangladesh to work harder to change the lot of both individuals and the community at large. The capacity to retain and maintain literacy skills among the newly literate has increased significantly, and people have generally become more eager to enroll and keep their children in school. The various educational and awareness-building activities have resulted in an increased ability to communicate with others, to resolve conflict, and to act in the interests of the community, as a whole. Community members are more conscious about protecting the human rights of all citizens, including women and children. Their readiness to participate in income generating activities and rural development efforts has grown because of the *ganokendra* and its role in the community. Although people have not been able to solve all of their problems, the *ganokendra*-based community has gradually emerged as a self-reliant and self-contained social entity.

In summary, the *ganokendra* is an effective model of a community-based organization that supports the goals and concerns of the UNLD in two ways. First, the community, itself, is responsible for its organization, ongoing operations and support. Second, community members are more likely to provide this support if the *ganokendra*'s literacy programmes are designed to assist in alleviating the poverty and improving the quality of life of adult learners.

III. Gender Equality	*APPEAL, UNESCO Bangkok*

The Asia-Pacific region is home to approximately 70% of the world's illiterate women and about half of all girls who are out of school. The focus on literacy and gender in the first two years of the UNLD is, therefore, crucial in efforts to bridge the gender gap and, ultimately, to achieve gender equality.

Although progress has occurred in increasing the access of women and girls to education, far more needs to be done to meet the objectives of the UNLD. Education systems, both formal and non-formal, need to become more gender responsive, with a greater understanding of the different needs of women and girls and the obstacles they face. Education can be an effective vehicle for changing attitudes and transforming gender relations in society, at large. In order for this to happen, however, action must take place on several fronts to reach those girls and women excluded from the education system and to promote their empowerment.

In the area of training, workers in Ministries of Education and related government departments require greater awareness and knowledge regarding gender issues and concepts. They also need the capacity to conduct gender analysis in order to identify gaps in the education system and to better serve the distinct needs and interests of girls, women, boys and men.

In the area of research, planners and practitioners need data (disaggregated by sex) as evidence to shed light on existing gender disparities and inequalities. They need to know the underlying reasons for the barriers to educational access and achievement. This knowledge should help educators to create more gender-responsive teaching and learning environments. Generating this evidence means conducting more qualitative research, in addition to collecting quantitative data.

Evidence from research should provide a solid basis for advocacy at higher levels to influence policy-making. Greater attention needs to be paid to women's literacy, girls' education, and the promotion of gender equality, as well as to the empowerment of women and girls, with structure and support in place at the national level.

Finally, in the area of networking, much can be gained from the experiences and lessons learned in other countries. The exchange and sharing of information across and within countries needs to be facilitated and reinforced to strengthen efforts in achieving gender equality.

In regard to these key areas, UNESCO Bangkok has been working with Ministries of Education in seven countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia) to ensure that gender issues are integrated into EFA planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Practical tools for conducting gender analysis, ensuring gender mainstreaming and

promoting gender equality are being widely used within the participating countries and beyond. This "gender toolkit," which has been translated into local languages and adapted to local contexts, is available on the UNESCO Bangkok website <http://www.unescobkk.org/gender>.

In addition, the Gender in Education Network in Asia (GENIA) facilitates the sharing of experiences and resources in the region via the Internet, as well as during sub-regional and regional meetings. UNESCO Bangkok is developing a manual for conducting qualitative research in order to build knowledge and capacity in this area through a user-friendly format and set of guidelines. It is also publishing a series of "advocacy briefs," booklets on specific topics related to gender equality as a requirement in policy. The first booklet produced focuses on "The Role of Men and Boys in Promoting Gender Equality." Future topics include the impact of boarding schools, incentives and mother-tongue teaching on girls' attendance and learning.

Work is continuing at CLCs to train personnel to integrate gender analysis and gender mainstreaming into all activities and programmes. CLCs have been effective in involving women as learners, but the content of the courses offered is not always appropriate for women's practical and strategic needs. In addition, women's representation on decision-making bodies at CLCs is generally low.

UNESCO Bangkok has developed a set of needs assessment tools to gain a better understanding of the distinct needs of and barriers to participation for women, girls, men and boys. These tools should help CLC staff and NFE departments to make their programmes and activities more gender responsive. Three countries – Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam – are participating in the pilot test of these tools. Gender training based on the results of this participatory assessment process will follow.

IV. People with Disabilities	*Mr. Willaim Brohier, CBM*

The World Bank and other authorities estimate that there are as many as 600 million persons with disabilities around the world, making them one of the largest minority groups of unserved, marginalized people. Probably 400 million of them live in the Asia-Pacific region. On 30 October 2003, the Director-General of UNESCO observed that **"98% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school."** Earlier studies by UNESCAP and UNICEF show that this deplorable condition also applies to the Asia-Pacific region, where only around 2% of children with disabilities – one in every fifty children – have access to education of any sort.

The problem is even more difficult for adults and children with disabilities who live in rural areas of the region, where education facilities and services are scarce and inaccessible. Moreover, early detection and intervention are non-existent or minimal at best in the hinterlands of the Asia Pacific.

Up to 80% of the causes of disabilities are either preventable or avoidable. Nevertheless, the incidence and prevalence of disabilities are on the rise in the region. The number of people with multiple disabilities is also increasing.

Disability is inextricably linked to poverty, which, in turn, has a close correlation with illiteracy. Maternal and childhood nutrition, infection and disease, and the lack of clean water are among the major causes of disabilities. In countries where people are enjoying a longer life span, age-related disabilities such as cataracts, hearing loss, and reduced mobility naturally develop, too. Accidents – on the road, in the workplace, at home and at school – are another significant contributing factor, not to mention armed conflict, terrorism and anti-personnel landmines, which are responsible for ever-growing numbers of disabilities.

In response, the governments of the region have launched a number of initiatives to address the needs of people with disabilities. Some significant gains have taken place, thanks to the efforts of these governments working in concert with UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO and WHO. However, reviews of the situation in 1995 and 1999 proved beyond a doubt that very much more needed to be done. Therefore, the UNESCAP and its partners proclaimed the "Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 2003-2012." This initiative is accompanied by a blueprint for urgent action: the "Biwako Millenium Framework for Action: Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-Free and Rights-Based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific."

There are no simple solutions to providing literacy for the hundreds of millions of children, youths and adults with disabilities in this region. However, there are numerous definite actions to be undertaken in order to meet the needs and fulfill the human rights of this population. The Biwako Millenium Framework for Action (BMF) provides the guidelines to begin.

The BMF is guided by the following principles and policy directions concerning persons with disabilities:

- ‣ Enactment and/or enforcement of inclusive non-discriminatory legislation and policies that provide protection and equity for people with disabilities
- ‣ Establishment or strengthening of national coordination committees, with effective participation from organizations of and for persons with disabilities in the decision-making process
- ‣ Support for the development of persons with disabilities and their organizations, with special focus on the development and inclusion of women in these organizations, as well as in mainstream gender initiatives
- ‣ Inclusion of this population in all programmes focusing on poverty alleviation, primary education, gender and youth employment
- ‣ Strengthening national capacity in collecting and analyzing disability statistics to support policy formulation and programme implementation
- ‣ Strengthening community-based approaches to the prevention of the causes of disability, rehabilitation, and provision of equal opportunities
- ‣ Applying the concept of inclusion to the design of all infrastructure and services in the areas of rural and urban development, housing, transportation and telecommunications

Furthermore, the BMF targets seven broad areas for priority action:

- ‣ Self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and related family and parent associations
- ‣ Women with disabilities
- ‣ Early detection, early intervention and education
- ‣ Training and employment, including self-employment
- ‣ Access to built environments and public transport
- ‣ Access to information and communication technology (ICT)
- ‣ Poverty alleviation through capacity-building, social security, and sustainable livelihood programmes

Special efforts are needed to eliminate illiteracy among those with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. To ensure the success of literacy programmes, concerned governments, NGOs and international agencies must first make progress in reducing the incidence of disabilities in each country by tackling the major causes in the areas of public health, safety and social order. In addition, they must address the prevalence of disabilities in order to identify and refer those individuals whose degree of disability can be reduced or eliminated by medical intervention.

In addition, the political will and commitment of governments are the cornerstones of success. They are essential for the necessary funding, trained personnel, and special equipment and materials.

Last but not least, community-based rehabilitation programmes and community learning centres are the ideal places for providing literacy instruction for people with disabilities.

V. Language Minorities

Dr. Susan Malone, SIL International

In the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, minority language communities usually inhabit remote mountainous or forested regions and have, thus, been on the periphery of national economic development efforts, including those in basic education. Illiteracy is widespread among these communities. In response, governments and education experts have emphasized bilingual or multilingual programmes that first impart literacy skills in the native language or mother tongue of an ethnic minority community. Literacy skills in the mother tongue make it easier for individuals to acquire literacy in the national language or other languages used in the country. This approach is especially appropriate in this region, where national languages make use of a variety of scripts (cf. Chinese, Thai, Viet Namese, Bahasa Indonesia).

Promoting literacy through mother tongues has its own set of issues and requirements for success. The essential requirement is the mobilization of will and commitment. A variety of stakeholders – governments, NGOs, international donors and, most importantly, minority language communities – need to be convinced of the educational, social and cultural benefits of multilingual education.

Countries also need to undertake research in order to understand the language situation in regions inhabited by ethnic minorities. Which languages do people actually use and when? Which language groups need education programmes in their native languages? Do these languages have alphabets? Is there any written literature that can be used in an education programme? Language groups whose languages have never been written will need help in developing their orthographies. They will require the assistance of universities and NGOs with experience in this area.

Language groups will also need help developing graded reading materials in their heritage languages. These materials can be inexpensive – written, illustrated and edited by mother tongue (MT) speakers and produced in black and white with paper covers — especially while they are being tested. The important thing is that they are created within the language community by MT speakers and are about people, places and activities that are familiar to the learners and relevant to their lives.

Education departments will need to develop curriculum guidelines that language teachers can use to develop their instructional plans. These teachers ideally should be MT speakers of the language to be taught. If there are no professionally trained teachers who are MT speakers, non-professionals will need to be identified and given good pre-service and in-service training, along with careful supervision.

Finally, because these programmes are usually quite innovative, they need close monitoring and evaluation of every aspect of the programme, including the impact on the learners' ongoing education.

The following steps are necessary for action:

» Mobilize decision-makers in each country who are willing to implement pilot multilingual education projects.

» Mobilize the government agencies, universities, NGOs, businesses and donor agencies that will support the pilot projects.

- Identify potential donors and secure funding for the projects.
- Identify one or two (or more) language groups who are motivated to establish a mother tongue-first education programme, and who have established orthographies.
- Identify and train individuals to be trainers and supervisors.
- Begin implementing the pilot projects.
- Carefully document the projects and their impact.

Successful multilingual education projects that provide literacy skills to hundreds of previously neglected individuals should be a significant accomplishment of the United Nations Literacy Decade.

UNLD Draft Proposal and Plan

United Nations

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

General Assembly	Economic and Social Council
Fifty-sixth session	Substantive session of 2001
Item 121 of the preliminary list*	Agenda item 14 (b) of the provisional
Social development, including questions relating to the	agenda**
world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled	Social and human rights questions: social
persons and the family	development

Draft proposal and plan for a United Nations literacy decade

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General is pleased to transmit herewith the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, including the draft proposal and plan for a United Nations literacy decade.

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* A/56/50.
** E/2001/100.

01-42265 (E)   110701

Draft proposal and plan for a United Nations literacy decade

Introduction

1.   The fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution (resolution 54/122 of 20 January 2000) envisaging the proclamation of a United Nations literacy decade. This proposal was first brought forward at CONFINTEA V (Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg, 1997), endorsed at a round table held at the World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000, and reiterated by the United Nations General Assembly special session, Geneva, 2000.

2.   In Dakar at the World Education Forum, the international community committed itself, by 2015, to ensuring that all children "have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality" and to "achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy". In more general terms, but with equal urgency, these goals were part of the Copenhagen Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development (1995) and were reaffirmed by the special session of the United Nations General Assembly marking the Social Summit +5. To achieve this, 113 million children must enter a quality school environment, and almost 500 million youth and adults must learn to use literacy skills in their daily lives by that time.

3.   There are about 880 million illiterate youth and adults and some 113 million children who are still out of school and who continue to nurture every year the world's illiteracy statistics. They are the poorest of the poor and most of them – two thirds of the adult illiterates and 60% of the out-of-school children – are female. Among the world's less-developed regions, the adult literacy rate is the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, with respective median rates of 57% and 58%; but around 600 million of the illiterate youth and adults are to be found in the nine large countries representing more than half of the world's population. The fact that the map of illiteracy continues to overlap with the map of social, gender and ethnic inequalities, makes the struggle for literacy a struggle not only for education goals but for social justice and for human dignity an empowerment. In September 2000, the United Nations Millennium Declaration consequently gave special emphasis to women and girls' education. Also, United Nations resolution 55/586 of December 2000 on the implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty emphasized "the critical role of both formal and non-formal education and training and basic education in the empowerment of those living in poverty". Literacy opens the door to sustainable learning and livelihood, as well as educational opportunity.

4.   Over the 1990s, and under the umbrella of EFA, important efforts were made particularly regarding children and primary education; however, prospects for universal literacy are not encouraging. As stated by the EFA 2000 Assessment, since 1990:

- primary school enrolments increased by some 82 million children;

- developing countries as a whole achieved an average net enrolment ratio in excess of 80%;

- there was a modest improvement in gender equality in primary enrolment in many regions, with 44 million more girls in school in 1998 than in 1990;

- repetition and dropout rates declined;

- early childhood care and education expanded modestly, and mainly in urban areas; of the more than 800 million children under 6 years of age, fewer than a third benefit today from any form of early childhood education;

- the overall adult literacy rate rose to 85% for men and to 74% for women, but this is far from the goal of reducing adult illiteracy rates to half of its 1990 level;

- growth in non-formal education and skills training was slow.

5. According to the latest UNESCO estimates, and if current trends continue, by the year 2010 the adult illiterate population would represent 830 million people and the proportion may decrease only from 20% to 17% (namely one in every six adults would still be illiterate). On the other hand, meeting the basic literacy needs of children, young people and adults has become an increasingly complex endeavour, in the context of increased education levels required by modern societies as well as the more complex nature of literacy in order to deal with its more sophisticated applications, including the emergence of new information and communication technologies.

6. This is an unacceptable situation in a world where the access to and processing of information and knowledge is the basis of opportunity and growth. The decade opens a critical window for change – a chance to give further impetus to the commitments of Dakar. This chance must not be missed. The decade must take up the challenge to put in place measures and resources which will lead both to the meeting of the international target in terms of percentage, and to a reduction in absolute numbers. Annex I illustrates graphically the clear shortfall in meeting the 2015 target if there is no change in current trends.

7. Over the last few decades, the year 2000 emerged as a horizon against which mankind projected some of its most important aspirations, universal literacy one of them. However, at the turn of the century literacy for all – children, youth and adults – is still an unaccomplished goal and an ever moving target. A combination of ambitious goals, insufficient and parallel efforts, inadequate resources and strategies, and continued under-estimation of the magnitude and complexity of the task, is likely to explain this situation. Lessons learnt over these past decades show, in any case, that meeting the goal of universal literacy calls not only for more and better efforts but for renewed political will and for doing things differently at all levels: locally, nationally and internationally. There is an urgent need for **a renewed commitment to literacy for all** through a major new worldwide initiative that focuses on literacy as an integral component of the global and renewed commitment for Education for All (EFA) and for social development.

8. Literacy policies and programmes today require going beyond the limited view of literacy that has dominated in the past. Literacy for all requires **a renewed vision of literacy,** which will foster cultural identity, democratic participation and citizenship, tolerance and respect for others, social development, peace and progress. It must admit that literacy is not confined to any particular age (childhood or adulthood), institution (i.e. the school system) or sector (i.e. education); that it is related to various dimensions of personal and social life and development; and that it is a life-learning process. Such renewed vision towards literacy for all calls for renewed modalities of operations, monitoring and accountability procedures and mechanisms.

• **Why a United Nations literacy decade?**

Because universal literacy – for children, young people and adults – remains a major quantitative and qualitative challenge for both developing and industrialized countries.

Because literacy is a fundamental human right, a basic learning need, and the key to learning to learn.

Because knowledge and experience have shown that the battle for literacy requires intensive, focused and sustained efforts beyond one-shot programmes, projects or campaigns.

Because the United Nations and its specialized agencies offer the only universal forum to develop strategies of access to the right to education which is the fundamental human right and specifically for education for all as understood by the World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien, 1990, and confirmed by the World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000.

Aims

9.   This United Nations initiative aims at **voice for all, learning for all** through a decade for **literacy for all**. The decade is designed to give greater thrust to achieving international development targets, and to give priority to make opportunities available where currently they are not: for the poorest and most marginalized people.

(a)   **Voice for all** – In a globalizing world, the voice of the poor and marginalized is often lost, becoming socially invisible and politically silent. Literacy for all is a key to enabling expression of identity and participation in debate in today's knowledge-based society. Literacy is the crucial first step in basic education which is "an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century" (Dakar Framework, para. 6). Tomorrow's generation of active citizens depends on quality literacy learning for today's children. Literacy as written communication empowers people to express and share their own dynamic ways of knowing, their own social realities. Through literacy in their own and other languages, people build a culturally specific knowledge base as a deliberate process, and give new value to local knowledge, enabling it to circulate more widely and to serve as a basis for creative confrontation with other people's knowledge. Literacy enables people to be active participants in democratic processes, exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

(b)   **Learning for all** – Literacy is the first step towards sustainable learning, towards an education "geared to tapping each individual's talents and potential, and developing learners' personalities, so that they can improve their lives and transform their societies" (Dakar Framework, para. 3). Literacy enables access to bodies of knowledge from other horizons and empowers learners, both adults and children, to make a critical assessment of its usefulness and value. Literacy helps construct and reinforce lifelong learning for all.

(c) **Literacy for all: a renewed vision** -- To reach voice for all, learning for all, literacy for all, will:

- require a renewed commitment from all: national governments, national societies, local communities and international agencies;

- transcend age groups; it is the foundation of lifelong learning, a key to inter- and cross-generational learning;

- include *all*: children, young people and adults, girls and boys, women and men, rural and urban, countries in the South and in the North;

- ensure effective and sustainable literacy levels: this implies ensuring adequate conditions and opportunities for literacy development in the family, the community, the workplace, the school system, the media;

- necessitate active policies and collective efforts not only towards literacy acquisition, but towards plural and meaningful uses of literacy as a means of expression, communication and lifelong learning.

(d) **A decade for ALL** -- Efforts thus far have failed to offer literacy opportunities to certain groups of people: women and female youth, the urban and rural poor, minorities and indigenous peoples, those in inaccessible regions and post-conflict areas, prisoners and many others. Literacy is a key part of the struggle to alleviate poverty by increasing the control of the poor over their own lives. For education for all efforts to be truly **inclusive of ALL**, the decade focuses on these groups in particular.

10. Towards the vision of literacy for all, with particular focus on those groups of people for whom current strategies have failed, the decade will:

(a) strengthen the **political will**, both of national governments and the international community, to commit resources of all kinds to improving literacy rates; this will be based on a heightened awareness of the literacy need and an increased recognition of its central importance; it will also work for the effectiveness of primary education in ensuring sustainable literacy practices;

(b) develop more **inclusive policy-making environments** in which active and wide-ranging participation in literacy promotion can take place, in particular to develop partnerships, resources and innovative approaches for reaching the poorest and most marginalized groups, and for seeking alternative school and non-school approaches to learning;

(c) devise and design **new strategies**, especially at national level, so that local actors are empowered to offer relevant, high-quality opportunities to gain literacy skills, linked to poverty alleviation.

Guiding principles

11. The following guiding principles serve to channel the efforts of the decade, giving focus to the energies of the various actors.

(a) **Rights-based**: the right to learn and to an education is the starting point. Literacy is a fundamental part of that right. Every individual has the right to write and read for their own purposes. It is therefore not an option, but an obligation on governments, civil society and the international community to actualize that right.

(b) **Access-driven**: tireless efforts must be made to ensure that no-one is out of reach of opportunities to acquire literacy skills; barriers of all kinds – social, geographical, gender-related, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, economic – must be overcome.

(c) **Poverty-focused**: literacy efforts must be part of an integrated approach to poverty eradication, aiming at halving the number of those living on $1/day or less by 2015. This will require the pro-active development of links to other sectors, such as health, food production, micro-enterprise and skills training.

(d) **Partnership-directed**: working together is the only way to ensure maximum impact and the most effective use of resources. Partnerships must be developed, particularly at national level, between government, civil society, the private sector and local communities on the basis of regular and open dialogue.

(e) **Quality-minded**: only an education of quality will make any difference in the long run; sustained use of literacy will be based on high quality input (teaching, animation), relevant content and the promotion of a local literate environment.

(f) **Learner-centred**: the context and profile of learners, both adults and children, must shape the process and purpose of literacy acquisition; the nature of local literacies must be discovered and respected; the oral use of languages will determine multilingual approaches, and participatory learning processes will build on existing knowledge.

(g) **Community-wide**: learning opportunities must be structured with regard to the whole community – children and adults, women and men, old and young. The lines of demarcation between formal and non-formal modes must be revisited and new approaches found to promote a community-wide learning environment.

(h) **"Literate environment"**: efforts towards universal literacy require not only increased enrolment in school or in youth and adult education programmes. Adequate and stimulating literate environments – at home, in the classroom, in the workplace, in the community, in libraries, in play and sports grounds, etc. – are essential to literacy acquisition, development and use.

(i) **Impact-oriented**: all actions will be judged on their impact at the grassroots; sustained local ownership of literacy efforts, with appropriate support, will raise awareness of opportunities and threats in achieving maximum impact and lead to lesson-learning and evaluation.

Key implementation strategies

12. Achieving literacy for all means addressing multiple and very differentiated target groups and contexts, making use of various learning institutions and systems available, and devising differentiated strategies, contents and mechanisms, appropriate and relevant to each of them at local, national, regional and global levels.

(a) **Demand and country-driven interventions** – The ownership of the decade should remain country-driven – bottom-up rather than top-down. Within a unified global framework, national literacy for all plans and activities will be defined by countries as part of their national education for all plans according to their specific conditions, needs and possibilities. Each country and each community should be free to define which sectors of the population to include and prioritize under the ten-year literacy plan, and which strategy to adopt in order to make literacy for all a reality.

(b) **Build on what exists** – All countries are engaged in school and out-of-school literacy provision and development, and many have innovative policies and experiences to consolidate. Thus, rather than creating new or ad hoc structures or programmes, efforts must build on what exists, strengthening, expanding or redirecting it, as needed. A key to success lies precisely in merging literacy decade activities with the regular life of families, schools, local and national communities, and within the agendas of international organizations.

(c) **Cutting across sectors, institutions and agents** – Literacy is related to various dimensions of personal and social life and development. Thus literacy efforts must be related not only to education but also to a comprehensive package of economic, social and cultural policies. Furthermore, literacy acquisition, development and use can no longer be viewed as the responsibility of a single institution, sector or educational modality. Neither the school system nor non-formal education programmes can accomplish this task in isolation. It requires complementarity and synergy of action among governments, NGOs, universities, public and private organizations and civil society at large. Advancing firmly towards literacy for all requires large-scale efforts supported by wide and sustained social mobilization at the local, national and global levels, going beyond education as a sector and include broad social, cultural and economic institutions and policies.

(d) **Comprehensive, flexible and compensatory** – National literacy for all plans and strategies must be flexible so as to incorporate the inputs from civil society and from lessons learnt along its implementation process, as well as the new circumstances and developments that emerge during the decade. Also, in order to avoid further discrimination of the most disadvantaged areas and groups, special measures must be taken and resources allocated to compensate regional and social imbalances between areas and local communities.

(e) **Area- and community-based** – Actions at the local level must be rooted in the respective community so that:

- decisions are taken in a genuinely participatory process where all relevant community agents and institutions are involved;

- the plan and subsequent actions respond to the specific characteristics, needs and assets of each community and area;

- convergence, partnership and complementarity among the various community institutions and agents is facilitated and materialized;

- monitoring and accountability mechanisms are clearly defined at the local level, within a framework of autonomy and responsibility.

Coordination mechanisms

13. The Dakar Framework for Action makes it clear that progress towards EFA goals will be country-driven and based on productive and mutually supportive partnerships. It emphasizes that the principal actors are at the national level: governments and their institutions, civil society and NGOs, communities and their organizations, the private sector. Other partners, such as aid agencies and the United Nations system must act to support and optimize educational efforts at the national level. The decade marshals energies of the international community to that end.

14. At national level the key partners will be:

(a) National governments: governments must ensure that literacy is placed at the centre of basic education policies and efforts for all ages, through approaches including as well as bridging between formal or non-formal systems. They must also ensure that such policies address primarily the most neglected and disadvantaged groups, for reasons of income, age, gender, ethnicity or any other condition.

(b) Civil society: literacy for all requires wide social participation and responsibility. Non-governmental and community-based organizations working with adults and children at the grassroots, families, schools, educational, cultural and religious institutions, libraries, academic and research centres, the mass media, private enterprises, social organizations and sports clubs, all have a place and a role to play in this endeavour.

Through national EFA platforms bringing all the relevant actors together in sustained dialogue and policy formulation. The establishment of these platforms, where they do not yet exist, was envisaged at Dakar and will be a high priority at the start of the decade.

At national level, all the partners will work together in the planning, implementation and evaluation of literacy efforts, as part of the larger EFA dialogue platform. State and civil society must renew their interest in literacy promotion and become critical partners in this endeavour.

15. At the international level, UNESCO will lead the coordination of the decade in accordance with the United Nations resolution proposing the decade and within the coordination framework of the EFA processes. This coordination will build on partnerships among:

(a) UNESCO and its institutes, such as UIE (UNESCO Institute for Education) (lifelong learning), UIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) (monitoring), IBE (International Bureau for Education) (curriculum content), IIEP (UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning) (training), UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, WHO and other agencies of the United Nations system and the World Bank; regional organizations, networks and mechanisms, and regional development banks: Organizations at regional and international level will focus on joint and cooperative action to build capacity at national level to achieve the expected outcomes of the decade.

(b) at the regional and international levels, cooperation will be developed through dialogue within EFA structures (such as the EFA working group) and through the ongoing interaction between professionals in the different agencies. Each agency should appoint a "focal point person" to ensure consistent coordination of literacy support efforts.

Expected outcomes

16.   The coordinated efforts of the international community should ensure that the decade results in the following seven outcomes:

(a)   **Baseline knowledge**: a clearer understanding of the structure of illiteracies, building on the EFA 2000 Assessment and addressing issues hitherto not adequately addressed, for example: the constraints on female literacy acquisition in specific contexts; the percentage of the world's illiterate population made up of minority language groups; the percentage of adult illiteracy made up of partially schooled youth; approaches to secure the formal/non-formal interfaces and more generally to redress the imbalance in resource allocations between the two sectors.

(b)   **Policy development**: a viable policy-making framework, with regional and international support to national-level initiatives to develop and elaborate those policies – based on dialogue in national EFA platforms and resulting in national literacy for all plans as part of national EFA plans.

(c)   **Mobilization**: a clear prioritization at national level of the particular population groups where special literacy efforts are required, resulting in targeted action. This will involve government, civil society and others acting together; at a local level it will mean stronger school-community links and community-wide learning.

(d)   **Strategy development**: increased capacity in designing context-sensitive strategies, taking account of diversity at subnational levels. Strategy decisions will focus above all on locally identified needs and be based on broad consultation.

(e)   **Quality improvement**: quality will be crucial to sustaining literacy processes in communities. It is not enough to multiply literacy opportunities without also addressing the quality of input to learners and of the materials available in the local environment. Thus improved and increased training for schoolteachers and adult educators will be essential, particularly with regard to innovative pedagogical approaches, such as multilingual approaches which incorporate the mother tongue, interactive learning methodologies, the use and promotion of local knowledge and culture in materials and in the teaching/learning process, the development of school-community links with a view to strengthening life-wide learning processes.

(f)   **Impact on poverty reduction**: conditions for sustaining literate environments to promote the functional use of literacy skills. In culturally and linguistically sensitive ways, literacy practices and materials will connect with life skills which enable individuals and communities to break the cycle of poverty and pursue broad social development goals.

(g)   **Use of information technologies**: appropriate and effective use of new information technologies in two ways:

(i)   at international, regional and national levels virtual fora and discussion groups should be set up to exchange good practice and share information on strategies, problems and progress;

(ii)   at the level of learners, it is urgent to develop and apply new delivery mechanisms to reach marginalized and poor groups and communities. IT

must be seen as a learning tool which supports rather than threatens the social and cultural environment and advances not only literacy but also empowerment.

Recommended actions

17. The following set of actions is designed to lead to the outcomes listed above. They are time bound (see possible time frame below) and phased over the whole decade:

(a) **Capacity-building for baseline knowledge**: national research capacity will be strengthened through regional and national workshops, focusing on local priorities and majoring on methodology and analysis. Data and the resulting analysis will serve to identify target groups, resource availability and needs, and will serve as a planning tool.

(b) **Organization of policy fora**: to build common understanding, joint ownership and collective commitment to implement the policies and plans agreed upon using the national and regional EFA forums and meetings, national literacy for all policies and plans will be developed, in the context of overall education for all planning. These fora will involve government departments, civil society, the private sector and local representatives of international agencies.

(c) **Springboard professional consultations**: to mobilize all the actors and energies available. These consultations, at national and subnational levels, will take place early in the decade. Discussions will focus on the vision for the use of relevant literacies in a literate environment, and on what each partner can bring to the process of making the vision a reality in particular contexts. This will involve a clear demonstration of feasible methods and a realistic inventory of available resources.

(d) **Strategic implementation and cooperation**: progress in literacy for all will only be made if specific strategic plans are in place to reach the hard-to-reach. Using the baseline research and based on the policies and national plans, implementation will require intensive dialogue with other literacy stakeholders, such as those working with cultural aspects of learning and development, language issues in literacy, role of learning in participatory development, media (radio, television, press, Internet).

(e) **Capacity-building for quality**: regional workshops to design quality training programmes will equip and stimulate national literacy trainers in approaches which enable communities and institutions (traditional and recent/officially recognized) to promote a sustainable literate environment, based on the affirmation of local knowledge and on self-confident cultural expression.

(f) **Information and exchange**: there are huge differences between the effectiveness of literacy efforts and the development of literate environments in different regions and countries. Knowledge-sharing, networking, South-South and South-North links will give the opportunity for educators and trainers to visualize radically different ways of promoting literacy. UNESCO will seek funds to set up strategic exchanges, and use the virtual forum (see (g) below) and other pilot projects to enable greater information-sharing on good practice.

(g)   **Use of IT:**

(i)   UNESCO will create a database and linked virtual forum on literacy needs (linked to UIS databases), literacy practices and problems. It will enable interactive discussion around literacy themes;

(ii)   UNESCO will examine the possibility of launching a multi-year research and experimentation programme, together with other partners to develop an understanding and clear strategies on the use of IT as a learning tool for literacy learners and neo-literates, in the context of local creativity and self-expression, not merely as a means of access to exogenous material on the Internet.

(h)   **Celebration:** A distinctive feature of the decade will be regular thematic celebration, focused each year on International Literacy Day. It will be a means to express and generate enthusiasm for learning and literacy amongst learners, facilitators and all those involved. Thus, celebration at national and community level is the most important since it is there that progress can be most clearly seen. Celebration will not mask the enormous needs nor cover up the need for regular critical analysis of the process and progress of literacy. Rather, it will give an opportunity at every level to mark significant progress in the local context and generate further energy for the next year.

UNESCO will have a special role in raising the profile of a particular aspect of the literacy effort each year, as a theme to celebrate, such as gender equity, diversity, facilitators and teachers, creative writing, and others (see Annex II). Among other initiatives, this will mean the promotion of wide media coverage of local situations, supported by press packs and thematic background materials. This international activity will aim to give prominence and encouragement to national accomplishments. Regions and countries will be encouraged to pick up the theme in their own way and for local purposes.

Possible time frame

18.   It is proposed that the decade should start in 2002. Each International Literacy Day will be a milestone and will provide the opportunity to assess, critique and celebrate progress during the decade. The final event will take place on 8 September 2012 at the end of the tenth year.

19.   The Plan of Action proposes concrete and specific timed events and activities to take place throughout the decade. The chart in Annex II presents a possible sequencing over the ten years.

Monitoring and evaluation

20.   Monitoring and evaluation will serve to assess, both during the decade and at its end, the progress the world makes towards the United Nations goals of eradicating illiteracy, and as part of that examine indicators relating to reaching gender equity, guaranteeing the right to education, ensuring sustainable development, and improving the quality of the lives of the poor and marginalized. To achieve this, monitoring and evaluation processes will, through periodic assessment, focus on three related aspects of literacy:

(a)   the change in the absolute numbers and in the percentages of the literate population;

(b) the relative contribution of formal and non-formal education to attaining literacy;

(c) the impact of literacy on the quality of people's lives.

These indicators will require different methods and the involvement of different partners.

21.   UIS within its EFA observatory will play a special role in establishing valid quantitative indicators, particularly to link literacy outputs and achievements with other sectors, e.g. progress on health indicators, income generation, political participation, cultural self-expression. Literacy data will become increasingly available as part of the EFA monitoring process and such data will be tagged and tracked over the decade.

22.   Improving impact indicators will require qualitative and ethnographic approaches. To achieve this, UNESCO/UIS should build a cooperative programme with a range of other agencies and partners, such as civil society and NGOs, universities and research institutes. These partnerships will focus on developing a consensus on what indicators to establish and how data will be collected over the decade to arrive at a longitudinal assessment of the value of literacy. Thus literacy experience will be documented in depth, through a wide range of diverse case studies, country-wide analyses and regional comparisons.

23.   The organization, process and cooperation of the decade itself will be evaluated, at the mid-point and at the end. In addition, a subgroup of the EFA working group will examine progress annually and propose course corrections along the way as necessary.

24.   At the end of the decade substantial progress should have been made towards the 2015 goal of achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy – on a straight-line projection we should be three quarters of the way there, both in terms of school-age children and newly literate youth and adults. Gender equity in primary schooling should have been attained in 2005 according to the Dakar Framework for Action. Above all, the decade should have had an impact on the quality of lives of the poor and marginalized, enabling large numbers to break out of the cycle of poverty and deprivation. How then might we follow up on the decade?

Follow-up to the decade

25.   Much depends on how far these ambitious goals have been met. Even allowing for their achievement, there will still be enormous efforts to be made. How will the decade have equipped us better to go on with the challenge? Literacy efforts should, by 2012, be enhanced by:

(a) a clearer and more detailed analysis of the challenge;

(b) greater collective commitment, political will and results;

(c) stronger and more specific national policies and plans (and planning capacity);

(d) a heavier emphasis on the quality of educational programmes (teachers, materials, etc.);

(e) a comprehensive programme to foster non-formal education as one pillar of literacy efforts;

(f) the integration of IT into learning strategies and as delivery mechanisms on an increasingly broad basis.

26.   In view of the remaining challenge, the spirit and the momentum of the decade must continue. The achievements must be sustained and the new commitments written into regular

programmes and budgets. The increased capacity and political will should continue to inspire and enable further efforts. The EFA platforms at national level, the working group at international level, and UNESCO's own sectoral programmes focused on EFA goals will provide a continuing framework, strengthened by the outcomes of the decade.

27. The decade will only have been effective if there is sustained and sustainable literacy acquisition and use in thousands of local communities around the world. Thus its continued impact will be seen in empowered communities using and celebrating their own literacies and passing them on to the next generation.
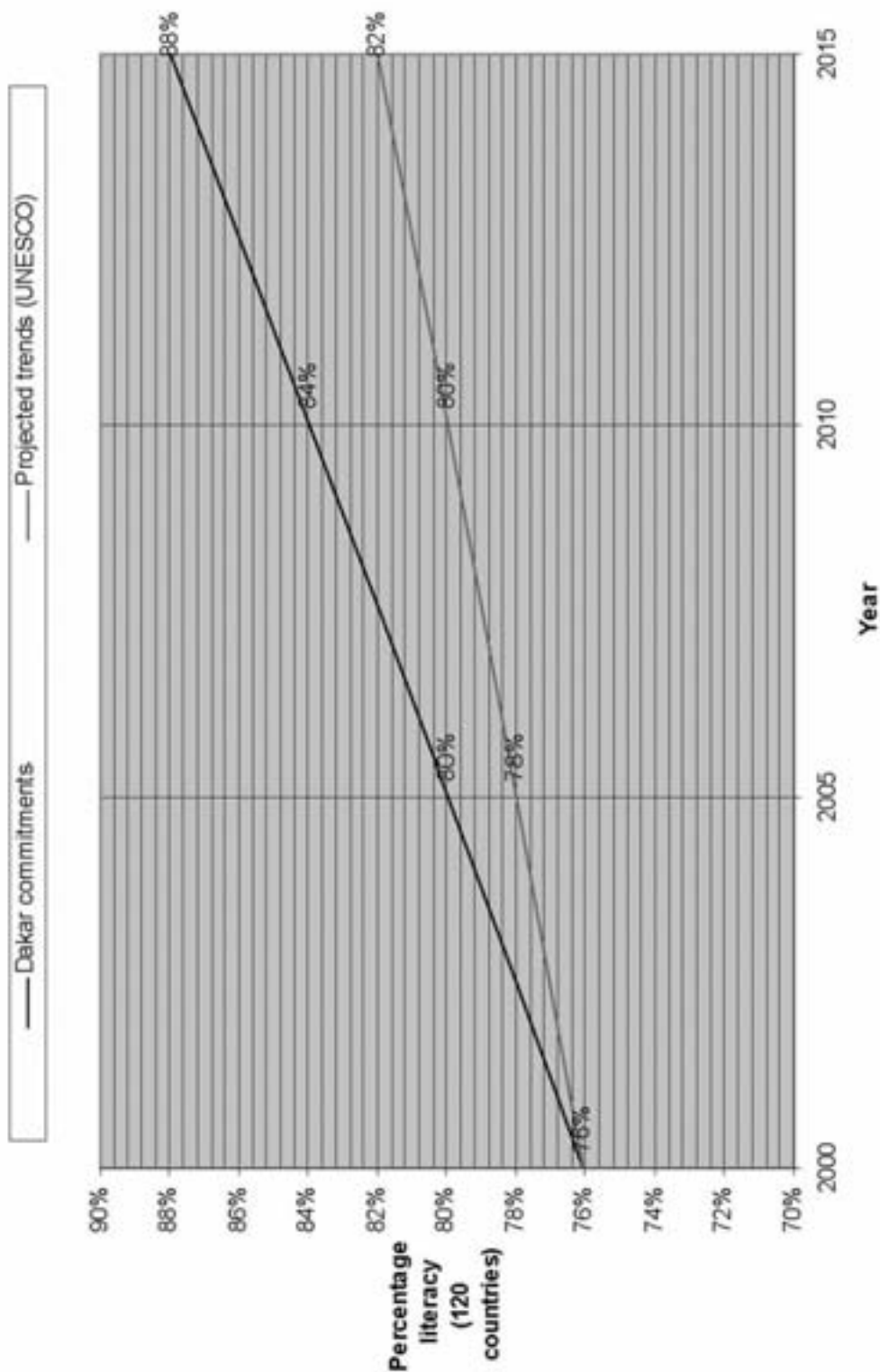
28. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to consider the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 159 EX/Decision 7.1.3,

2. Having examined document 161 EX/7,

3. Further recalling the commitments made at the World Education Forum, Dakar, April 2000,

4. Acknowledging the centrality of literacy to basic education, including formal and non-formal education, lifelong learning and social development;

5. Recognizes the urgent need for refocusing in a global and concerted manner on literacy as an integral component of Education for All;

6. Appeals to Member States to give particular attention and support to the item on a United Nations literacy decade which will be placed on the agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly;

7. Authorizes the Director-General to submit the proposed draft plan of action for a United Nations literacy decade, taking into account the comments and observations of the Executive Board at its 161st session, to the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council.

ANNEX I

Commitments and realities: Dakar commitments and UNESCO projected trends

——— Dakar commitments   ——— Projected trends (UNESCO)

ANNEX II

A proposed timed plan of decade activities and events

Begin Sept 2002-	2002-2003 YEAR 1	2003-2004 YEAR 2	2004-2005 YEAR 3	2005-2006 YEAR 4	2006-2007 YEAR 5	2007-2008 YEAR 6	2008-2009 YEAR 7	2009-2010 YEAR 8	2010-2011 YEAR 9
Development Goals				Gender Equality Education Goals	Proposal International Gender Equality in Education Conference				
1. Baseline Research		Research Workshops							
2. Policy Forums	National Forums	National Forums / Regional Forums	National Forums	National Forums / Regional Forum	National Forums	National Forums / Regional Forum	National Forums	National Forums / Regional Forum	National Forums
3. Mobilization: National and Sub-national Springboard Consultations	Consultations	Consultations	Consultations		Consultations		Consultations		Consultations
4. Strategic Implementation and Cooperation				Sustained cooperation and dialogue					
5. Regional Training Programme Design Workshops		Workshops		Workshops			Workshops		
6. Information and Exchange				Sustained Strategic Exchanges					
7. Information Technology Use a)	Database Creation		Sustained Virtual Forum						
b)	Five year reseach and experimentation programme								
International Literacy Day Activities	8 September 2003: Gender Equity	8 September 2004: Diversity	8 September 2005: Creative Literacy	8 September 2006: Teachers and Facilitators	8 September 2007: Half-way celebration	8 September 2008: Quality	8 September 2009: Participation	8 September 2010: Literacy for Health	8 September 2011: Materials and Literature

UNLD International Plan of Action

General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session
Item 100 of the provisional agenda*
Social development, including questions relating to the
world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled
persons and the family

United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all; International Plan of Action; implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/116

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The Secretary-General hereby transmits the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/116 of 19 December 2001 entitled "United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all". The report presents the Plan of Action of the United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all, and consists of the recommendations to implement a successful decade.

In its resolution 56/116, the General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Literacy Decade for the period 2003-2012 towards the goal of education for all. In that resolution, the Assembly took note of the draft proposal and plan for a United Nations literacy decade (A/56/114 and Add.1-E/2001/93 and Add.1), which it had requested in resolution 54/122, and decided that UNESCO should take a coordinating role in stimulating and catalysing the activities at the international level within the framework of the Decade.

The draft Plan of Action has been developed in compliance with paragraph 11 of resolution 56/116, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Director-General of UNESCO, to seek comments and proposals from Governments and the relevant international organizations on the draft plan for the Decade in order to develop and finalize a well targeted and action-oriented plan of action to be submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

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* A/57/150.
** The present report was submitted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 15 July 2002.

Contents

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session adopted its resolution 56/116 entitled "United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all", in which it proclaimed the United Nations Literacy Decade for the period 2003-2012 towards the goal of Education for All. The proposal for a United Nations literacy decade was brought forward at the fifty-fourth session of the Assembly (see resolution 54/122), endorsed at the roundtable convened at the World Education Forum, held in Dakar in 2000, and reiterated by the Assembly at its special session, held in Geneva in 2000. The proclamation of the United Nations Literacy Decade by the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session was welcomed by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2002/23 of 22 April 2002 on the right to education.

2. In the preamble to its resolution 56/116 the General Assembly states it is convinced that literacy is crucial to the acquisition, by every child, youth and adult, of essential life skills that enable them to address the challenges they can face in life and represents an essential step in basic education, which is an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century. The resolution also supports the concept of literacy for all in its reaffirmation that literacy for all is at the heart of basic education for all and that creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy.

3. The United Nations Literacy Decade, as an integral component of Education for All, will provide both a platform and an impetus for achieving all six goals of the Dakar Framework for Action.[1]

The six goals of the Dakar Framework for Action

(1) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

(2) Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

(3) Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes;

(4) 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;

(5) Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;

(6) Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

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[1] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Final Report of the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000* (Paris, 2000), annex II.

Literacy is the common thread that runs through the six goals. Indeed, the acquisition of stable and sustainable literacy skills by all will ensure that people can actively participate in a range of learning opportunities throughout life. Literacy for all is the foundation for lifelong learning for all and a tool for empowering individuals and their communities.

4. The plan of action builds on the draft proposal and plan for a United Nations literacy decade (A/56/114 and Add.1-E/2001/93 and Add.1) and articulates essential requirements and the focus of actions for the successful implementation of the Literacy Decade as a thrust of Education for All efforts. It aims to stimulate action taken by national Governments, local communities, individuals, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, public and private organizations and civil society in their broad coalition. It also aims to mobilize international agencies and national Governments for forging global commitments.

II. Literacy for All: the vision

5. In the rapidly changing world of today's knowledge society, with the progressive use of newer and innovative technological means of communication, literacy requirements continue to expand regularly. In order to survive in today's globalized world, it has become necessary for all people to learn new literacies and develop the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use information in multiple manners. As recalled in paragraph 8 of the draft proposal and plan for a United Nations literacy decade, "Literacy policies and programmes today require going beyond the limited view of literacy that has dominated in the past. Literacy for all requires a renewed vision of literacy ...".

6. The vision for the Literacy Decade situates Literacy for All at the heart of Education for All. Literacy is central to all levels of education, especially basic education, through all delivery modes — formal, non-formal and informal. Literacy for All encompasses the educational needs of all human beings in all settings and contexts, in the North and the South, the urban and the rural, those in school and those out-of-school, adults and children, boys and girls, and men and women.

7. Literacy for All has to address the literacy needs of the individual as well as the family, literacy in the workplace and in the community, as well as in society and in the nation, in tune with the goals of economic, social and cultural development of all people in all countries. Literacy for All will be effectively achieved only when it is planned and implemented in local contexts of language and culture, ensuring gender equity and equality, fulfilling learning aspirations of local communities and groups of people. Literacy must be related to various dimensions of personal and social life, as well as to development. Thus, literacy efforts must be related to a comprehensive package of economic, social and cultural policies cutting across multiple sectors. Literacy policies must also recognize the significance of the mother tongue in acquiring literacy and provide for literacy in multiple languages wherever necessary.

III. Priority groups

8. Literacy for All focuses on a range of priority groups. In the countries of the South, particularly, women's literacy must be addressed urgently. The priority population groups to be addressed are:

- Non-literate youth and adults, especially women, who have not been able to acquire adequate skills to use literacy for their personal development and for improving their quality of life

- Out-of-school children and youth, especially girls, adolescent girls and young women

- Children in school without access to quality learning so that they do not add to the pool of adult non-literates.

Of the priority population referred to above, certain more disadvantaged groups urgently require special attention, in particular, ethnic and linguistic minorities, indigenous populations, migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, aged people and pre-school children — especially those who have little or no access to early childhood care and education.

IV. Expected outcomes

9. National Governments, local authorities, international agencies and all stakeholders are to ensure that by the end of the Literacy Decade, the

Literacy for All thrust of Education for All will yield the following outcomes:

(a) Significant progress towards the 2015 Dakar goals 3, 4 and 5, in particular, a recognizable increase in the absolute numbers of those who are literate among:

(i) Women — accompanied by a reduction in gender disparities;

(ii) Excluded pockets in countries that are otherwise considered to have high literacy rates;

(iii) Regions with the greatest needs, namely, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and E-9 countries;

(b) Attainment by all learners, including children in school, of a mastery level of learning in reading, writing, numeracy, critical thinking, positive citizenship values and other life skills;

(c) Dynamic literate environments, especially in schools and communities of the priority groups, so that literacy will be sustained and expanded beyond the Literacy Decade;

(d) Improved quality of life (poverty reduction, increased income, improved health, greater participation, citizenship awareness and gender sensitivity) among those who have participated in the various educational programmes under Education for All.

V. Principal strategies

10. In order to attain the above-mentioned outcomes, the implementation process of the Literacy Decade needs to be focused on the following actions as principal strategies, which are essential for attaining and maintaining the outcomes but are largely overlooked currently:

(a) Placing literacy at the centre of all levels of national education systems and developmental efforts;

(b) Adopting a two-pronged approach, giving equal importance to both formal and non-formal education modalities with synergy between the two;

(c) Promoting an environment supportive of uses of literacy and a culture of reading in schools and communities;

(d) Ensuring community involvement in literacy programmes and their ownership by communities;

(e) Building partnerships at all levels, particularly at the national level, between the Government, civil society, the private sector and local communities, as well as at the subregional, regional and international levels;

(f) Developing systematic monitoring and evaluation processes at all levels, supported by research findings and databases.

VI. Key areas for action

11. For the successful implementation of the Literacy Decade for Literacy for All, the aforementioned principal strategies must be put in place in reality at all levels through actions that are coordinated and complement each other. The key areas for action are policy, programme modality, capacity-building, research, community participation and monitoring and evaluation. It must be stressed that all actions must address the gender equality perspective in all its ramifications.

A. Policy

12. Develop a policy environment across communities, sectors, agencies and ministries that mainstreams the promotion of literacy by undertaking the following:

(a) Develop a policy framework and incentive scheme that ensures multi-ministerial collaboration as well as a financing scheme to enhance literacy programmes in formal, non-formal and informal education, spelling out expected roles of the private sector, civil society and individuals;

(b) Engage communities (including community-based organizations, families and individuals), civil society organizations, universities and research institutes, mass media and the private sector in providing input into literacy policy;

(c) Provide a framework for the context-sensitive development of a literate environment, such as:

• Promoting multilingual and multicultural education

• Encouraging local literature production

• Encouraging participation of the book publishing industry and establishing and supporting community libraries towards Reading for All

• Widening access to tools for expression and communication, such as newspapers, radio, television and information and communication technologies, as well as promoting freedom of expression;

(d) Ensure that literacy is part of broad discussions on poverty reduction, e.g. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, multi-agency collaboration, such as the Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as well as education, e.g. Education for All planning and the Sector-wide Approach;

(e) Ensure that the promotion of literacy is an integral part of planning and implementation for educational components relating to health, agriculture, rural and urban development, conflict and crisis prevention, post-conflict reconstruction, HIV/AIDS prevention, environment and other intersectoral issues;

(f) Put literacy on the agenda at national, subregional, regional and international forums on development and education, e.g. United Nations summits, G-8, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), conferences of ministers of education, regional partnership mechanisms such as New Partnerships for Development in Africa and national development consultations.

B. Programme modality

13. In order to achieve Literacy for All and thus Education for All goals, which cut across all age groups in and out of school, literacy programmes must cover the whole life cycle so as to make possible lifelong learning and be gender-sensitive, and must be delivered through both non-formal and formal approaches. They must also be built on the already available literacy programmes and, at the same time, should add newer literacy programmes by forecasting the future literacy needs. It is therefore essential to recognize the need for the following actions:

(a) Develop programmes which aim at meaningful uses of literacy in addition to the acquisition of the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy, spanning various age groups from pre-school age to adulthood. Such programmes could encompass literacy readiness for pre-school children as well as family literacy and literacy for primary schoolchildren, school dropouts, out-of-school children and adolescents and non-literate youth and adults, addressing such content needs as:

• Literacy for vocational upgrading and employment

• Post-literacy and continuing education programmes for a variety of client groups, including information and communication technology literacy

• Information literacy, including media literacy, legal literacy and scientific literacy;

(b) Design programmes that give learner motivation a high priority by meeting the needs of learners and supporting a literate environment. The following actions are suggested to this end:

• Develop diverse modes of delivery, including the use of information and communication technologies

• Develop gender-sensitive content, materials and methodology, building on local languages, knowledge and culture

• Integrate literacy instruction in other sectors, such as health education, agricultural extension education and income-generation schemes

• Have reading materials available for children and adults in the mother tongue and a second language in schools and communities;

(c) Establish linkages and synergy between formal and non-formal education through the following:

• Develop equivalency programmes to bridge formal and non-formal education by establishing, inter alia, policies, guidelines and accreditation mechanisms

- Upgrade the credentials of literacy facilitators through professional training and by providing official recognition to non-formal education facilitators on par with formal schoolteachers

- Establish distance education programmes that enable people who have left formal education to progress at their own pace until they are ready to re-enter the formal education system

- Encourage bridges between teachers' associations and non-formal education facilitators.

C. Capacity-building

14. In order to implement educational programmes as part of the Decade, it is necessary to ensure that various partners and stakeholders have the requisite capacities for running such programmes in a sustained manner in such areas as those listed below:

(a) Planning and management: organize capacity-building activities for educational planners and decision-makers at regional, subregional, national and local levels, built into ongoing educational programmes, in such areas as fund-raising, programme designing and implementation, multisectoral cooperation, project documentation and reporting;

(b) Research: design programmes for strengthening the capacity of NGOs, community-based organizations and civil society organizations to carry out action research;

(c) Training of trainers: identify and support a core group of trainers at regional, subregional, national and subnational levels who can train programme personnel, including teachers and facilitators at the local level;

(d) Training systems: develop training systems that are gender-sensitive and can be adapted to different contexts and purposes and used at subnational and local levels;

(e) Curriculum: develop literacy curriculum frameworks at regional, subregional and national levels that can be adapted to local curricula and lesson plans according to the needs of specific learner groups at the local level.

D. Research

15. In order to use research findings for the formulation of literacy policy effectively, the improvement of literacy programmes and the periodic review of progress towards Literacy for All, specific and well-designed research activities and projects will have to be undertaken during the Literacy Decade, which include the following:

(a) For the purpose of policy formulation: conduct baseline studies for identification of, inter alia, priority groups, levels of literacy, local needs, resource availability, likely partnerships and mapping gender disparities;

(b) For improving primary schools and non-formal education programmes: conduct process research to enable educational planners and administrators to make mid-course corrections on the basis of research findings;

(c) For deeper insights into the concept of Literacy for All: conduct longitudinal studies on the uses of literacy in schools and communities, and map emerging and new literacy practices in the context of information and communication technologies;

(d) For empowerment of local communities: conduct research in how local communities can participate in literacy programmes and derive benefits from such programmes;

(e) For research utilization: critically review relevant research in the North and South, for adoption and adaptation of research results for use in policy and practice in new contexts.

16. The following actions are proposed for facilitating the development of the aforementioned research activities:

(a) Create a database on literacy studies, including evaluation studies;

(b) Encourage universities, institutions of higher education and research institutions to put literacy on their research agendas;

(c) Create networks of research organizations for cooperation between countries and regions, ensuring participation from the North as well as the South and encouraging cooperation between countries of the South.

E. Community participation

17. The success of the Literacy for All programme depends on the extent of the involvement of the local community in the programme and the willingness of the local community to take on the ownership of the programme. It is important that the Government should not seek community involvement as a cost-cutting strategy and it must be remembered that occasional campaigns and festivals do not ensure community participation in educational programmes. Some of the steps in securing community participation are the following:

(a) Document experiences of governmental organizations, NGOs and the private sector regarding community participation in literacy programmes;

(b) Provide technical and financial support for sustaining community-based programmes of literacy;

(c) Create subnational/national networks of NGOs working with local communities for literacy;

(d) Encourage local communities to organize community learning centres;

(e) Share experiences of successful community learning centre programmes among countries;

(f) Develop appropriate tools for communication between Governments and communities as well as among communities, including the use of information and communication technologies.

F. Monitoring and evaluation

18. For the success of the Literacy for All programme, it is necessary to build functional monitoring information systems across various programmes and different levels (institutional/subnational/national/international). The systems should be designed to provide reliable and meaningful information on the status of literacy among the population, on the uses and impact of literacy and on the performance and effectiveness of literacy programmes. The following actions are proposed for building an effective monitoring and evaluation system:

(a) Refine literacy indicators and methodologies to enable countries systematically to

collect and disseminate more and better information, with particular attention to providing information on gender gaps;

(b) Promote widespread and better use of population data, for example through demographic censuses and surveys, in monitoring literacy status, use and impact among the population;

(c) Develop cost-effective methods for assessing literacy levels of individuals for use in literacy surveys, as well as in the regular evaluation of learning outcomes at the programme level;

(d) Build information systems to support policies and management of non-formal education among agencies, programmes, learners and educators;

(e) Establish long-term tracking systems of new literates for studying the impact of literacy on the quality of life.

VII. Implementation at the national level

19. The State must play the central and crucial role in planning, coordinating, implementing and financing programmes for Literacy for All. In order to fulfil this role, the State must build symbiotic partnerships with a variety of stakeholders. It is therefore necessary to mobilize the local communities, NGOs, teachers' associations and workers' unions, universities and research institutions, the private sector and other stakeholders to contribute to and participate in all stages of literacy programmes.

20. The successful implementation of the Literacy Decade requires that Literacy for All be the central focus of all Education for All plans and programmes. Thus, it is necessary to remember that a plan for the Literacy Decade and its implementation at the national level must be incorporated in the national Education for All plan and its implementation. Where the national Education for All plan has already been formulated, the Literacy for All component can be added as a supplement. Where the national Education for All plan is being finalized, it would be appropriate to incorporate the Literacy for All component within it. In the process of incorporating a Literacy for All component in the Education for All plans, a checklist of questions and key elements can be a useful guide. A sample checklist is contained in annex I.

21. The Literacy Decade must be viewed as a unity, not as a sum of 10 successive single years. Every country, therefore, must plan within its own 10-year perspective for implementing Literacy for All. In so doing, attention should be paid to ensuring that the initial period of the Decade is devoted to the creation of comprehensive and reliable databases on literacy. An example of such a 10-year time frame is contained in annex II.

VIII. Resource mobilization

22. The Literacy for All intervention must not suffer or languish on account of insufficient funding. Governments need to mobilize adequate resources in support of Literacy for All. The following strategies may be adopted at the national level:

(a) Incorporate the Literacy for All component across the budget for all levels of education, from basic to higher education;

(b) Attract additional funding through coordination and resource sharing with other ministries and departments where literacy is a component of programmes of advocacy, extension education and poverty reduction;

(c) Mobilize the private sector and civil society to support the Literacy for All programme.

At the international level, successful resource mobilization will require:

(a) Ongoing consultation among United Nations agencies in support of Literacy for All as a component of Education for All;

(b) Involvement of bilateral agencies for their financial support and commitments;

(c) Mobilization of international civil society in support of Literacy for All.

A special role should be given to the World Bank with the task of integrating the Decade in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and preparing a special funding chapter with Education for All. At the regional level, it is also possible to attract financial resources from regional organizations and regional banks. In order to attract international funding, it is essential to formulate credible projects based on research, justifying investment in literacy. These projects must also have carefully worked out costs and effects based on actual studies.

IX. International support and coordination

23. The United Nations system as a whole sets the promotion of literacy in the context of human rights, seen as indivisible and interdependent. The right to education, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which literacy is both a crucial element and a tool, connects with the right to equality (especially gender equality), to development, to health and to freedom of expression. United Nations agencies as well as the World Bank engaged in these various sectors recognize these connections and frequently include literacy as one of the problems to be addressed and solved in conjunction with the fulfilment of other rights. As the coordinating agency at the international level for the achievement of the goals of the Dakar Framework for Action for Education for All, as well as for the Literacy Decade, UNESCO will work within the Education for All coordination mechanism already established, through which it will identify literacy components in the ongoing development programmes of various international and bilateral agencies and forge joint mobilization and maximum use of resources among these agencies in support of the Decade.

24. In consultation with the relevant United Nations agencies, UNESCO will work towards creating meaningful and goal-oriented partnerships in order to encourage inclusive planning and implementation of the Literacy Decade. Such a partnership will ensure efficient delivery of different inputs provided by the United Nations agencies. A key partner will be the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the lead agency in the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. The World Bank will work with UNESCO in literacy assessment and cost and financing analysis for literacy, for which OECD and UNICEF can also be key partners. UNESCO will facilitate cooperation among other United Nations agencies whose mandates and programmes are strongly relevant to achieving Literacy for All, such as those listed below:

• Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: rural development, agricultural extension programmes

- International Labour Organization: learning and training for work, elimination of child labour

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: right to education, gender equality, right to development, right to freedom of expression, indigenous peoples (languages, cultures, knowledge)

- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS: education about HIV/AIDS

- United Nations Development Programme: rural development, participatory citizenship, democratic governance, poverty reduction, sustainable livelihood

- United Nations Population Fund: teacher training and curriculum development regarding reproductive health and population

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: education as a key issue in supporting refugee children

- World Food Programme: Food for Education

- World Health Organization: Health for All, primary healthcare education, access to health information, safe motherhood, HIV/AIDS prevention.

Annex I

Sample checklist for implementation at the national level

Key questions

- What is the current status of literacy in the country?

- What is the status of literacy programmes in schools?

- What literacy programmes are being implemented?

- What are the relationships between these programmes and other programmes for social and economic development?

- What are the problems/bottlenecks in running these programmes?

- How will Literacy for All be incorporated in the Education for All plans?

- Which priority groups need to be included in the literacy programmes during the Decade?

- What types of literacy should be included in the programmes of Literacy for All?

- What kind of data is needed for planning further input for these programmes?

- What proportion of the education budget should go to literacy programmes?

- Where and how can additional funding be obtained? (e.g. private sector, bilateral sources, regional and international bodies)

- What roles are to be played by whom in the planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the programmes for Literacy for All?

Essential elements

- Policy and planning: plan for the Literacy Decade through incorporating a Literacy for All component in Education for All plans, with a realistic time frame for the entire 10-year period of the Literacy Decade

- Advocacy: draw up plans for advocacy actions at all levels in cooperation with all stakeholders, such as government functionaries, NGOs, civil society, institutions, funding agencies, local communities, local governments and potential learners

- Capacity-building: develop training programmes for all categories of stakeholders in the areas of planning, research, training, curriculum development, materials development, monitoring and evaluation

- Partnership: build effective partnerships with other ministries, NGOs, civil society, institutions, universities, the private sector, funding agencies, international agencies, United Nations agencies and the media

- Research: carry out baseline study for priority identification; support action research for developing alternative models and process research to review programme implementation

- Monitoring and evaluation: establish and activate realistic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; develop databases and keep track of current status of literacy

- Celebration: plan regular celebrations of the Literacy Decade on International Literacy Day in order to maintain momentum and commitment; plan regular media events as part of the celebrations

- Resource support: ensure adequate human and financial resources.

Annex II

Example of a 10-year time frame for the United Nations Literacy Decade

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
I. Policy: policy forums	National forums	National forums	National forums	National forums	National forums	National forums	National forums	National forums		
		Regional forums		Regional forums		Regional forums		Regional forums		
II. Research		Baseline research workshops								
		Database creation								
	Five-year research and experimentation programme in the use of ICTs for literacy learners									
III. Monitoring and evaluation	Indicator and assessment methodology development								National Assessment Forums	Regional Assessment Forums
IV. Capacity building: regional training programme design workshops		Workshops		Workshops			Workshops			
V and VI. Community participation and two-pronged approach	National and subnational consultations	National and subnational consultations	National and subnational consultations		National and subnational consultations		National and subnational consultations		National and subnational consultations	
Information and exchange	Sustained strategic exchanges and sustained virtual forum									International Literacy Conference
International Literacy Day activities; possible themes	8 September 2003: Gender equality	8 September 2004: Diversity	8 September 2005: Creative literacy	8 September 2006: Teachers and facilitators	8 September 2007: Half-way celebration	8 September 2008: Quality	8 September 2009: Participation	8 September 2010: Literacy for Health	8 September 2011: Materials and literature	8 September 2012: Celebration

Regional Resource TOR and Strategies

TERMS-OF-REFERENCE

Formation of UNLD Resource Persons' Team in Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe and North America for implementing and monitoring the UN Literacy Decade

I. Background

At the request of the 56th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2001, UNESCO has been taking the lead coordinating role in stimulating and catalysing the activities at international level within the framework of the UN Literacy Decade (UNLD). The international plan of action for the UNLD was prepared by UNESCO in consultation with its partners and adopted at the 57th session in 2002.

It has been suggested in a series of formal and informal consultations and meetings during UNLD launching year to create a pool of resource persons from all regions to advocate, implement and monitor the UNLD. Setting up of such resource persons' team will help UNESCO facilitate better coordination within the UNLD at regional and international levels and assist the Member States to advance literacy and non-formal education (NFE) in the UNLD framework.

Such a technical arm will also require UNESCO Headquarters, regional bureaus for education, cluster and field offices and Institutes, in particular UIE and UIS, to carry out activities related to literacy and NFE under 32C/5, in a more coherent, systematic and cost-effective way.

To achieve maximum impact and effectiveness of the activities in carrying out 32C/5 in relation to the UNLD within limited human and budgetary resources, UNESCO intends to set up a team of resource persons. This team will be composed of competent literacy experts in each region of Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, Europe and North America. The team will be set up bearing in mind the expected outcomes, strategies and key areas of actions spelled out in the UNLD Action Plan and shall be tasked with the following objectives.

II. Objectives

To cooperate with and support UNESCO in:

 ▸ advocating literacy and NFE, and UNLD in particular to enhance public and political awareness on the achievement of UNLD goals in and among the regions;

 ▸ building and strengthening cooperation among UNLD partners including UN agencies, bi-/multi-lateral development agencies, governments, NGOs and civil society organizations;

 ▸ providing technical assistance to the Member States in key areas of action articulated in the UNLD Action Plan (policy, programme, capacity building, research, community participation, monitoring and evaluation);

- promoting interregional and cross-country interaction for exchanging views, expertise and resources;

- providing suggestions and recommendations regarding the implementation and monitoring of UNLD at national, regional and international levels.

III. Assignment Term

The team will be task-based and shall revolve every two years. The first term will commence in April 2004 to April 2006.

IV. Selection of the Members

- The team members will be selected by the respective UNESCO regional bureaus for education and UIE (for Europe and North America) on the basis of the recognition of proven action and practice in consultation with ED/BAS/LIT, when necessary.

- The team will consist of 6 members who should be competent literacy experts of the respective regions involved within six key areas for action stipulated in the UNLD international plan of action, namely, policy, programme, capacity-building, research, community participation, monitoring and evaluation.

- Sub-regional balance and cluster representation will be taken into account in the selection.

V. Remuneration

Members will be nominated on their personal capacity and will not be remunerated. However, in cases where particular services shall be sought, they will be remunerated according to UNESCO's rules and regulations when required.

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Strategies for Promotion of the UN Literacy Decade through a Regional Resource Team

I. Background

The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), launched in 2003, has significant meaning to the countries in the Asia-Pacific region in view of the large number of illiterate youths and adults as well as out-of-school children. It is estimated that the two-thirds of the illiterate population live in this region.

On the other hand, this region has considerable potential and resources in various aspects of lifelong learning. In addition to government organizations, there are many NGOs and professional organizations working in basic education and literacy in particular. Networks of such organizations include: Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (APSBAE); APPEAL Resource and Training Consortium (ARTC); and, ACCU-Literacy Resource Centre network (LRC).

The Regional Bureau for Education at UNESCO Bangkok has served as the coordinating agency of the Thematic Working Group (TWG) for EFA in the region. The UNLD will be further promoted within the framework of EFA in cooperation with the EFA partners such as governments, UN agencies, NGOs and other development partners.

II. Purpose of this Paper

Based on the TOR for the formulation of the UNLD regional resource persons' team, this short paper presents the proposed mechanisms, strategies and activities of the resource team in Asia and the Pacific as well as the time schedule of 2004. The TOR for the resource persons' team prepared by UNESCO HQ is attached as Annex 1.

III. Proposed Mechanisms for the Team

1) Regional Mechanisms

To further the initiatives for UNLD within the EFA framework, the resource team for Asia and the Pacific is proposed to be constituted using the existing networks and resources in the region rather than creating a new team of individual experts. In view of this, the following networks and bodies have been invited to the resource team for the period of 2004-05. The membership of this team will be reviewed every two years

- Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)
- Christian Blind Mission (CBM)

- ⇥ Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (APSBAE)
- ⇥ Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Bangladesh, representing APPEAL Resource and Training Consortium (ARTC)
- ⇥ Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), representing Literacy Resource Centre network (LRC)
- ⇥ 2 – 3 representatives from government agencies and the private sector are being invited

To effectively coordinate this team with the present EFA mechanisms, the resource team is proposed to function in close contact with the TWG for EFA. UNESCO Regional Bureau in Bangkok will coordinate the work of this team.

2) National Mechanisms

UNESCO Bangkok will inform countries in the region about the initiatives of this resource team and suggest that a UNLD focal point or team be established under the EFA mechanism in each country. The national focal point/team will formulate concrete action plans for UNLD within the framework of the country's national EFA plan and in coordination with government, UN, donor agencies and NGOs.

The regional resource team will provide technical assistance to this process in consultation with the local counterparts as well as UNESCO offices and other UN agencies.

IV. Main Strategies

1) Functions

It may not be realistic to carry out activities directly by the regional resource team, and so the main functions of this team will be advisory and sharing of information and identifying key areas of actions. Regular consultations among members will be made largely through electronic means. It is planned to organize a meeting of the team in conjunction with one/two of the TWG for EFA meetings a year.

2) Implementation

Based on the above consultations, actual work and activities will be carried out by the respective members and their own network partners. Each member, in consultation with its partner agencies, will formulate concrete action plans under UNLD, in view of the available expertise and resources. As a first step, detailed profiles and draft action plans of the members will be prepared and shared as a 'promotion kit' of UNLD to explore possible joint activities and avoid overlapping. This information will also be shared with a national focal point/team to assist their activities in the country.

3) Action Areas

As suggested by the TOR, the resource team will assist countries in the region to promote UNLD, in particular to formulate and implement the national action plans in the following 6 key areas: policy, programme, capacity building, research, community participation, monitoring and evaluation. The UNLD Action Plan which elaborates these key areas, is attached as Annex 2.

4) Role of each member

While team members are invited to formulate activities in all the action areas of UNLD, each member will identify the focus areas of their activities in consultation with their network partners. Members from government organizations are expected to explore strategies and action plans to strengthen government networks at sub-regional and regional levels. A member from the private sectors is invited to play active role for mobilizing social awareness and various resources to promote the UNLD.

5) Funding

UNESCO will provide seed money for the activities under UNLD and try to mobilize financial resources, at the same time, it is expected that each member will mainstream the UNLD initiatives in their regular activities at the regional as well as national levels.

6) Information Sharing

Information concerning UNLD and the resource team will be shared through UNESCO Bangkok's website (www.unescobkk.org) and Asia-Pacific Literacy Database (www.accu.or.jp/litdbase). In particular, these sites will inform about the UNLD related activities in the region and possible areas of assistance to be provided to the countries by the team members.

V. Proposed Activities and Timeframe for 2004

Mar - May	TOR and Strategy paper will be disseminated to the proposed resource team members for consultation and finalization.
June - July	Each resource team member will develop the profile to compile the existing resources of its network partner agencies and expertise and identify the possible areas of activities under the UNLD.
	Each member will have consultations with partner agencies to explore possible areas of activities for 2004-2005 through meetings or internet.
	Countries will be informed about the resource team and invited to formulate the national mechanisms for UNLD within the framework of their national EFA plans.
Aug - Sept	Proposed areas of activities will be shared among the team members and prioritized for developing concrete activity plans. The inform will also be shared with national focal points through UNESCO Bangkok website and Literacy Database.
October	Consultation of the resource team will be organized to discuss the possible actions to be carried out by the resource team.
	Selected activities may commence at the regional and national levels.

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Annnex

4

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List of UNLD Partner Organizations

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Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) (Focal Point of ARTC)

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