



BOCAED

Bonn Conferences on  
Adult Education and  
Development



## The Bonn Declaration on Financing Adult Education for Development June 2009

### Recommendations

1. These recommendations for action were developed at the International Conference on Financing Adult Education for Development convened in Bonn, Germany, 23-24 June 2009. They are intended to inform the action needed at the Sixth UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in Belem, Brazil in December 2009 and beyond.

### *The Bonn Conference calls on national governments*

2. to create a comprehensive legal foundation for adult education where it does not already exist, as a basis for appropriate financial support;
3. to allocate a minimum of 6% of GNP to education within which a minimum of 6% is for adult education, reserving half of this for adult literacy programmes where required;
4. to build lifelong learning, including provision for adult learning, into all strategic planning, resource allocation and implementation;
5. to achieve Education for All, specifically goals 3 and 4, and the full spectrum of the Millennium Development Goals;

6. to put an end to short-term illiteracy eradication campaigns and sustain investment in the programmes required, supporting continuity into programmes of lifelong learning;
7. to recognise the importance of supporting lifelong learning including opportunities for post-experience continuing education for all groups and individuals, at all levels and ages, in all societies;
8. to work with all of civil society, including private sector organisations and interest groups, to benefit fully from available resources;
9. to concentrate more on financial initiatives for adult education coming from the end-beneficiaries rather than from the top;
10. to prioritise women's education and development, including through gender mainstreaming and support of specific actions to empower women;
11. to support skills development, including in taking into account the specific needs of small enterprises;
12. to find the links between financing adult education and health & sustainable development; to achieve effective coordination between public sector departments; and to monitor how well activities across all departments enable learning.

***We call on intergovernmental organisations***

13. To honour and support the purposes and actions set out above in respect of national governments.
14. ***We request OECD*** in particular to extend the understanding of adult education in DAC code 112.30 (adult literacy and education) in its education statistics to capture other aspects of adult education, as a basis for indicators and monitoring in this area.
15. The G20 should insist with the IMF that macro-economic conditions should take full account of the importance of investing in human development (and specifically in EFA) as a key part of the response to the financial crisis.

***We call on Donors***

16. to allocate at least 6% of aid to education to youth and adult education in order to fill the financing gap in this area of at least two billion dollars a year;
17. to support, collaborate with, and encourage collaboration between, all parties able to contribute to lifelong learning efforts in general, and especially those that relate to EFA Goals 3 and 4 and to achieving the MDGs;

18. to include adult literacy rates among the indicators for MDG 1 on reducing poverty by half, as well as under MDG 2 on universal primary completion;

19. recognising that national governments should provide the resources to ensure the right to education of all citizens, but that some countries are so poor that even if they allocate 6% of their GDP to education this will not be sufficient to cover the cost of EFA in their countries, external aid is critical to support these countries as part of the Dakar Promise.

***We call on the Fast Track Initiative FTI therefore***

20. to treat adult education as integral to EFA and duly consider adult education in FTI supported policies.

***We also call on the European Union and Commission***

21. to achieve more policy coherence between intra-EU programmes, which are good in terms of adult education and lifelong learning, and the EU external aid programmes (including the European Development Fund, the Development Co-operation Instrument, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) which often neglect adult learning and education;

22. to bring lifelong learning and adult education into all of its development policies, country assessments, and country strategy papers;

23. and to establish Grundtvig Mundus, on the lines of Erasmus Mundus, as a programme for adult education exchange and other projects between the adult education communities of EU and non-EU countries.

***We recommend that the worldwide adult education and lifelong learning movement gathered at Belem undertakes***

24. to accord at least equal importance to building social and cultural capital as to income and financial capital, in investing in adult education, literacy and lifelong learning for sustainable community and national well-being;

25. To influence political will and win media support for adequate financing by means of concrete examples of value and return on investment from adult education finances.

## **Context and Declaration**

26. Meeting in Bonn in Germany on 23 and 24 June 2009, and preparing for the deferred 6<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in Belem, Brazil in December 2009, we recognise this to be a crucial time in the history of human affairs.

27. Yet we approach the future in a spirit of purposeful optimism. We can be inspired by extending our imagination beyond what we are now doing, yet in a spirit of realism in setting priorities for competing resources.

28. The ever more interdependent world is poised between avoidable catastrophe of our own making as a species, and an opportunity for people and their governments at all levels to take intelligent control of their shared destinies. The complexity of what is required from adult education was vividly illuminated by our discussions at Bonn.

29. Long-standing and chronic problems generated by population growth, the mobility of peoples for political and economic reasons, and by massive and once again rising inequalities between have and have-not individuals, communities and nations, have reached a critical point. The pressures on our shared ecosystem threaten possible collapse, if we fail to alter our ways, learning and living a culture of sufficiency and custodianship in place of competitive exploitation and growth.

30. Crises associated with global warming, scarcity and competition for food, water and energy, threaten to unleash a new era of refugee migration, inter-cultural conflict, and resource wars. The need for new and renewable energy resources points a way to collaborative recovery deeper than merely economic revival.

31. The recent collapse of global fiscal systems, caused by the same non-viable culture, has led to global economic recession and the threat of new and selfish protectionist nationalism. The current financial crisis is likely to have deep and long-term negative effects on developing countries, deepening inequalities. Large-scale support is urgently needed.

32. We can only plan and manage our way out of this multi-faceted complex and global crisis with the active participation and the mobilised capacity, informed abilities, wisdom and solidarity of all peoples and communities. These things cannot be achieved by the cleverness of even the wisest governments alone, nor by the natural workings of the free market. Local, regional and national governments and donor agencies must strive to mobilise and support all kinds of agencies and organisations to work together for a system and culture of lifelong learning.

33. We declare that lifelong including adult learning, anchored in principles of equity, sustainability and a balance between social and economic purposes, is a universal human right. It lies at the heart of global renewal and is a key to

addressing our intractable problems. It means seeing all people as essential resources for effective and sustainable development, grounded in their own ability and commitment.

34. These principles apply to all nations in all conditions and to collaborative development between nations, South-South and North-North as well as North-South.

35. Lifelong learning is in turn an essential condition for being able to manage ourselves well, and to prosper economically. The capacity to learn - of nations, their governments and international bodies, as well as of individuals and communities, for civil society and for its citizens - underpins the ability to judge and to manage wisely and efficiently in the public interest. Some benefits of adult education and skills development are amenable to econometric treatment; others such as reduced racism are no less important, but not easily measurable.

36. We recognise a serious shared failure on the part of the adult education movement to make known and to have adopted the centrality of lifelong learning to economic health and social wellbeing. In part this is because of the loose and unbounded nature of the field.

37. Adult learning is present everywhere, and provision to support learning in the form of adult education takes place more widely than in classrooms. Skills development for employment is crucial, but only part of what society and its citizens require. Lifelong learning means creating a learning environment of active and confident participation that will help the emergence of learning societies.

38. We have some data that should enable better action, and that could be used for better advocacy; but we need to collect more and better data as well.

39. In particular, governments must embed their work towards lifelong learning and a learning society in all policy arenas and all government departments.

40. Those in the non-governmental sector must more effectively advocate the empowering and enabling role of high quality education. This includes fully functional literacy, along a spectrum from illiteracy, for the least as well as the most advantaged peoples, as a key to human development and the development of nations. There is no magic dividing line between illiteracy and literacy, nor between the lifelong learning needs of different nations, poor or wealthy, in the new knowledge era.

41. Such a stance is political. We assert the centrality of the public interest, expressed through the governance of nations, for ensuring, where necessary by direct provision: the means and the resources to ensure the high quality and successful learning of all, adult and young, throughout their lives; and for the allocation of adequate resources – infrastructure, staff, teaching and learning resources – to make this possible and accessible to all.

42. We declare that the political will and means to achieve this must include transparent and robust legal and administrative arrangements, long-term planning, and adequate financial allocation through all levels of government. It must include, enable and require the active participation and contribution of the private sector, especially for employment-based learning and training, and of the third sector, or civil society. A culture of trust and accountability must be built, underpinned by the realistic sharing of roles, allocation of targets, and monitoring and reporting arrangements.

**More broadly, looking to the worldwide adult education and lifelong learning movement we call on those assembled at Belem in December 2009**

43. to be ambitious and fearless in specifying and demanding levels of resource allocation for adult education and lifelong learning in the budgets of all countries and in international aid programmes and that will match the importance, urgency and need here declared; and that can be compared with the orders of magnitude being expended on other financial, economic and political purposes judged to be of critical importance;

44. to promote adult learning as central to raising public awareness and supporting managing the global climate challenge, and to press this matter with the Intergovernmental Conference in Copenhagen during the following days.

***We recommend that they undertake***

45. to enhance our professional understanding, knowledge base, skill and ingenuity in relation to staff and facilitator preparation and support, and in determining the best teaching-learning modes, methods, aids, material and delivery systems;

46. to ensure transparency and accountability in what we achieve;

47. to elaborate a statement on the vital role of adult education for sustainable development to be presented at the Copenhagen Summit, and to produce statements at the mid-point of the International Decade of Education for Sustainability regarding strategies for adult learning.

48. We recommend working with governments of all possible persuasions, and with all sectors and parties, in government as well as across civil society, to achieve the collaboration, common purpose and partnerships without which lifelong learning for all will remain unattainable.

### ***We encourage Governments***

49. Where necessary, to convene national roundtables on adult education in national development bringing all parties together as a basis for active collaboration;
50. to create mechanisms to track support for adult education in all sectors at all levels;
51. to collect and aggregate disaggregated data on a full spectrum of literacy levels, not just literacy/ illiteracy, and on levels of participation in youth and adult education;
52. to compile national dossiers on the benefits of adult education programmes;
53. to collect baseline data preceding any adult education intervention and to monitor and evaluate rigorously;
54. To develop their own national benchmarks, and to develop these and review national policies and programmes in the light of established international benchmarks and good practice.

### ***Going forward from Belem***

55. to develop adult literacy and adult education plans, including strategies for sustainability, and targets by 2012, and implement them as part of CONFINTEA VI commitments, EFA and education sector-wide plans and overall poverty eradication plans;
56. to plan a strategy which takes account of adult learners' experiences through grassroots organisations;
57. and to put in place a global monitoring mechanism for adult education policy that interacts with and complements mechanisms such as the Global Monitoring Report. GRALE should form part of a regular ongoing monitoring and tracking mechanism.
58. Governments should commit themselves to regular monitoring and research in relation to CONFINTEA VI targets, along with a plan for a substantial Mid-Term Review which will coincide with the EFA and MDG timeline of 2015.