A transformative agenda:

Outcomes of the CONFINTEA VII

regional preparatory conferences

Education
2030

Outcomes of the CONFINTEA VII regional preparatory conferences (2021)

1. Introduction

In preparation of the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII), in Marrakech, Morocco, in June 2022, a series of regional conferences took place between February and September 2021, in some regions preceded by sub-regional consultations. Participants came from government institutions, including ministries of education, as well as non-governmental organizations, national and regional education representatives, academia, the private sector, and other adult learning and education/lifelong learning stakeholders. Each of the regional preparatory conferences produced an outcome document that summarized the discussion, including key achievements in adult learning and education, crucial challenges and key recommendations. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) expresses its sincere gratitude to the UNESCO regional and field offices involved, to the CONFINTEA VII Consultative Committee and to all institutions that supported the preparatory process.

This document provides a synthesis of the outcomes of these events. The regional outcome documents identified current concerns, priorities and recommendations for CONFINTEA VII. This synthesis of the regional outcome documents will contribute to the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA), the main outcome document of CONFINTEA VII, and guide all relevant ALE stakeholders and UNESCO Member States in promoting adult learning and education (ALE) and lifelong learning for all.

The present document reports on achievements across regions in the field of literacy, as well as across other themes in ALE, such as gender equality and citizenship education. However, new themes are emerging in light of the shift in discourse with regard to sustainable development, the acceleration of climate change, political unrest and conflict in many parts of the world, and unforeseen crises such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.

This report starts by briefly recalling the characteristics of each region, including key concerns and the state of ALE in the region; summarizing the common themes raised in the regional outcome documents; and highlighting several emerging themes and tensions. It ends by presenting collective ways forward and recommendations, including action points, to feed into CONFINTEA VII and the draft MFA.

UIL co-organized the regional conferences and subregional consultations in preparation of CONFINTEA VII with the UNESCO regional offices in Abuja, Dakar, Harare, Nairobi and Yaoundé; the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States, Beirut; the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok; the Slovenian Ministry for Education, Science and Sport and the UNESCO National Commission for Slovenia; the Ministry of Education of Argentina; the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC); and the UNESCO offices in Almaty, Apia, Beijing, Kingston, New Delhi and Tehran. We are sincerely grateful to them. We also thank the Arab House for Adult Education and Development (AHAED) and DVV International for their contribution to organizing these meetings.

2.
Overview by region

2.1. **Africa**

Subregional consultations were conducted in West Africa, West Africa-Sahel, East and Southern Africa, and Central Africa. In terms of population, the African region has maintained the fastest growth in the world since 2000. From 2000 to 2017, Africa's population increased by 58 per cent, compared to 19 per cent in the rest of the world.

When it comes to literacy, there are more than 773 million illiterate young people and adults (aged 15 and over) in the world (UIS, 2022). Around 153 million of these are in Africa and two-thirds of them are women (World Bank, 2022). In sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage of individuals who can read and write ranges from 81 per cent in Southern Africa to 68 per cent in Central and East Africa, 64 per cent in Central Africa and 45 per cent in West Africa (AU, 2016).

Low levels of education and poor living standards remain the main challenges to human development in Africa (UIL, 2022a). The situation is exacerbated by a rapidly growing population, political instability (security crises) and the COVID-19 pandemic. Africa needs more funding for ALE from governments, the private sector and third-party donors, as well as ALE programmes that favour women and vulnerable people/groups.

2.2. **Arab States**

With an estimated 439 million inhabitants, the Arab States represent 5 per cent of the world's population (UNDP, 2020). The region has experienced increased political instability, with conflicts in a number of Arab countries leading to the displacement of many people. For example, more than 40 per cent of the world's refugees and displaced persons live in the region, millions of them needing security, food, shelter, basic services (including education) and employment. These problems are coupled with structural challenges, such as demographic growth and gender disparities in education and training.

Between 2000 and 2019, overall literacy rates in the region increased from 65.29 per cent to 75.14 per cent, with youth literacy increasing from 82.06 per cent to 86.16 per cent (UIS, 2020). Despite this, literacy rates among adults and youth are still below the global averages of 86.48 per cent and 91.73 per cent, respectively.

Most Arab countries have employed ALE in national youth training programmes as a means of addressing youth unemployment. As a result, their policies, legislation and existing provision tend to prioritize literacy and basic skills over other learning domains, such as continuing training and professional development, and citizenship education.

The region's needs for the future centre on increased funding for education in general and ALE in particular; recognition of the importance of ALE alongside formal education; and strategies to ensure that ALE addresses the crises and challenges facing the educational system in emergencies, such as conflicts.

2.3. **Asia and the Pacific (AP)**

The AP region, made up of East, Southeast, South and Central Asia, and the Pacific, is a highly diverse region, home to one-third of the world's total population and more than 60 per cent of the world's youth, or around 750 million young people aged 15 to 24 years (UIL, 2022c).

Literacy rates and ALE progress vary across the AP region. In East Asia, the adult literacy rate stands at 96.83 per cent (UIS, 2020) and national ALE policies have been implemented in several countries, supported by multi-stakeholder collaborations. In South Asia, progress in ALE has led to a literacy rate of 74.31 per cent (ibid.), but numerous challenges remain due to high levels of poverty, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Central Asia has achieved near-universal literacy, at 99.81 per cent (ibid.); however, despite significant progress in ALE in recent years, the subregion has yet to develop holistic ALE and lifelong learning (LLL) policies. In the Pacific, ALE is a core component of education in most countries but has not yet been widely recognized and is in need of stable funding.

A dominant theme in the region is the prevalence of low literacy rates, particularly among older adults and women, and increasing social disparities, alongside additional environmental concerns in the Pacific subregion. Furthermore, political unrest and conflict remain major issues in parts of the region.

Priorities for the region are the inclusion of ALE in national qualification frameworks (NQFs); the further institutionalization of ALE mechanisms; and measures to raise awareness of and increase funding for ALE.

2.4. **Europe and North America (ENA)**

ENA is a diverse region, but its countries face the common demographic challenge of an ageing population. Young people (aged 0 to 14 years) make up 15.6 per cent of the region's population; people aged between 15 and 64 account for 65.6 per cent of the population; and older people (aged 65 and over) comprise 18.9 per cent of the population (EAEA, 2021).

More than 65 per cent of countries in North America and Western Europe state that they have made significant progress in ALE at the policy level, although countries in Central and Eastern Europe tend to report the reverse (UIL, 2019). With regard to participation rates in education and training among the adult population, a positive trend can be seen. UNESCO's Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) identified an average increase in participation rates across the region during the period 2009–2019, rising from 7.9 per cent in 2009 to 10.1 per cent in 2014, and 10.8 per cent in 2019. However, in 2020 – the year marked by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic – this average dropped to 9.2 per cent, with participation rates falling in virtually all European and North American countries (UIL, 2022d).

Alongside the ongoing challenges of unemployment, slow economic growth and pressure on public finances, the ENA region is experiencing a growing influx of migrants and refugees from Asia, Africa and – particularly in the case of the Northern American countries – Latin America. Furthermore, educational attainment varies greatly in the region, with comparatively lower rates in Southern European countries. Key priorities in the ENA region pertain to themes of health and well-being, the digital transition, migration, climate change and the development of future-oriented skills related to the world of work.

Regional needs for the future are to increase adequate and sustained ALE funding; and to strengthen recognition of the full range and quality of ALE provision and its wider benefits, beyond purely economic benefits.

2.5. **Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)**

The LAC region has various cultures, languages and ethnicities, and is home to over 826 Indigenous peoples with 44.8 million members, and 125 million individuals of African descent.

Although literacy rates in the LAC region can be as high as 97 per cent in Latin America and 88 per cent in the English-speaking Caribbean, they are much lower in rural areas and among women, older adults and members of Indigenous communities (UIS, 2021). Moreover, the availability of ALE policies varies substantially from country to county. Despite the progress made throughout the region, the outcome document notes that ALE is not a policy priority in LAC, and that there is a notable lack of policies providing a framework for ALE governance, financing, legislation and institutional management in the English-speaking Caribbean.

One of the dominant themes in the LAC region is the structural and social inequality affecting the development of ALE. This is demonstrated by policies that are unequally developed across the region and do not always provide for equitable access. In line with a long-standing tradition in the region, the LAC outcome document refers to youth and adult education (Y&AE) rather than adult learning and education (ALE).

Priorities for the LAC region are for ALE to be recognized as a fundamental and lifelong human right, and for ALE to be incorporated into countries' development agendas and regional frameworks through explicit national policies that adopt an intersectoral perspective in order to promote strategies that encourage participation among stakeholders.

3. Synthesis

3.1. **Reflecting on areas of action**

As noted in many of the regional outcome documents, certain key topics have remained unchanged over the past years, and now require renewed – and more urgent – attention.

Policy support: Policies that contribute to ALE include national skills frameworks, national lifelong learning policies and measures to integrate ALE into national education sector plans. Although all regions note the importance of national support for ALE, wide disparities remain as to where government policies acknowledge ALE, and where they do not. For example, the reports indicate that while policy and implementation strategies in the East and Central Asian subregions embrace the ALE concept, this trend is less pronounced in the subregions of South Asia and the Pacific. There are also differences in the way in which policies are formed, with some countries employing more collaborative, multi-stakeholder approaches to ALE policy development, and others favouring more centralized, expert-driven approaches. Several regions advocate a more participatory and inclusive approach to ALE policy

development. Furthermore, participation in ALE remains a persistent challenge across all regions, with the ENA outcome document noting that lower levels of participation in ALE often result from a lack of policy support to address potential barriers with regard to social welfare, such as access to childcare, healthcare, housing and transportation.

Governance: The regional outcome documents demonstrate a continued focus on increasing the involvement of multiple stakeholders in ALE, and on fostering innovative partnerships between the public and private sectors. ALE depends on collaboration among various stakeholders, including the public and private sectors, universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based institutions and international organizations. For ALE to develop further, the regional outcome documents note that, as well as increasing the number of inter-ministerial and intersectoral national entities involved, more must be done to promote the informed involvement of stakeholders; establish effective partnerships; and institutionalize collaboration at both community and national levels. Some reports emphasize the key role of community-level collaborations, which promote the ownership and sustainability of ALE programmes. Others note the importance of establishing links between education and other sectors (such as health) and specialized agencies, further strengthened by civil society involvement and community action.

Financing: While the adequate structural financing of ALE within a LLL perspective has always been an issue, the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated it further as governments are forced to (re)allocate funds in order to provide urgent care and keep their economies afloat. Some regions note that participation in ALE may increase as a result of the pandemic-induced shift to online education – and the government and private-sector investments that this has entailed – as people become more familiar with information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital tools. Some regions, such as AP, propose strengthening the financing of ALE and LLL through measures linked to national systems of taxation. A further mechanism for increasing structural funding for ALE, proposed by the subregions of East and Southern Africa, allocates an agreed percentage (e.g. 3 per cent) of the total education budget to ALE. The Arab States, meanwhile, highlight the importance of non-traditional financing entities and mechanisms, such as regional funds that, within a country, address each region's specificity.

Participation, inclusion and equity: Growing educational inequality remains a concern in many regions (particularly in LAC, according to the outcome document from that region). Gender disparity with regard to access to ALE is flagged in all of the outcome documents, although it features more prominently in certain regions, such as the Arab States and some subregions of Asia and the Pacific. Certain regions, such as AP, advocate for the implementation of gender-responsive policies promoting ALE, supported by corresponding budget plans. Considering concerns that COVID-19 has exacerbated the digital divide, outcome documents report that women in particular tend to have limited access to digital technology, thus further intensifying gender inequalities with regard to literacy and ALE. They also note that, in order to reach marginalized and remote people, quality digital content must be available in local languages. Moreover, demographic change – an ageing population in some regions and subregions (e.g. ENA) and a growing young population in others (e.g. Africa and South Asia) – will lead to further challenges in ensuring the equitable and quality provision of ALE.

Quality: Consultations across the regions and subregions pointed unanimously to a lack of valid, reliable, transparent and accessible information systems that would allow experts to assess the demand for training, monitor the implementation of ALE policies and initiatives, and estimate the financial costs of and requirements for ALE programmes. The regional outcome documents thus place a strong emphasis on data collection/analysis and continuous monitoring as a means of improving both the quality and the impact of ALE. Adequate and inbuilt monitoring and evaluation strategies, processes and tools need to be developed and supported. Governments are more likely to support ALE when there is evidence that it better equips citizens to participate meaningfully, competently and actively, both in the world of work and in day-to-day life. Monitoring and evaluation measures are also essential for verifying and enhancing the implementation of specific policies and programmes, and for identifying marginalized groups and their specific ALE training needs. Additionally, benchmarks should be established to monitor progress with regard to ALE coordination and cooperation, thereby enhancing responsibility for and ownership of ALE among all stakeholders. The role of educators as key agents for high-quality ALE provision is highlighted in the LAC outcome document and elsewhere. It is noted that further provision is required to build educators' capacities with regard to the use of ICTs. Moreover, a continuing need for professionalization is identified, and the reports recognize that the role of ALE facilitators and providers is changing. They also pinpoint a need to link learners with similar requirements and interests, as learners benefit most from practical training and learning approaches that centre on the everyday issues and problems

that they share with their peers. This in turn feeds into the need to develop more flexible, diverse and relevant curricula that support global citizenship education (GCED).

3.2. **Key themes**

As noted in the four GRALE reports published since CONFINTEA VI (2009), several global challenges are becoming more pressing. These challenges feature in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their associated targets. More recently, many of these challenges have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda: CONFINTEA aims to align the role of ALE with the SDGs laid down in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda (see UNDESA and DSDG, 2015). Both the Africa and Asia Pacific outcome documents refer explicitly to SDG 4 (quality education), while all of the outcome documents recognize the potential of ALE to reduce poverty and inequalities; to promote social justice, decent work and economic growth; and to equip beneficiaries with the skills and knowledge needed to understand and respond to complex issues, such as climate change. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs require ALE and LLL to strike a balance between learning for life and learning for work.

COVID-19: The COVID-19 pandemic has affected ALE significantly in all regions, often exacerbating poverty and inequality, e.g. due to the loss of funding for ALE activities and increased drop-out rates among disadvantaged participants for economic reasons. At the same time, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of ALE in creating resilient societies that can respond to a crisis. The resilience of ALE provision itself in the face of the COVID-19 crisis can be seen in the success stories detailed in the regional outcome documents, most of them concerning the transition from in-person to virtual and digital learning. ALE has been digitally transformed by the introduction of more online content into learning provision, and greater support for internet connectivity, e.g. through the allocation of special budgets to equip community learning centres (CLCs) with internet access for online learning. It is vital that citizens from all backgrounds and with all levels of literacy are informed and educated about the virus. A well-developed ALE infrastructure can help realize this by targeting hard-to-reach groups, and by utilizing innovative learning and teaching methods.

Climate change: Climate change is an emerging theme raised in a number of the regional outcome documents. The AP region, for example, explicitly proposes a cross-sectoral implementation of ALE in order to deal with emerging crises, such as COVID-19 and climate change. The AP outcome document also urges development organizations to provide official development assistance for vulnerable youth and adults through ALE programmes that focus on health education, climate change education, and issues pertaining to sustained recovery and resilience, alongside literacy and work skills. The ENA outcome document states that, to deal successfully with social inequality and climate change on a global scale, learners must first be able to situate their own lives within a global context. The LAC outcome document, referring to the fate of severely climate change-affected small island states, posits the importance of linking ALE to GCED and education for sustainable development (ESD). ALE can thus promote awareness and action among youth and adults on community and global issues such as climate change, public health, respect for diversity, and gender equality. The Africa outcome document in turn suggests that ALE needs to develop awareness modules on climate change.

ICTs and digital skills: All of the regional outcome documents reference the use of ICTs in ALE, the development of digital skills in the wake of COVID-19, and the resulting need to move learning online. Although there are differences both between and within regions, progress is reported regarding the widespread incorporation of ICTs into educational provision, e.g. through the use of internet-based resources, online teaching and communication platforms, and open educational resources. At the same time, the Arab States, Asia Pacific, and Latin America and Caribbean outcome documents point to the continuing importance of traditional media, such as radio and TV. The Africa outcome document notes the need to leverage digital technologies in blended learning approaches, or to expand access to learning for marginalized or remote communities in order to improve learning outcomes. It provides an example of an effective, multi-sectoral and sustainable intervention from West Africa. Here, ALE programmes have adopted a learning approach based on digital technologies (e.g. cell phones) that supports basic skills acquisition and provides vocational training and traditional forms of adult education in order to reduce illiteracy, foster the economic integration of youth and women, empower marginalized people, promote citizenship and consolidate peace processes within a lifelong learning perspective. All regional outcome documents similarly stress the unequal and precarious status of connectivity and access to technology in some countries, reflecting the general trend of digital inequality (the 'digital divide'). Limited access to the internet has negatively impacted learning opportunities for hard-to-reach groups, including older people, low-skilled workers, the inhabitants of small island developing states (SIDS) and rural areas, and migrants and refugees. The ENA outcome document concludes that, while multiple online learning platforms

have been developed during the pandemic, more must be done to link existing ICT tools to actual, learner-centred pedagogical practices. The fact that educators and staff lack experience in using technology for ALE represents a further challenge.

ALE for work and life: Both the SDGs and the more recent UNESCO report, *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (UNESCO, 2021), highlight the need for wide-ranging transformations that will allow sustainable futures to evolve. The AP outcome document contends that ALE should be 'transformative for all and the state's responsibility' (UIL, 2022c, p. 5). The ENA document identifies the need for a holistic approach, and recommends 'transformative ALE through learning systems that provide the knowledge and skills needed by present and future generations to face the challenges of today and tomorrow' (UIL, 2022d, p. 4). While all regional outcome documents note the importance both of increased participation in ALE and of citizenship education, the AP document highlights an underlying tension between the increasing role of the private sector in education, and the need for government involvement and regulation. This tension must be resolved in order for ALE to achieve a balance between prioritizing work skills and employment, and aligning with UNESCO's traditional focus on transformative and empowering approaches to education (UNESCO, 2021).

Conflict, post-conflict and disaster contexts: Over the past decade, many regions have undergone dramatic changes in all aspects of life due to political events and social and natural conflicts. Political unrest has led to civil war in some countries in the Arab States and AP and, as in other regions of the world, such political unrest has culminated in migration and displacement, resulting in high numbers of refugees. In addition to these conflicts, many countries currently or will imminently face disasters such as those resulting from environmental degradation in the Pacific and the Caribbean islands. Connectivity/access to ICTs is especially important (and challenging) in these conditions of crisis and emergency, particularly in remote areas. More specifically, as noted in the Arab States outcome document, these crises require non-traditional solutions. While the ENA region notes achievements with regard to counselling services and certification facilities (e.g. for refugees), and citizenship education for integrating migrants, the prospect of further crises in the future indicates that more attention should be paid to issues of education and learning for displaced persons, and to the importance of achieving psychological security (UNHCR, 2021).

Learning infrastructure: As noted in the LAC outcome document, it is crucial that ALE promotes diverse training trajectories that include workplace training, technical

training and continuity in higher education. Doing so will reinforce civic education and the development of critical thinking and community experiences based on solidarity and sustainability. The ENA outcome document emphasizes the need to develop learning ecosystems that include ALE and are embedded within a lifelong learning perspective (UIL, 2022d), e.g. CLCs. An important challenge is to respond to the need for the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, particularly as governments in some regions, such as the Arab States, tend to prioritize formal education at the expense of ALE.

Adult educators: The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the vital role of ALE educators in guaranteeing the right to quality education. However, the regional outcome documents also indicate that educators continue to experience job instability and a lack of pre-service and in-service training, including continuing education opportunities. While some regional outcome documents only mention the role of educators in passing – usually in connection with a lack of digital teaching skills and technological competences on the part of educators and staff – the LAC outcome document goes further to highlight the latter's precarious work conditions and related public health risks, the ongoing need for professionalization and the failure to achieve adequate recognition at societal or institutional levels.

3.3. **Fields of learning**

The three core fields of learning of ALE are: (1) literacy and basic skills; (2) continuing education and professional development (vocational skills); and (3) liberal, popular and community education (citizenship skills) (UNESCO, 2016).

Literacy and basic skills: Literacy among youth and adults remains a dominant concern in all regions of the world. While adult literacy rates have been rising since CONFINTEA VI (2009), they have not increased at the same rate in all regions. For example, literacy has increased more slowly in Africa compared to the rest of the world. Globally, 153 million of the world's 773 million illiterate young people and adults (aged 15 and over) are to be found in Africa, two-thirds of them women. The subregion of South Asia, meanwhile, accounts for half the global illiterate population, the majority of whom are older adults and women. Furthermore, while overall literacy rates are high in LAC and the subregion of East Asia, these regions are nonetheless home to a number of often marginalized groups with poor literacy skills and little or no access to ALE. These groups include rural women, those with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, refugees and, more generally, people

living in extreme poverty. While literacy rates can be as high as 97 per cent in Latin America and 88 per cent in the English-speaking Caribbean countries, the LAC outcome document notes that these numbers fall sharply in rural areas and among women, older adults and members of Indigenous communities.

Continuing training and professional development:
Technical vocational education and training (TVET) represents an important means of empowering individuals, institutions and businesses to cope with socio-economic change and globalization. At the same time, the AP outcome document highlights the need to ensure that TVET and community learning programmes recognize and integrate traditional knowledge/local wisdom. Professionalization is an important means of improving ALE practice in terms of quality, provision and participation rates. While the majority of countries in Northern and Western Europe support TVET as a means of promoting economic self-sufficiency and general well-being, low literacy rates in the Arab States mean that basic literacy and skills are prioritized over continuing professional development (and citizenship education) in the region. The ENA outcome document furthermore notes that COVID-19 has resulted in fewer training programmes.

Citizenship skills: Bearing in mind principles of diversity and inclusivity, societies, communities and organizations cannot prosper, economically or socially, without the democratic participation of youth and adults, including vulnerable groups such as refugees and migrants. As highlighted by the Arab States outcome document, peace can only be achieved by adopting concepts of global citizenship and societies built on the notion of shared values. ALE that promotes GCED increases learners' understanding of and involvement in local and global issues, such as climate change, public health, respect for diversity, gender equality, peacebuilding and sustained recovery. The LAC and AP outcome reports underscore the importance of digital citizenship skills that boost awareness of cybersecurity and facilitate online learning, while the ENA outcome report notes the crucial role of citizenship education in supporting migrants, e.g. through learning provision aimed at facilitating social integration.

4.
Ways forward and recommendations

The areas of action, key themes and learning fields identified in the regional outcome documents enable us to discern several specific ways forward and recommendations for ALE:

- Political commitment must be strengthened to ensure public, free ALE and LLL, and to safeguard the right to education of young people and adults, particularly those in vulnerable situations, thereby acknowledging the transformative potential of youth and adult education in the lives of people, communities and societies as a whole.

- Member States must develop and implement gender-responsive policies in order to establish inclusive learning environments that meet 'on-the-ground' learning needs, including those of disadvantaged social groups (e.g. the long-term unemployed, the low-qualified, those aged 65+, the disabled, the homeless, immigrants, single parents and women). These policies should be comprehensive and robust: they should promote ALE within a LLL framework, include concrete budget plans and define clear targets for ALE programmes.

- Member States must promote ALE by ensuring effective partnerships and collaboration among all stakeholders, including the public and private sectors, universities, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, religious institutions, and international organizations. In particular, they should promote the involvement of civil society in governance structures, and enable the systematic integration of a holistic, cross-sectoral, lifelong and life-wide learning perspective into national ALE programmes.

- Member States must promote reliable, valid, transparent and accessible information and monitoring systems (including benchmarks at all levels) to encourage the creation of knowledge through government and non-governmental institutions, academia and civil society, thereby facilitating exchange among and between different associations/organizations and promoting peer-learning among countries.

- Member States must ensure adequate and sustained ALE funding by implementing long-term, future-oriented public investment in ALE that mobilizes domestic, international and public- and private-sector resources.

- Member States should take advantage of the rich learning content produced by public and private actors and made available on the internet. Such content empowers adult learning facilitators to blend online and in-person programmes and courses, focusing on project- and activity-based learning to address the issues faced by learners on a daily basis.

- Member States should recognize the vital role of ALE educators by implementing policies and strategies designed to enhance pre-service/in-service training and professionalize their work.

- Progress must be made among Member States with regard to the development of flexible, context-specific and relevant curriculum policies, plans and designs in support of global citizenship skills. Such progress will require a focus on the key competences that agents of change will need in order to contribute to a flourishing society, and to act for social justice.

- Member States should accelerate efforts towards the recognition of learning, wherever, whenever and however achieved, within a coherent and comprehensive qualifications system that also acknowledges traditional knowledge/local wisdom through the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

- Member States should take advantage both of technological developments and the digitization of training content, and of low-tech and no-tech learning programmes. As regards the former, attention must be paid to ensuring 'digital justice', i.e. bridging the digital divide by guaranteeing connectivity, free internet access and equal access to training in digital citizenship.

- Member States are encouraged to increase youth and adult participation in ALE programmes by fostering a lifelong learning culture. Effective advocacy and communication will encourage adults and youth to participate actively in learning pursuits according to their interests, passions and life purposes. CLCs and other learning spaces can serve as an effective platform to reach people and motivate them to participate in ALE.

- Member States should pay particular attention to countries and regions in conflict situations when building lifelong models of education and learning. They should take account of the challenges facing these countries and their displaced persons and leverage digital technologies in blended and/or traditional learning approaches in order both to expand access to learning for marginalized or remote communities and to improve learning outcomes.

- Member States must embrace the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which call for more attention to be paid to topics such as health and well-being, democracy and participation, climate change responsiveness and global citizenship.

- Member States should equitably promote GCED and ESD for youth and adults, thereby contributing to the achievement of SDG 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Understanding that learners may experience multiple forms of disadvantage (e.g. with regard to gender, digital inequalities, ethnicity and disability) will help in developing transformative learning opportunities that benefit vulnerable populations.

- Member States should promote ALE that gives youth and adults an understanding and awareness of climate change issues and equips them with the knowledge and skills needed to adapt to climate change, mitigate its impact and reduce its magnitude.

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In preparation for the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII), in Marrakech, Morocco, in June 2022, a series of regional conferences took place between February and September 2021, in some cases preceded by subregional consultations. Each of the regional preparatory conferences produced an outcome document summarizing the discussion, including key achievements in adult learning and education, crucial challenges and key recommendations. This document provides a synthesis of the outcomes of these regional and subregional consultations and will contribute to the Marrakech Framework for Action, the main outcome document from CONFINTEA VII, as well as providing a guide for all relevant stakeholders and UNESCO Member States to the key current issues in adult learning and education.

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