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SDG 4 – EDUCATION 2030

PART II

UNESCO STRATEGY FOR YOUTH AND ADULT LITERACY (2020-2025) – ACTION PLAN

SUMMARY

In accordance with 40C/Resolution 16, the Director-General submits the draft action plan with a budget for the implementation of the UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020-2025) to the Executive Board at its 209th session for approval.

Any financial and administrative implications related to the present document will be borne within the framework of C/5 documents, while additional extrabudgetary funds will be sought for greater impact.

Decision required: paragraph 23.



Introduction

1. The General Conference adopted a new UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020-2025) at its 40th session in November 2019 through 40 C/Resolution 16. The Strategy builds on the substantial previous work, including the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012) UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (2006-2015), the Global Alliance for Literacy within Lifelong Learning Framework (GAL) launched in 2016, as well as other operational and policy support at country-level.

2. The Strategy adopts a literacy vision guided by the SDGs, understanding literacy as a continuum of learning and proficiency in reading, writing and using numbers from a lifelong learning perspective; context-specific skills; and part of a larger set of skills, including digital skills, media literacy, education for sustainable development and global citizenship as well as job-specific skills. Its approach to literacy considers the following four dimensions: (i) learning that is lifelong; (ii) learning through different learning pathways; (iii) intersectoral collaboration; and (iv) the universality of the literacy agenda.

3. The main goal of the Strategy, therefore, is to guide UNESCO's work towards supporting Member States in "*ensuring that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030*", as captured in SDG 4 Target 4.6. In doing so, it will also contribute indirectly to achieving other targets of SDG 4 and other SDGs. While universal in scope, this Strategy will pay special attention to member countries of the GAL, which includes 20 countries with an adult literacy rate below 50%, and the E9 countries where the largest number of non-literate youth and adults live. It will, among others, foster targeted support to and cooperation among the GAL countries, of which 17 are in Africa and seven in conflict or post-conflict situations.

4. Pursuant to 40 C/Resolution 16, the Director-General presents to the Executive Board for approval the draft action plan with a budget for the implementation of the UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020-2025). The action plan outlines strategic priority areas, resources, partnerships and advocacy, budgetary and organizational implications as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy.

Strategic Priority areas

5. In line with the Strategy, UNESCO's action will be centred around four strategic priority areas.

Strategic Priority Area 1: Supporting Member States in developing national literacy policies and strategies

6. UNESCO will support Member States in ensuring that youth and adult literacy is well integrated in national policies and education sector plans. This will include technical assistance on policy formulation and reviews as well as capacity development for policymakers. In this regard, general guidelines for developing and strengthening national literacy policies and strategies will be produced, also in line with the 2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education. Training programmes, such as the online course on integrating youth and adult literacy and learning in education sector plans by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) will be offered.

7. UNESCO will work with Member States to better articulate the above-mentioned literacy vision in national policies and systems. This includes policy advice and technical assistance to ensure that supportive policies and mechanisms are in place, including language policies, especially the recognition of indigenous and local languages and associated writing systems, mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning (RVA), national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), and quality assurance mechanisms for literacy programmes and equivalency programmes.

8. To ensure quality of literacy provision, UNESCO will support Member States in improving and developing literacy curricula frameworks and standards, establishing and strengthening competency frameworks and qualification standards for literacy instructors and facilitators, as well as standards and curricula for training programmes. In this regard, general guidelines for developing national youth and adult literacy curriculum frameworks and standards will be produced to support policy advice and technical assistance to help Member States articulate literacy as a continuum of learning and proficiency. Depending on the availability of extrabudgetary resources and requests from Member States, capacity development initiatives will also be provided for national institutions and stakeholders in selected countries in the design of literacy curriculum frameworks, instructional materials, competency standards for instructors and facilitators, and minimum standards for training programmes. It will also explore the potential of intergenerational learning approaches.

Expected Results	Targets for 2025
Youth and adult literacy is integrated into gender-responsive national policies and education sector plans	30 countries
The quality of literacy provision improved through developing and strengthening literacy curriculum standards and competency frameworks for instructors and facilitators	30 countries

Strategic Priority Area 2: Addressing the learning needs of disadvantaged groups, particularly women and girls

9. At the policy level, UNESCO will provide policy advice to national efforts for strengthening inclusive and equitable policies, systems and programmes to address the literacy needs of disadvantaged groups and individuals, including ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, rural populations, and persons with disabilities. It will focus particularly on women and girls, out-of-school youth, refugees, migrants and internally displaced people (IDPs). Member States will be supported in mainstreaming gender equality in literacy policies to improve more targeted programming and budgeting.

10. At the system level, UNESCO will support Member States in creating greater synergies between formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways through enhanced NQFs and RVA mechanisms so that disadvantaged youth and adults can have their literacy skills recognized and valued and access quality flexible learning opportunities for further learning and work. At the programme level, depending on the availability of resources, targeted technical assistance will be provided to select Member States in designing and implementing quality and flexible learning opportunities for the disadvantaged youth and adults.

Expected Results	Targets for 2025
National literacy programmes meet the learning needs of disadvantaged youth and adults	30 countries

Strategic Priority Area 3: Leveraging digital technologies to expand access and improve learning outcomes

11. While continuing the efforts to leverage the merit of media, such as radio and television, UNESCO will further support countries in unleashing the potential of digital technologies to expand access and improve learning. It will build a knowledge base on the use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) for youth and adult literacy in line with the 2019 Beijing Consensus on AI and Education.

12. UNESCO will support Member States in expanding quality literacy learning opportunities for youth and adults through technical assistance in creating national Open Educational Resources (OERs) guided by the 2019 UNESCO Recommendation on OER, including the development of OERs policies and sharing of openly licensed learning and teaching materials, which benefit literacy learners and instructors/facilitators. Subject to additional resource mobilization efforts, Member States will also be supported in adapting technologies for the capacity development of instructors, facilitators, and other professionals for youth and adult literacy (e.g. open distance learning, blended learning approaches, digital literacy applications, literacy games) and enhancing the relevance and quality of such instructional and learning tools.

Expected Results	Targets for 2025
National systems, capacities and programmes for youth and adult literacy enhanced with the effective and innovative use of digital technologies, including digital learning and AI-supported tools	10 countries

Strategic Priority Area 4: Monitoring progress and assessing literacy skills and programmes

13. UNESCO will strive for improving literacy data for evidence-based literacy policy and programme interventions at the national level as well as the monitoring of progress towards SDG 4 Target 4.6 at the global level. This will be achieved through consolidation and sharing of knowledge and experiences as well as through the development of guidelines and standards for assessment. UNESCO will also advocate, through its flagship events such as International Literacy Day as well as global and regional education meetings, for a more reliable and accurate assessment of literacy skills for evidence-based policy and programme cycle management.

14. At the global level, UNESCO will monitor global literacy progress through the work of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), including the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML), and through the Global Education Monitoring reports. This will be further complemented by the monitoring of the 2015 UNESCO Recommendation of Adult Learning and Education, included in the Global Reports on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) which are an integral part of the International Conference on Adult Learning and Education (CONFINTEA) process.

15. At the country level, focus will be given to national capacity development in establishing literacy skills assessment systems and promoting the use of data for improved planning, delivery and accountability. UNESCO will also support countries in developing capacity in the monitoring and evaluation of literacy programmes through, for instance, the implementation of its Action Research initiative on Measuring Literacy Programme Participants' Learning Outcomes (RAMAA) in Africa.

Expected Results	Targets for 2025
Global literacy progress monitored through global reports on monitoring SDG4 indicator 4.6.1	at least 1 global report on monitoring SDG4 indicator 4.6.1
National capacities enhanced for the monitoring and evaluation of programmes and learning outcomes for youth and adult literacy	20 countries

RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

16. To implement the Strategy and its Action Plan, UNESCO will ensure an effective allocation and use of both human and financial resources under the corresponding programme and budget (C/5). In addition to the integrated budget, it will foster partnerships and cooperation with a wide

array of technical and funding agencies within and beyond the United Nations system at all levels in accordance with its Comprehensive Partnership Strategy (document 207 EX/11).

17. UNESCO will remain a strong advocate of literacy as part of efforts to ensure the right to education and lifelong learning, and promote its empowering and transformative potential for individuals and societies. It will also consolidate advocacy efforts across the Organization, building on existing platforms and activities, including International Literacy Days and the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes, to mobilize political will and action among Member States and the international community for the promotion of literacy and resources.

Expected Results	Targets for 2025
Enhanced status of literacy on the policy agenda at national, regional and international levels, through advocacy and communication, especially the International Literacy Day (ILD) and the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes (ILP)	6 annual cycles of ILD and ILP implemented

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

18. For the period 2020-2021 (40 C/5), UNESCO's regular programme budget for literacy under Expected Result 3 is US \$938,000. On the assumption that the same level of funding will be available for the next two biennia (2022-2023 and 2024-2025), the total regular programme for the six-year implementation of the Strategy will be \$2,814,000. Moreover, the current level of extrabudgetary funds is \$9,334,456, which are earmarked for projects in five countries, notably for Afghanistan, with a \$7.2 million non-formal education project up to 2022.

19. Given the limited amount available in the regular budget and the strong earmarking of extrabudgetary resources, the Organization will take initiatives to mobilize support from Member States and the donor community to raise funds for the full implementation of the Strategy. Policy support and advocacy will be supported from the available regular budget, while large scale technical assistance to Member States, including capacity development, will require additional extrabudgetary resource mobilization, including human and financial resources.

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

20. UNESCO will implement the Strategy in accordance with its mandate, key functions, and programmes and budget of the corresponding years through coordinated activities of Headquarters, field offices and category 1 institutes. The Education Sector in Paris and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg will jointly lead the implementation of the Strategy and its monitoring and evaluation, ensuring effective collaboration with the other Programme Sectors of UNESCO, as well as that with key partners, including the funds, programmes, and specialized agencies of the United Nations System, other multilateral organizations such as development banks and funding platforms, including the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

21. At the regional and national levels, UNESCO will work closely with governments and regional organizations, such as regional economic communities and United Nations Regional Commissions and coordination mechanisms. It will rely on existing regional and national partnership frameworks which can facilitate the alignment of Strategy's activities with national development agendas and education policies and plans, as well as strengthening collaborative partnerships with regional and local stakeholders involved in literacy and adult education, including multi- and bi-lateral organizations, NGOs, civil society organizations, the private sector, and representatives of different stakeholder groups.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

22. UNESCO will apply a results-based programming, management and monitoring approach, consistent with the Organization's rules and procedures, and will develop an accountability and results matrix for continuously tracking progress and drawing out useful lessons. A mid-term review of the implementation of the Strategy will take place in 2022, which is the first year of the next UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy (41 C/4). A final and independent evaluation of the Strategy will be conducted in 2025 to determine the need for continuing this Strategy into the 2026-2030 period to coincide with the completion of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Proposed draft decision

23. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 40 C/Resolution 16 and 207 EX/Decision 6.I,
2. Also recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution 73/145, which requests UNESCO to continue to play its “coordinating and catalysing role through the implementation of the recommendations of the Global Alliance for Literacy and by continuing to provide support to Member States, in collaboration with partners”, in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal targets connected with literacy,
3. Having examined document 209 EX/6.II,
4. Approves the action plan for the UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020-2025) and invites the Director-General to implement it;
5. Invites Member States and development partners to reinforce UNESCO's capacities and resources on literacy through extrabudgetary funding;
6. Encourages Member States and UNESCO to foster partnerships and promote South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation, with a particular focus on the Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning (GAL);
7. Requests the Director-General to present to it at its 217th session the results of a mid-term review on the implementation of the UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020-2025) which will take place in 2022.