Deliberating on innovative ways to achieve the literacy targets

First meeting of the Core Group of the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL)

23 May 2016, Paris, France

The first meeting of the Core Group of the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL) deliberated on ways to deliver literacy learning, as well as to draw a road map for achieving the literacy targets under Sustainable Development Goal 4.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) convened the first meeting of the Core Group of the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL) within the framework of lifelong learning. The meeting was held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris and brought together key stakeholders - Member States, regional organisations, development and civil society partners, academics, and representatives of the private sector to deliberate on innovative ways to deliver literacy learning, as well as to draw a road map for achieving the literacy targets under Sustainable Development Goal 4.

In his presentation on the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL), Arne Carlsen, Director, UIL, highlighted that the GAL should focus on Goal 4.6 of the SDGs on achieving youth and adult literacy. He also emphasized adopting an inter-sectoral approach looking at all the 17 SDGs and making literacy relevant to the lives of learners by integrating it in health, skills development, poverty alleviation, and decent livelihoods. Strategically, efforts should be taken to make literacy open the gateway for lifelong learning through the following strategies 1) institutionalization 2) building assessment and certification systems to facilitate learners' seamless transition to further learning opportunities.

In an open forum discussion, participants acknowledged that lack of resources and donor support was a challenge in promoting and implementing adult literacy. Discussions also focussed on ensuring results at the ground level and that target groups benefit, developing data and monitoring progress, focussing on enhancing capacities at the national level, improving partnerships, and challenging finances and resources to national level initiatives. Participants also agreed that there should be a focus of literacy efforts in marginalised communities. The most illiterate populations are in vulnerable areas such as in fragile states. It is important to discern who are the most vulnerable and what kinds of literacy programmes they need.

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Some issues that emerged were how to meet the diverse learning needs of learners and ensure that content is relevant and engaging enough, and how to use assessments as a tool to motivate learners to become lifelong learners.

Arne Carlson then stressed that recommendations should not only focus on upstream capacity support such as in policy development, but in downstream implementation at the country, local, district levels, ensuring results are achieved at the community level.

In a discussion on strategies to enhance the relevance of literacy using ICTs, participants agreed that there needs to be advocacy for governments to invest in ICT. There also needs to be a framework for ICT and literacy and that teachers need to be trained for to provide that kind of education. If ICT is to reach disadvantaged people, then there needs to be a proper mechanism on how to work with communities. It was highlighted that the focus should be on ensuring quality of literacy programmes, identifying who we need to reach, what their learning needs are, and how to be equip teachers with the proper capacities and skills.

Some issues that emerged were - being mindful of an inter-sectoral approach in achieving literacy and for literacy to be a crosscutting issue that runs through the SDGs, such as in Goal 2 on agriculture, Goal 3 on health, and Goal 8 on employment and decent work. Other issues to consider were how to meet the diverse learning needs of learners and ensure that content is relevant and engaging enough, and how to use assessments as a tool to motivate learners to become lifelong learners.

In terms of focussing on what the GAL can do to provide political articulation and how to promote Goal 4.6 to governments, participants stressed that there needs to be a multi-disciplinary approach and specific targets – how do we develop a tool that is applicable to the world, how can we make data comparable across countries, how can we contextualise Goal 4.6 in country contexts and diverse needs? There was agreement that a wide concept of literacy within lifelong learning should be adopted and that there be evidence to provide necessary recommendations.

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From the global to the regional level, it was proposed that there be an Inclusive and efficient regional coordination with focus on (1) data collection and monitoring (2) mutual learning and exchange of good practices (3) advocacy and resource mobilization 4) implementation of joint projects

Formulating the ways forward, participants of the meeting suggested that thematic groups be established, that a mapping be done of possible partnerships with multi-stakeholder groups, and that there be strategic direction in giving a voice to the GAL in the Education 2030 Steering Committee. GAL will be launched on 8 September 2016 in Paris on International Literacy Day.

ASPBAE participated in the meeting as a representative of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) which is one of the civil society organisations in the GAL Core Group. Thea Soriano attended as an alternate for Maria Khan, GCE's representative in the GAL Core Group.

What is the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL)?

Both the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the UNESCO General Conference have expressed deep concern over the scale of the unfinished literacy agenda. In view of UNGA resolution A/RES/68/132 and the decision of UNESCO's 37th General Conference *"to continue consultations with Members States and development partners in order to put in place a multi-stakeholder partnership for literacy that would ensure long-term global literacy efforts"*, UNESCO proposed to establish a global alliance for literacy within the framework of lifelong learning. This was strongly supported by the Paris Communiqué on Literacy and Sustainable Societies adopted by over 100 delegates from 34 countries at the Global meeting on Literacy and Sustainable Societies in September 2015.

What is the Core Group of the Global Alliance for Literacy?

GAL is facilitated and guided by a core group of 30 members consisting of 12 representatives from member states (nominated by each of the six UNESCO Electoral groups), 3 civil society representatives from UNESCO CCNGO network (e.g. ICAE, Global Campaign for Education,), 6 co-convenors of the World Education Forum (UNDP, UNICEF, UN WOMEN, UNFPA, UNHCR, World Bank), WHO, ILO and IFAD, GPE, OECD, Commonwealth of Learning and Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie, Ibero-American States Organisation for Culture and Representative of Global Compact. The group is expected to meet once a year to provide strategic direction to the global, regional, and national literacy efforts. It will review progress and make its recommendations to Education 2030 Steering Committee (SC) on key

catalytic actions to achieve the targets set by the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development and Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA).

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has been tasked to lead the process of consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

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