

## Using the SDG agenda to promote youth and adult education

24-25 November 2016, Bangkok, Thailand

By Uwe Gartenschlaeger, Regional Director, DVV International

How can we make the most of the new lifelong learning framework provided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to advocate for more recognition and financing for youth and adult education? This question was at the heart of the agenda of a policy forum organised by ASPBAE, ICAE, UNESCO, and DVV International in Bangkok. The event was planned as a multi-stakeholder event, bringing together more than 100 representatives from governments, UNESCO, education coalitions, civil society organisations (CSOs) active in lifelong learning, and donor agencies to strategise and exchange about the implementation of youth and adult learning strategies and policies within the lifelong learning framework of SDG4. Specifically, the event aimed to share and develop strategies and good practices to transform the agreed targets and indicators of youth and adult learning and education into practices and bring up systemic changes.



The Policy Forum aimed to share and develop strategies and good practices to transform the agreed targets and indicators of youth and adult learning and education into practices. Here, Director, UNESCO Bangkok, Gwang Jo Kim, addresses the event held in Bangkok.



Werner Mauch (R), and Alexandru Gaina (seated), UIL, spoke at the Policy Forum where UIL's GRALE III report was launched as part of the event.

The policy forum unpacked the education goal and clarified indicators, the political context, and resources needed to realise the targets related to youth and adult learning and education. The analysis of the current situation showed that there needs to be growing attention in the region towards non-formal education owing to the fact that the main focus of governments and donor agencies is still on the formal education system, particular primary education.

The SDGs addressing adult literacy, youth and adult skills, as well as education for sustainable development are still much less recognised and understood. Still, most governments spend only around 1% or less of their education budgets on non-formal education, which is seen in many cases as the responsibility of civil society, corporates, or individuals.

To change this peculiar picture, it seems essential that civil society and governments in charge of non-formal education provide more evidence on the benefits of youth and adult education. A major advocacy tool for that is provided by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) with the [3<sup>rd</sup> Global Report on Adult Learning and Education](#) (GRALE), providing some data and good practices on the benefits of adult education for health, employment, and social and community life. The official launch of the report took place within the framework of the policy forum.

Additionally, the organisers offered several encouraging examples for promoting non-formal education in the region,



Director, DVV International, Christoph Jost, addressed participants at a session on 'Challenges and Priorities in Resourcing Youth and Adult Education – the donor perspective'.

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demonstrating evidence on the impact of youth and adult education on different subjects such as health, gender, peace and reconciliation, and marginalised youth. Other presentations gave insights into creative ways of financing, especially at the local level, in using partnerships with companies, universities and civil society.

The policy forum was opened by the presentation of the new UNESCO publication '*Rethinking Education: towards a global common good*'. The publication reaffirms the understanding of education as a human right. However, it introduces the concept of education as a common good, as a shared social endeavor. In their reaction, civil society representatives criticised this shift away from the understanding of education as a public good, as it diminishes the role and responsibility of the state to guarantee adequate education possibilities for all, lifelong, and beyond only basic education.

Several speakers expressed their concerns about the growing populist movements in several parts of the world and urged youth and adult educators to find responds to these new challenges.

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