

A CALL FOR ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We, the participants in the Midterm Review of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), have come to the conclusion that despite the commitments made in 1997 in *The Hamburg Declaration* and *The Agenda for the Future*, adult education and learning has not received the attention which it deserves in major education reforms and in recent international drives to eliminate poverty, achieve gender justice, provide education for all and foster sustainable development. Our Midterm Review of the worldwide situation of adult education and learning – conducted thematically, globally, regionally, nationally and locally by governments, non-governmental and civil-society organizations, engaged networks, social movements and other partners – has, in fact, revealed a disturbing regression in the field.

For we have seen a decline in funding for adult education and learning, even as the minimal adult literacy goal set in the Dakar Framework for Action is achievable – requiring just \$ 2.8 billion per year. At the same time, public expenditures for adult education and learning have stagnated in the range of one to three percent of total education budgets, far behind the six percent norm envisioned by CONFINTEA V. Furthermore, support by international agencies and national governments alike has concentrated on formal basic education for children to the detriment and neglect of adult education and learning.

The ability of adult education and learning to contribute to a world in which people live together in peace and democracy has been undermined by its marginalization in the priorities of national and international institutions and agencies. Its potential to contribute to building learning societies in support of the struggle against poverty and overcoming global strife, violence, HIV/AIDS, environmental destruction, demographic tensions and a myriad of other ills has not been adequately realized. We are particularly concerned that its potential to enable people to live in a world with HIV/AIDS is not being exploited, as millions of vulnerable young persons and adults are exposed to the consequences of the pandemic.

We are alarmed that the confident perspective documented by CONFINTEA V has given way to a situation which, due to global tensions, conflict and war as well as the weakening of the United Nations, is dominated by fear and insecurity.

Nonetheless, there is yet a chance for creative action. Despite the daunting realities now confronting us, we are witnessing the birth of a new global consciousness which itself, insisting on equality and diversity and calling for universal respect of ethics, rights and laws, spawns the hope that another world and another kind of education and learning are still possible.

For our Review has also highlighted numerous innovative policy and legislative changes, an increased tide of participation in adult education and learning, significant advances in the empowerment of women and the expression of new learning demands by groups with special needs attended by pioneering inclusive educational responses serving these groups. The joy of learning is celebrated in Learning Festivals and Adult Learners' Week in more than 50 countries worldwide.

In view of these developments, we, the participants in the CONFINTEA V Midterm Review, reaffirm our commitment to *The Hamburg Declaration* and *The Agenda for the Future*. We wish to remind the world that adult education and learning is and must remain a collective responsibility shared by all learners, adult educators, governments, non-governmental and civil-society organizations and the entire family of the United Nations. All of these actors and partners must work with UNESCO and UN agencies to propel, monitor collectively and account for the endorsement and implementation of lifelong learning made at CONFINTEA V.

We believe that the political will to achieve the goals of *The Hamburg Declaration* and *The Agenda for the Future* must now be backed with resource allocation, outfitted with a concrete course of action and equipped with new partnerships.

Today, more than ever, adult education and learning composes an indispensable key for unlocking the creative forces of people, social movements and nations. Peace, justice, self-reliance, social cohesion and solidarity remain

indispensable goals and obligations to be further pursued and reinforced in and through adult education and learning.

We therefore call upon Member States, bi- and multilateral agencies, non-governmental and civil-society organizations and social movements

- to include adult education and learning in all development initiatives and social programs as an essential contribution to economic prosperity, social cohesion and solidarity;
- to promote community-driven development approaches as an important starting point for adult education and learning as well as poverty reduction;
- to adopt inclusive policies and take concrete measures and provide adequate resources in support of education programs mainstreaming and catering to the learning demands of persons with disabilities as well as groups with special needs such as indigenous people, migrants and refugees, minorities (including sexual minorities, where licit), prisoners etc.;
- to recognize adult learning as an investment and not solely an item of social consumption, let alone a marketable product;
- to increase funding for adult learning, as a consequence, to the six percent of the total public education budget obliged by *The Hamburg Declaration*;
- to accept that commitment to lifelong learning for economic prosperity and social cohesion is a necessary response to globalization as well as an essential component of local and individual self-fulfillment;
- to integrate adult education and learning more systematically into the education plans and agendas of governments at the local, national, regional and global levels as well as into the programs, conferences and summits of UN agencies, especially those related to the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), the Dakar Framework for Action (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) of the World Bank;
- to articulate organically CONFINTEA V recommendations for adult literacy and adult basic education with the UNLD International Plan of Action and the Dakar Framework for Action and implement them in the perspective of lifelong learning.

We call in particular upon the industrialized nations to align their aid agencies and education ministries with the bi- and multilateral agencies they support in order to harmonize domestic and international policies for life-long learning.

We call upon UNESCO

- to integrate the CONFINTEA V follow-up with the monitoring of EFA goals and invite accordingly all partners to provide and produce collective input for the EFA Global Monitoring Report and its underlying processes, especially the 2005 Report to be devoted to literacy;
- to support the national capacity of Member States as well as non-governmental and civil-society organizations and partner agencies in training adult educators, in establishing benchmarks for continuous monitoring of the United Nations Literacy Decade by 2004 and in systematically assessing literacy levels in different countries and contexts;
- to reinforce the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) in monitoring CONFINTEA V with all partners along the lines expressed in this Call for Action and Accountability.

Finally, we call upon Member States, UN agencies and non-governmental and civil-society organizations as well as social and private partners to organize the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2009 as a case of accountability in adult education and learning, one based on collective monitoring and evaluation.