



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Institute  
for Lifelong Learning

This document is  
only a summary  
of the

# Virtual annual report

→ [https://annualreports.  
uil.unesco.org](https://annualreports.uil.unesco.org)

UIL  
2020

# Annual Report





United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Institute  
for Lifelong Learning

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# Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



## We need to make lifelong learning the governing principle of education policy



### Daniel Baril

Chair of the UIL Governing Board and Director- General of the Canadian Institute for Cooperation in Adult Education

→ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DAeHKxk5mU>

**The COVID-19 pandemic is a stress test of education systems around the world. The right to education is challenged for children, youth and adults alike – but while school education is central to emergency response packages, the much-needed holistic approach to learning throughout life is often missing. In fact, as governments revise and resume school protocols, lifelong learning has been largely absent from the policy debate. Education for children and youth is undoubtedly vital, but adult education should equally be prioritized, notably because the development of adult capacities assumes major strategic importance in times of crisis.**

We need to make lifelong learning the governing principle of education policy and offer people opportunities to learn throughout life, whatever their background or context. As we ‘build back better’ in the wake of this pandemic, we must capitalize on the strategic importance of adult learning and education and consider a comprehensive understanding of the right to education. Protecting, respecting and fulfilling this right – of which adults are undoubtedly beneficiaries – is a baseline obligation of us all.

In 2020, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning worked tirelessly to support UNESCO Member States and further partners in realizing lifelong learning. Countless webinars, capacity-building initiatives, networking events and research activities were implemented in creative ways in spite of the incredible challenges brought by the pandemic.

I thank the entire UIL Governing Board for their guidance; the UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education Stefania Giannini, UIL's Director, David Atchoarena, for their leadership; and the Institute's staff for their quality work and commitment to lifelong learning.

Taking place while the pandemic was hitting the world, my first year as Chair of UIL's Governing Board has been very special but at the same time a rewarding experience.

**I warmly invite you to learn more about UIL's work in 2020 in this virtual annual report. I hope that you will enjoy reading it!**

## Lifelong learning facilitates and shapes change, and is key to build resilience



### David Atchoarena

Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

→ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oip5VSta1Hw&feature=youtu.be&ab\\_channel=UILUNESCO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oip5VSta1Hw&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=UILUNESCO)

**All children, young people and adults benefit from quality lifelong learning opportunities – that is our vision! UIL promotes lifelong learning as the leading educational paradigm for inclusive and sustainable learning societies in the context of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

2020 has been an intensive year for many of us. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged education systems around the world. It has threatened the provision of lifelong learning opportunities and forced many countries across the globe to close learning institutions. Existing social inequalities have widened and people already considered as disadvantaged have been further pushed to the margins.

While the pandemic has had devastating impacts on education, economies and societies around the world, it has also forced us to explore new learning modalities, and underlined the tremendous importance of lifelong learning. We already knew that lifelong learning was needed to facilitate and shape change; the pandemic showed us that it is also key to build resilience. As we anticipate further disruptions caused by the effects of climate change, demographic shifts and the growing influence of digital technologies in every aspect of our life, lifelong learning is due to move further up on the policy agenda.

In 2020, we have risen to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and have found innovative and creative ways of reinforcing the provision of lifelong learning opportunities for all, despite the harsh environment. Throughout the pandemic, UIL worked with the 229 members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities to integrate lifelong learning in their emergency

response plans. Continuing its engagement to promote literacy, the Institute built capacity among policy-makers and other stakeholders to implement family literacy programmes and further strengthened the Global Alliance for literacy. In spite of the global health crisis, UNESCO member states responded to the survey launched by UIL to prepare the fifth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE), hence expressing a renewed commitment to Adult Learning and Education.

We are proud of the progress made in 2020, which has only been possible thanks to the outstanding collaboration of UNESCO Member States and other UIL partners. Governing Board members, our host country, the Federal Republic of Germany, the city of Hamburg, other donor countries, the many partners and stakeholders who supported us and participated in our activities in more than 70 countries, and our dedicated staff, all deserve credit for contributing to what has been a very special year!

**I warmly invite you to explore our virtual annual report 2020 and find out more about our activities!**

## Vision

All children, youth and adults benefit from quality lifelong learning opportunities. Life-long learning is the organizing principle for education systems worldwide. It enables a holistic, integrated, inter- and cross-sectoral approach to sustainable development.

## Partner

We work with UNESCO Member States, advocacy groups, researchers, non-governmental organizations and regional and global bodies to promote life-long learning; support better policy, planning and practice in the field; and build capacities for better and more effective implementation.

## Service

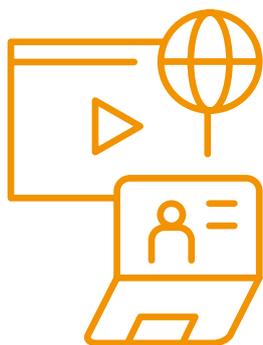
- Evidence-based lifelong learning policy support,
- Capacity-development,
- Monitoring the implementation of normative instruments,
- Advocacy and networking,
- Research and foresight.

With UIL support, lifelong learning opportunities for millions of people around the world improved in 2020.



8

countries supported in strengthening lifelong learning policies.



10,000

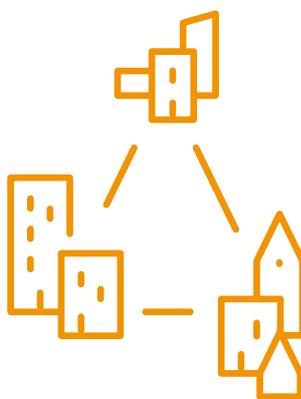
education stakeholders provided with COVID-19 response inspiration through 30 webinars.



Over

80

multipliers trained in family and intergenerational literacy and learning.



Lifelong learning for over

250

million people in

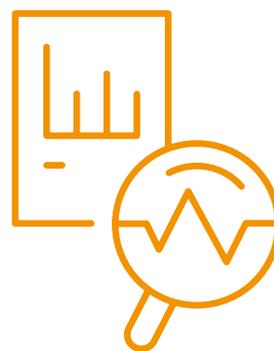
229

cities supported through the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities.

Capacity of over

500

stakeholders built in monitoring adult learning and education.



53

policy briefs, publications, issue notes published to advance lifelong learning around the world.



UIL works towards lifelong learning opportunities for all through policy support, research, monitoring, capacity-building, networking and advocacy.



## Policy support

We support Member States in every world region in lifelong learning policy development and education sector planning from a lifelong learning perspective. We work closely with ministries and local and regional stakeholders to develop tailored and targeted policy solutions that widen learning opportunities and improve quality.



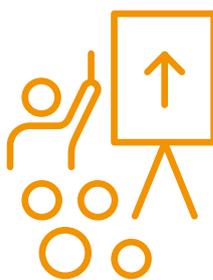
## Monitoring

Monitoring and evaluation are critical in building a strong evidence base for lifelong learning. UIL provides monitoring on UN Sustainable Development Goal 4, in particular on literacy and adult education and learning.



## Advocacy and networking

We promote lifelong learning as the leading educational paradigm for inclusive and sustainable learning societies. We support policy-makers in their work, and cooperate with civil society and non-governmental organizations in petitioning for positive change in their countries and regions.



## Capacity development

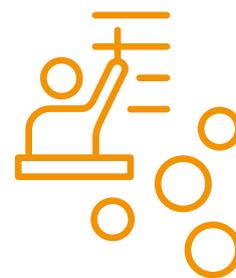
We offer workshops and courses, training modules and video tutorials, case studies and other resources, at national and regional levels.



## Research and foresight

We provide knowledge in the core areas of our mandate through research and development projects, and by way of insights and recommendations published in the form of books, policy papers and forward-looking studies.

# Advocacy and networking



UIL promotes lifelong learning as the leading educational paradigm for inclusive and sustainable learning societies. We support policy-makers in their work, and work with civil society and non-governmental organizations in petitioning for positive change in their countries and regions.

## Highlights in 2020

**Global Network of Learning Cities**

**Global Alliance for Literacy**

## Global Network of Learning Cities

Did you know?  
More than half of humanity lives in cities.



© Mole Antoniella

Learning cities are key to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. They provide good policies and practices fostering sustainable development at various levels, notably through lifelong learning. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning coordinates the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC).

In 2020 we:

- brought cities together in 30 webinars to work hand in hand on developing learning opportunities for all during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- worked with GNLC members on seven key topics and co-hosted 10 meetings and conferences in this regard;
- welcomed 54 new members to the Global Network of Learning Cities;
- provided evidence-based recommendations on making lifelong learning and sustainable development a reality at city level by means of a new video tutorial and a COVID-19 issue note.

## 30 webinars: Learning cities' response to COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 education for nearly 1.6 billion children and youth in more than 190 countries was interrupted and adult learning programmes were suspended. Cities were at the forefront in meeting the challenges brought by these crises.

Between March and December 2020, thousands of experts and participants from the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and beyond came together to share their experiences and learn from each other in 30 webinars. UIL produced the webinars in response to the COVID-19 crisis, showcasing cities' responses in areas such as health education, educational planning, inclusion and human rights, among others. Six of these webinars were organized in cooperation with the PASCAL International Observatory. Four more webinars were organised in cooperation with the UNESCO learning cities of Mexico and another four with the UNESCO learning city of Medellín, Colombia.



### Find out more

Presentations, recordings, and summaries of the webinars

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/gnlc-webinars-unesco-learning-cities-response-covid-19>

The webinars demonstrated a range of approaches and resources developed for well-thought-out COVID-19 responses from around the world. The diverse processes and modalities for mitigating possible offshoot challenges of this global and volatile pandemic covered health, governance, economy, education and culture.

Five key points emerged over the course of the series:

- Cross-sectional collaboration is key: Partnership is necessary to navigate crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, nurture a sense of normalcy in times of emergency, and conceptualize issue-specific solutions. Stakeholders should therefore comprise key decision-makers, a range of professionals (from health, communications, finance and academia), and those the initiative targets, especially the most vulnerable.
- A blueprint of issues to target already exists: The issues that warrant attention now most likely existed before the COVID-19 crisis emerged. These issues should therefore be examined first and foremost, as they have arguably become more high-priority in light of the pandemic.
- Intersectionality is non-negotiable: The multi-dimensional effects of COVID-19 are not experienced equally by citizens, even those within the same community. That is, factors such as gender, sexual identity, ability, age, income level, and access to infrastructure and services should be accounted for in any outreach programme that is created. The people who fall within various subgroups based on these factors are already disproportionately affected by issues external to COVID-19.

- Mental health is a major concern: Social isolation/ distancing and quarantining are new behaviours to which many are still adjusting. While limiting transmission is crucial to beating a virus like COVID-19, the conditions to achieving this take their toll. Whether it is anxiety, depression, loneliness or clinical illness, affective disorders demand integrated counselling services that target the entire individual.
- Think fast, plan big, start small: Despite warnings of a possible global pandemic like COVID-19 happening, the world was underprepared. However, the need for initiatives that raise awareness, build morale, preserve community spirit and promote general health are perennial. During crises, time is of the essence and there are often lives to consider. When resources are limited, attempting to administer to everyone at once could prove counterproductive and jeopardize efforts. Going forward, it may be more sustainable to implement changes incrementally; for example, by beginning at the grassroots/ community level and building from there. This may also help with possible shortfalls in budgets or financial capabilities.



**COVID-19 issue note on cities, non-formal and informal learning**



→ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374148>



**Interview series**

The UNESCO GNLC interview series featured mayors from member cities from around the world, who highlighted contextual challenges and solutions to ensuring that learning did not stop during COVID-19 and beyond.

→ [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLivu\\_GCIL2mjYQOp64hcvzGNsC75QKSLw](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLivu_GCIL2mjYQOp64hcvzGNsC75QKSLw)



**Video tutorial**

In 2020, in collaboration with UNESCO’s Section on Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality, we produced a video tutorial on gender equality in learning cities. The tutorial explains how gender equality must be prioritized in learning cities to empower women through learning, eliminate gender-based discrimination and foster equitable, inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities. Watch our video tutorial and find out how to prioritize gender equality in learning cities to empower women through learning, eliminate gender-based discrimination and foster equitable, inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities.

→ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmGyVvEgx5E&ab\\_channel=UILUNESCO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmGyVvEgx5E&ab_channel=UILUNESCO)

## 10 cluster meetings

In 2020, UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities members focused their work on seven key issues as manifested in the UNESCO GNLC Strategy 2019–2020:

- Education for Sustainable Development;
- equity and inclusion;
- educational planning, monitoring and evaluation;
- education for global citizenship;
- entrepreneurship;
- health and well-being;
- and literacy.

Members of the clusters met virtually in a total of ten meetings and conferences to share strategies, experiences and challenges concerning the respective topics.



### Access recordings and summaries

→ <https://annualreports.uil.unesco.org/#node-42>



## 54 new members

In September 2020, 54 new cities from 27 countries joined the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. These new members are outstanding examples of how lifelong learning can become a reality at local level. They have proven that effective lifelong learning policies and practices can support the development of inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



### Statements by mayors of the new learning cities

→ <https://annualreports.uil.unesco.org/#node-42>

## Looking ahead

UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) member Yeonsu-gu, Republic of Korea, will host the fifth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC 5), which will take place in autumn 2021. The event will welcome education experts and representatives of the 229 members of the UNESCO GNLC to deliberate on the conference theme ‘Global health education and emergency response’.

‘To realize the motto, “Lifelong learning for all is our city’s future”, many municipalities in the Republic of Korea have become active partners in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. Going forward, we will remain focused on finding ways to prosper together with the international community while learning from the extensive experiences of the global network.’

### Mr Moon Jae-in

President of the Republic of Korea



## Highlights 2020: Advocacy and networking

# Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning

An estimated 773 million adults worldwide still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, two-thirds of whom are women.



© UNESCO

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning coordinates the Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning (GAL) to foster and facilitate the partnership of 29 countries that are strongly committed to improving youth and adult literacy.

### What we did in 2020:

- organized the GAL general meeting to assess challenges brought by COVID-19;
- welcomed 14 associate members to the Global Alliance for Literacy;
- organized 5 webinars together with partners to promote literacy;
- initiated a literacy educator's training programme together with the UNESCO Global Education Coalition.

## GAL general meeting – assessing challenges brought about by COVID-19

In October 2020, the Global Alliance for Literacy met virtually to assess the unprecedented challenges brought by COVID-19 on youth and adult literacy in its 29 member countries. It reviewed national education response plans and strategies in the context of the pandemic and explored how new partnerships, including with the UNESCO-led Global Education Coalition, and with the new Associate Members of the Alliance, can advance youth and adult literacy in GAL countries.

A ministerial panel gave representatives of Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, and The Gambia an opportunity to present their countries' strategies for ensuring access to literacy provision during the pandemic.



'773 million youth and adults lack basic skills in reading, writing, and numeracy. Two thirds of them are women. The UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy aims to tackle these literacy challenges. The Global Alliance for Literacy is the main platform for implementation.'

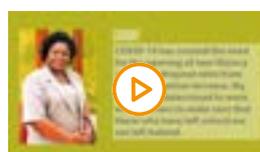
**Ms Stefania Giannini**

UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education

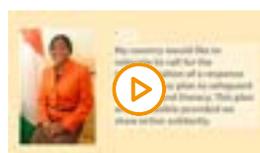


### Find out more

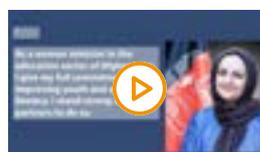
→ <https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/global-alliance/meetings-global-alliance-literacy-documents>



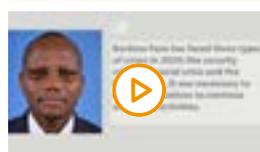
H.E. Claudiana Ayo Cole,  
Education minister,  
The Gambia  
→ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e684TXu5F2g&ab\\_channel=UILUNESCO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e684TXu5F2g&ab_channel=UILUNESCO)



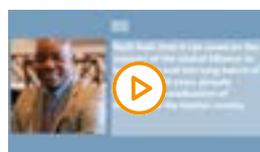
Kandia Camara, Education  
minister, Côte d'Ivoire  
→ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuxU\\_odwy\\_l&ab\\_channel=UILUNESCO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuxU_odwy_l&ab_channel=UILUNESCO)



H.E. Rangina Hamidi,  
Education Minister,  
Afghanistan  
→ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSobXZVEyqI&ab\\_channel=UILUNESCO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSobXZVEyqI&ab_channel=UILUNESCO)



Stanislas Ouaro, Education  
minister, Burkina Faso  
→ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iQPeI\\_hHhs&ab\\_channel=UILUNESCO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iQPeI_hHhs&ab_channel=UILUNESCO)



H.E. Mr Hervé Saintilus,  
Secretary of State for Literacy,  
Education minister, Haiti  
→ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ipC2lr0fEE&ab\\_channel=UILUNESCO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ipC2lr0fEE&ab_channel=UILUNESCO)

## 14 Associate Members

In 2020, GAL welcomed  
14 Associate Members:

- African Union (AU)
- Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)
- Commonwealth of Learning (COL)
- Conference of the Ministers of Education of French-speaking countries (CONFEMEN)
- European Basic Skills Network (EBSN)
- International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)
- Institut de la Francophonie pour l'éducation et la formation (IFEFOIF)
- International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Pamoja West Africa
- Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)
- SIL International
- UNESCO Chair in Adult Literacy and Learning for Social Transformation
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UIL organized or co-organized five webinars on different aspects of literacy throughout 2020.

International Literacy Day  
on 8 September 2020

International Literacy Day webinars in Abuja, Nigeria, on 23 and 30 September 2020



→ <https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/literacyday>

Virtual session on literacy educators during  
World Teachers' Day on 6 October 2020



→ <https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldteachersday>

Virtual session on the potential of ICT for  
lifelong learning of rural youth and adults in  
Central Asian countries on 7 October 2020



© Oberholster Venita from Pixabay

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/vcasie-2020-uil-webinar-explores-potential-ict-lifelong-learning-rural-central-asia>

Session on lifelong learning for marginalized  
youth and adults during the EdTech Korea  
Forum on 7 September 2020



→ <https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/mobile-technologies/uil-highlights-need-digital-inclusion-and-global-solidarity-korea>



**Princess Laurentien  
of the Netherlands**  
UNESCO Special Envoy  
on Literacy for Development

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/uil-blog-covid-19-wake-call-invest-literacy>

'Let us use this crisis to tackle the challenges that were already staring us in the face, a long time before COVID-19 was in our midst. This pandemic should be the final wake-up call to put into practice what we actually already knew was necessary: to enable everyone to read and write so that they can play their full part in social and economic life and in the process of rebuilding and renewal that must follow in the aftermath of the pandemic.'

## Looking ahead: Literacy educators' initiative

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic massively disrupted existing literacy programmes that are intended to support the world's low-literate adults and youth. Moreover, the crisis exposed some of the weaknesses of the literacy sub-sector, such as the dominant provision modality through in-person, on-site educational programmes and the low level of preparedness for remote and distance educational provision. As many governments completely suspended their literacy programmes to curb the spread of the infection, a few literacy classes were still offered through alternative modes of provision, such as radio, television, mobile phones, print materials, and organized in open learning spaces in some countries. When alternative modalities were employed, most of the literacy educators encountered considerable challenges.

In response to these challenges, the UNESCO Global Education Coalition and GAL launched an initiative to promote quality literacy provision by increasing effective use of technologies in literacy instruction and learning, during and beyond major crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this continuing initiative, the two parties will:

- build the capacities of youth and adult literacy educators in selected GAL countries by developing and offering a set of training modules and designing digital skills monitoring and assessment tools;
- enhance the capacities of relevant national institutions, such as ministries of education, ministries of higher education, teacher-training institutions and colleges, and NGOs that train and support youth and adult literacy educators, and contribute to network building among relevant literacy stakeholders and partners.

**By the end of 2022, nearly 100,000 literacy educators from at least 10 GAL countries will be trained in the effective use of technologies in literacy teaching and learning.**

# Research and foresight



UIL produces and disseminates knowledge in the core areas of its mandate through research and development projects, the development and publication of new insights and recommendations in the form of books, policy papers and forward-looking studies, and the expansion of its knowledge base.

## Highlights in 2020

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**Embracing a culture of lifelong learning**

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**COVID 19 issue notes**

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**International Review of Education – Journal of Lifelong Learning**

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**Universities' contribution to lifelong learning**

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**Literacy in the Sahel region – A comprehensive study**

## Embracing a culture of lifelong learning

In 2020, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning published a report, *Embracing a Culture of Lifelong Learning*, setting out a future-focused vision of education and demanding a major shift towards a culture of lifelong learning by 2050.

The report is designed as UIL's contribution to the UNESCO International Commission on the Futures of Education. It argues that creating a global culture of lifelong learning will be key to addressing the challenges faced by humanity, from the climate crisis to technological and demographic change, not to mention those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the inequalities it has exacerbated.

Drawing on the input of 12 distinguished experts from different disciplines and countries, *Embracing a Culture of Lifelong Learning* reflects on the potential contribution of lifelong learning both in transforming the field of education and in creating a more sustainable, healthy and inclusive future, and presents a compelling vision for lifelong learning and the values and principles that must underpin it. It calls on the international community to see education as something with public as well as private value, and to recognize lifelong learning as a new human right.

The report outlines the main features of the 'enabling environment' needed to make lifelong learning the governing principle of education policy and to offer people opportunities to learn throughout life, whatever their background or context. It analyses the main issues that currently inhibit lifelong learning and describes what is needed to transform them into opportunities. Looking to the future, the report sets out 10 key messages, each critical for creating a culture of lifelong learning:

- Recognize the holistic character of lifelong learning;
- Promote transdisciplinary research and intersectoral collaboration for lifelong learning;
- Place vulnerable groups at the core of the lifelong learning agenda;
- Establish lifelong learning as a common good;
- Ensure greater and equitable access to learning technology;
- Transform schools and universities into lifelong learning institutions;
- Recognize and promote the collective dimension of learning;
- Encourage and support local lifelong learning initiatives, including learning cities;
- Reengineer and revitalize workplace learning;
- Recognize lifelong learning as a human right.

The report also offers specific action points for realizing this vision and suggests selected policy measures.

**Download the full report**

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/embracing-culture-lifelong-learning>



**David Atchoarena**  
Director, UNESCO Institute  
for Lifelong Learning

'As we anticipate further disruptions caused by the effects of climate change, demographic shifts and the substantial transformation in the labour market due to the fourth industrial revolution, lifelong learning will have to be moved further up the policy agenda, beyond the fields of education and labour market policies.'

## Highlights 2020: Research and foresight

# UIL COVID-19 issue notes

The COVID-19 pandemic affected learners of all ages from around the globe. The UIL issue notes, which were part of the series of issue notes produced by the UNESCO Education Sector, provided evidence of good practice and practical tips and links to help mitigate the short- and longer-term impact of learning institution closures on learners worldwide. The aim of the UIL issue notes is to support education policy-makers and planners in ensuring lifelong learning continues during crises now and in the future.



### Family and intergenerational learning

In the face of school closures during the pandemic, the family home became, for many, a learning space by proxy, with parents and caregivers acting as the primary guides to support their children's learning. This issue note calls for special arrangements and support for youth and adults, as part of the distance and online education strategies of governments and international aid agencies.

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/issue-note-unlocking-potential-family-and-intergenerational-learning>



### Higher education institutions' engagement with the community

As well as primary education, the pandemic affected higher education institutions' delivery of lifelong learning opportunities for adults. More flexible learning formats, such as short-cycle courses, open lectures and public talks, were the solution in many of these cases. This issue note not only shares various lessons from past practices and the current crisis, but also provides practical tips for designing policy interventions.

→ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374128>



### How cities are utilizing the power of non-formal and informal learning to respond to the COVID-19 crisis

In pursuit of effective education responses to the pandemic, many cities across the globe mobilized cross-sectoral resources, promoting, supporting and developing non-formal and informal learning initiatives to ensure continuity of education and equip and empower citizens with multi-faceted tools to face the crisis. This issue note shares some examples of best practice and provides practical tips for designing policy interventions.

→ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374148>



### Open and distance learning

The pandemic was a wake-up call to the education community that people from all socio-economic backgrounds, wherever they live in the world, must develop new knowledge and skills in order to cope with the uncertainties that crises impose. This issue note takes stock of opportunities and challenges in using open and distance learning, both online and offline, for youth and adult learners outside the formal education system.

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/issue-note-open-and-distance-learning-support-youth-and-adult-learning>



### Adult learning and education and COVID-19

The pandemic forced the education community to rethink how learning opportunities, including adult learning and education (ALE), are provided. The role played by ALE and its means of delivery, such as through ICTs for distance learning and community learning centres (CLCs), in supporting individuals and communities to rise to challenges such as those posed by the pandemic are the focus of this issue note.

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/issue-note-no-26-adult-learning-and-education-and-covid-19>

Highlights 2020:  
Research and foresight

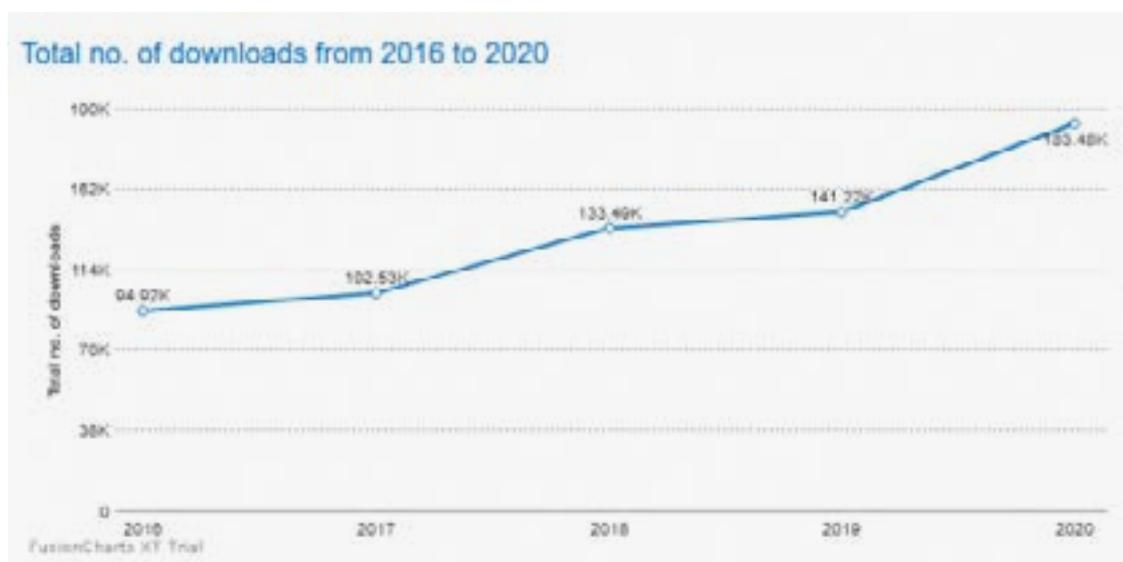
# International Review of Education – Journal of Lifelong Learning

Edited by UIL, the International Review of Education – Journal of Lifelong Learning is the world’s longest-running journal of comparative education. It publishes peer-reviewed research articles on lifelong learning policy and practice with a special focus on adult education, non-formal education and literacy, and formal education, viewed through the lens of lifelong learning.

- Our primary audience includes members of education research and policy communities.
- Our readers and authors are based in more than 50 countries in all five world regions.
- Readership has increased steadily over the past decades.

Six issues of the journal were published in 2020; this included two double issues: ‘Education in the age of COVID-19: Understanding the consequences’ and ‘Literacy and numeracy: Global and comparative perspectives’.

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/journal-international-review-of-education>



## Highlights 2020: Research and foresight

# Universities' contribution to lifelong learning

While the university sector constitutes a huge potential for promoting lifelong learning, its actual contribution remains unclear. Many universities continue to prioritize academic excellence and research with less attention being paid to teaching and providing lifelong learning opportunities to the community, hence achieving the vision expressed in Sustainable Development Goal 4 will require a substantial transformation of higher education institutions (HEIs), in particular universities.

To provide guidance to policy-makers and higher education institutions, UIL and Shanghai Open University (SOU) are conducting a comprehensive research project on the contribution of universities and other HEIs to lifelong learning.

In 2020, as part of this project, we:

- hosted a high-level meeting on the role of universities in promoting lifelong learning;
- completed a global survey of around 400 HEIs in cooperation with the International Association of Universities (IAU);
- conducted a literature review on universities' contribution to lifelong learning.

### High-level meeting on the role of universities in promoting lifelong learning

In February 2020, UIL hosted a high-level meeting on the role of universities in promoting lifelong learning. Experts from universities and university associations, along with UNESCO representatives, considered the enabling conditions and barriers to universities' engagement in lifelong learning.

Participants agreed that, while comprehensive policies and frameworks are necessary to facilitate lifelong learning, it is important to develop institutional networks and partnerships in order to share and promote innovative practices forged at universities. Flexible pathways – as well as flexible learning approaches such as technology-enhanced learning – are key to widening access to universities and promoting more inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The experts also examined recent initiatives by universities around the world to widen access and fulfil their so-called 'third mission', which is to engage with societal needs and market demands by linking their activities to the socio-economic context.

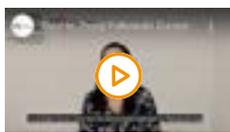
Outcomes of the research project and recommendations will be presented at the 2021 UNESCO World Higher Education Conference (WHEC2021) hosted in Barcelona, Spain.



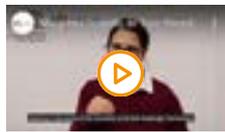
David Atchoarena, Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning  
 → [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAddTT2qZM4&feature=emb\\_imp\\_woyt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAddTT2qZM4&feature=emb_imp_woyt)



Mr Etienne Ehouan Ehile, Secretary-General, Association of African Universities  
 → [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPJBiiuKo7Y&feature=emb\\_imp\\_woyt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPJBiiuKo7Y&feature=emb_imp_woyt)



Thérèse Zhang Pulkowski, European University Association  
 → [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eomech27Quo&feature=emb\\_imp\\_woyt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eomech27Quo&feature=emb_imp_woyt)



Ms Margarita Guarello de Toro, President, Continuing Education Network for Latin America and Europe  
 → [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VycgxeQrTi4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VycgxeQrTi4&feature=emb_logo)



Ms Hilligje van't Land, Secretary-General, International Association of Universities (IAU)  
 → [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWKNK8NF908&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWKNK8NF908&feature=emb_logo)

## Highlights 2020: Research and foresight

# Literacy in the Sahel region – A comprehensive study

The current Sahelian educational context calls for an innovative approach to learning, integrating basic skills acquisition and vocational training, and combining traditional forms of adult education with digital pedagogy. This approach could contribute to reducing illiteracy, fostering the economic integration of young

people and the empowerment of women, promoting citizenship and consolidating the peace process in the region. Achieving these goals presupposes a careful needs analysis in order to design and implement effective, multi-sectoral and sustainable interventions within a lifelong learning perspective.

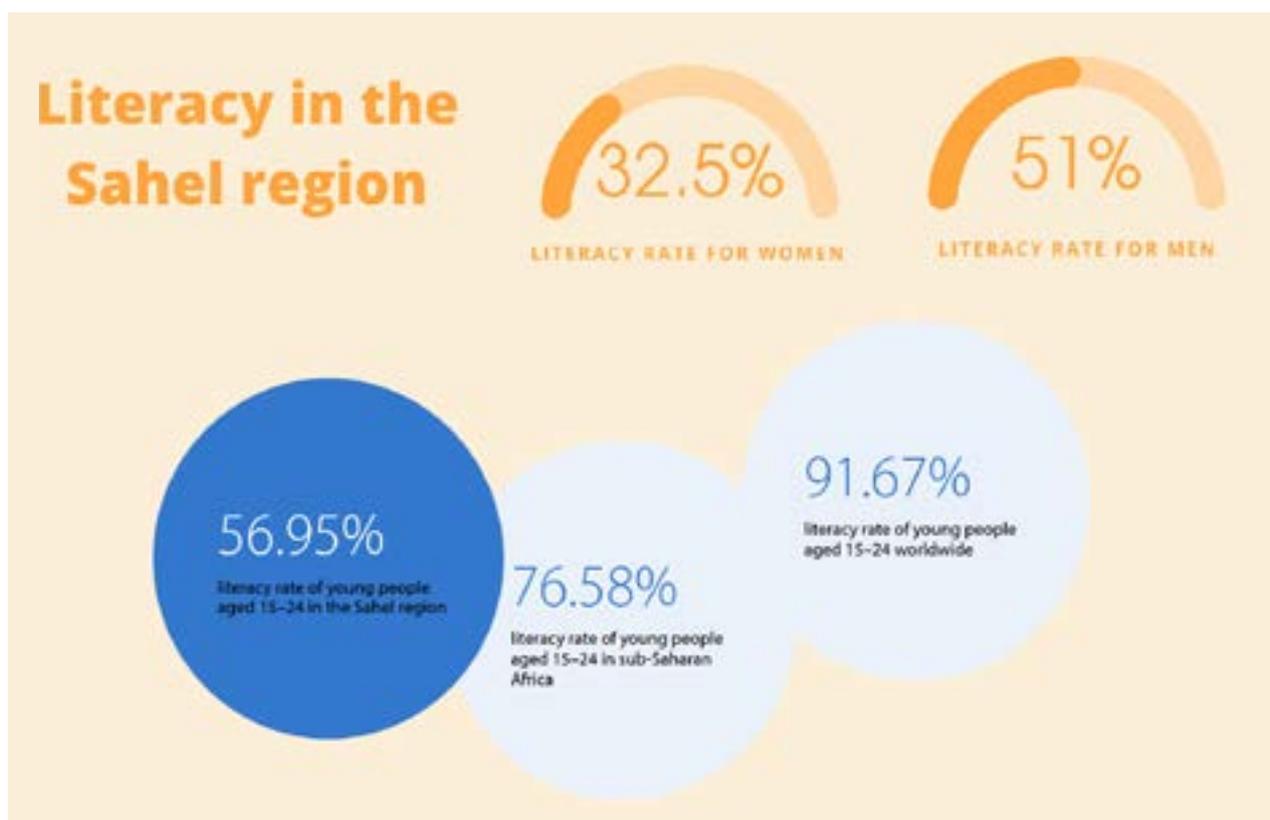
It is for this reason that in 2020, UIL in partnership with the French Development Agency (AFD) conducted a comprehensive study of illiteracy and literacy strategies in the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) and some neighbouring states (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Togo).

What we did in 2020:

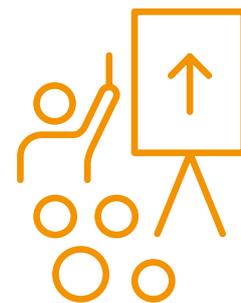
We developed:

- a literature review;
- a collection of quantitative and qualitative data on the literacy policies implemented in the region;
- a mapping of the stakeholders and a classification of the target groups, particularly in sensitive areas such as the Lake Chad region, Sikasso in Mali, Korhogo in Côte d'Ivoire and Bobo-Dioulasso in Burkina Faso.

The study focuses in particular on young people, especially young women, who continue to constitute a particularly disadvantaged population group in the Sahelian zone. The efforts undertaken by these countries to improve youth and adult literacy correspond to SDG target 4.6 ('By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy') and also fall within the framework of the African Union Agenda 2063: 'Leave no one behind'. The study includes new research on the profile of the audiences concerned, including displaced populations and refugees, and their needs. In addition, the analysis specifically addresses cross-border areas, including conflict zones.



# Capacity development



UIL develops policy and action research, workshops and courses, case studies and other resources in order to build capacities in the field of lifelong learning, notably in adult learning and education, youth and adult literacy, and non-formal education. Our work in this area involves the development of resources, including publications, courses and visual media, the provision of workshops and other training opportunities, and bespoke support for Member States in developing policy, planning and practice in a particular area.

## Highlights in 2020

**Online course on family and intergenerational literacy and learning**

**Strengthening alternative and non-formal education for youth and adults**

**Enhancing national capacities for monitoring adult learning and education**

**Measuring learning outcomes in literacy and basic skills – RAMAA**

## Family and intergenerational literacy and learning

The COVID-19 crisis forced countries around the world to implement distance, technology-enabled and other forms of home-based learning. Learning within families and across generations is key in this context.

Students who were unable to return to the classroom because of the pandemic often turned instead to parents, siblings and other family members for support.

What we did in 2020:

Built capacities in family and intergenerational literacy and learning (FILL) for over 80 education professionals – from civil society organizations, non-governmental providers and government institutions for literacy and early childhood education – by way of an online course implemented together with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).



Access recordings

→ <https://annualreports.uil.unesco.org>

The four-week online course introduced participants to the FILL approach, built their capacities in regards to the planning of facilitators’ training and family learning sessions, and dove into monitoring, evaluation and research issues. Participants also learned how to design a FILL programme and activities, and build partnerships.

Learning as a family activity contributes to developing a literate environment across generations. When adults assist children with their schoolwork and socio-emotional development, they develop their own learning and skills, including the digital skills that are increasingly needed to compete in the job market. The course UIL developed with COL showed participants how to make FILL a reality and, in doing so, contributed to making lifelong learning for all a reality.

‘When I first started I wasn’t even aware of the FILL terminology, now I am armed with the readings, examples and resources required to attempt a project proposal suited to my context.’

Senior Lecturer,  
University of Trinidad and Tobago

‘This course has provided me with a deeper insight into the value of family and intergenerational learning. I am more aware that through family learning, the very core beliefs and values that were once held dear can be changed with new knowledge. I have learnt how this concept has brought about tremendous changes to the lives of people all around the world.’

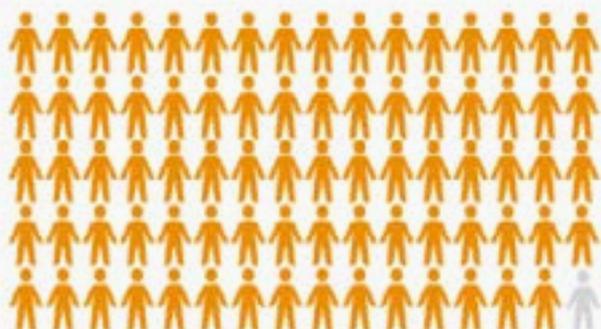
Regional Literacy Coordinator,  
Ministry of Education, Guyana



Blog: COVID-19: ‘This programme saved my life’

‘Family literacy programmes can be a lifeline for disadvantaged parents and caregivers who are struggling to support their children’s learning during the pandemic’, write Anna Kai-per-Marquez and Esther Prins on the UIL blog.

→ <https://thelifelonglearningblog.uil.unesco.org/2020/10/30/covid-19-this-programme-saved-my-life/>



98%

of the participants indicated that  
-the course was very relevant for their context.  
- they felt confident that they could develop a FILL programme in their own context.

## Highlights 2020: Capacity development

# Strengthening alternative and non-formal education for youth and adults

The skills and competencies required by today's knowledge societies and economies are rapidly evolving to match the pace of economic, technological and social change. The need to provide learning opportunities to individuals throughout life is growing. Responding to this trend demands flexible learning pathways, strong links between formal, non-formal and informal learning, including frameworks for the recognition, validation, and accreditation of learning outcomes, and new funding mechanisms.

Many countries worldwide do not provide sufficient learning opportunities for young people and adults who are out of the formal education system. Alternative and non-formal education for youth and adults (ANFE) is often missing in Education Sector Plans (ESPs) and, as a result, suffers from a lack of policy attention and funding.

In 2020, UIL, together with the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), responded to this challenge by:

- developing the capacities of 40 participants from eight countries by way of a four-month online course from November 2020 to March 2021;
- guiding participants through the main steps of an ESP preparation process;

- providing the tools to analyse the current state of ANFE in the education sector to identify gaps in service provision, demand, and opportunities for development;
- demonstrating how to develop strategies based on the education sector analysis;
- and demonstrating how to design implementation programmes with costed activities and develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for the ESP.

The course equipped participants with the technical knowledge and skills to ensure that the learning needs of marginalized youth and adult learning are reflected in sector-wide education plans and strategies within a life-long learning perspective. In the long term, a stronger focus on ANFE in education sector plans will guide the development of holistic lifelong learning systems, ensuring that all young people and adults can learn and continue learning throughout life in a changing world.



## Highlights 2020: Capacity development

# Monitoring adult learning and education



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**Adult learning and education (ALE) is central to sustainable development. But progress worldwide is uneven, as the fourth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 4) shows. To measure advancements in the area and develop effective policies and programmes, comprehensive data is necessary. Only with a thorough understanding of ALE can governments take steps in the right direction.**

### What we did in 2020:

- **Built capacities in monitoring ALE for over 500 stakeholders;**
- **Trained participants in the process of data collection for more comprehensive national, regional and global assessment of ALE through seven webinars.**

UIL, in cooperation with DVV International and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), held seven regional webinars on enhancing national capacities for monitoring adult learning and education in July 2020. Through these webinars, UIL engaged key stakeholders in the process of data collection for a more comprehensive national, regional and global assessment of ALE. Results will be fed into preparations for the forthcoming GRALE 5.

The webinars brought together ALE stakeholders and official focal points designated by their respective country's National Commissions for UNESCO to coordinate the national responses to the GRALE 5 survey. Three key areas were discussed: (1) ensuring data accuracy and comparability; (2) strengthening national consultation; and (3) clarifying ALE concepts mentioned in the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) and the 2015 Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE).

Each regional webinar was followed by closed sessions addressed to national focal points in order to introduce the mechanism of the GRALE 5 survey and allow further technical and procedural inquiries into the survey. GRALE 5 will be launched at the seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII) in Morocco in 2022.

## Highlights 2020: Capacity development

# Measuring learning outcomes in literacy and basic skills – RAMAA

The aim of the Action Research: Measuring Literacy Programme Participants' Learning Outcomes (RAMAA) initiative is to build the capacities of education stakeholders in 12 French-speaking African countries to evaluate and monitor the quality of youth and adult literacy programmes. Moreover, it aims to develop national capacities for evaluating learning outcomes and provide policy-makers and development partners with reliable, contextualized data about the quality of youth and adult literacy programmes.

In 2020, UIL published *Référentiel de compétences harmonisé*, a report on the RAMAA competency framework. Developed by specialists in the region with UIL's technical assistance, the reference framework provides a common tool for the 12 RAMAA countries to outline different proficiency levels in literacy, numeracy and life skills.

The reference framework is already actively used in:

- Chad, within the Le Projet de renforcement de l'éducation et de l'alphabétisation au Tchad (PREAT) project;
- Burkina Faso, through the NGO Solidarité Laïque;
- and Senegal, in a project to professionalize non-formal teachers.



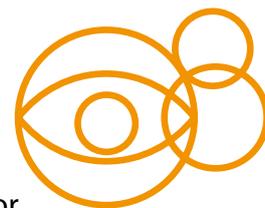
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**Publication:**  
**Référentiel de compétences harmonisé**

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/competency-framework-adult-education-francophone-africa-0>

# Monitoring



Monitoring and evaluation are critical for building a strong evidence base for lifelong learning and for assessing progress against global goals and targets, as well as for regional and national policy interventions. They guide UNESCO Member States in discerning the most efficient and effective uses of resources, and indicate the degree to which existing programmes can be considered successful. UIL provides monitoring on SDG 4, in particular on literacy and ALE.

## Highlights in 2020

**The fifth UNESCO Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 5)**

**Monitoring literacy: Collecting data, building evidence**

# The fifth UNESCO Global Report on Adult Learning and Education

Adult learning and education (ALE) is central to sustainable development. Research shows that ALE participants contribute to economic growth, and that adult education has a positive impact on health, as well as on the reduction of poverty and crime. Moreover, tolerance, open-mindedness, as well as civic engagement, can be sustained and transformed by adult learning. Yet progress in ALE around the globe is uneven. UIL monitors UNESCO Member States' commitment to implementing ALE by way of the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE).

## What we did in 2020:

- Launched preparations for the fifth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 5);
- Collected 159 national reports on ALE in preparation of GRALE 5;
- Commissioned 10 background papers that will feed into GRALE 5;
- Organized the first meeting of the GRALE 5 Editorial Board to plan data collection and define the content of the thematic chapter of the Report devoted to citizenship education.

In 2020, UIL launched preparations for GRALE 5. The Institute collected the necessary data, started analyzing national reports and worked with researchers from around the globe on the topic of citizenship education.

GRALE 5 will comprise survey data, policy analysis and case studies to provide policy-makers, researchers and practitioners with an up-to-date picture of the status of ALE in UNESCO Member States.

The thematic focus, the practice of 'citizenship education', will explore its full potential for the SDGs, assessing the progress being made across countries and regions, and examining key related concepts such as 'active citizenship' and 'global citizenship'. Recommendations for strengthening developments in ALE and for promoting active and global citizenship will be made.

GRALE 5 will be launched at the seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII) in Morocco in 2022.

## Highlights 2020: Monitoring



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# Monitoring literacy: Collecting data, building evidence

Adult numeracy and literacy skills are key to transforming lives, promoting social inclusion and contributing to sustainable societies. Achieving an optimal return on investment with regard to the development of adult skills and competencies requires the collation of comprehensive data to assess what people know, what they do with what they know, and the extent to which they are equipped to sustain themselves in the twenty-first century.

### What we did in 2020:

- Produced a first draft of a comparative study on a national curriculum for adult basic education in GAL countries;
- Published two policy briefs on the assessments of adult skills and learning outcomes;
- Built capacities for improving the availability of comparable data on adult skills globally;
- Published a competency framework for measuring literacy programme participants' learning outcomes.

## UNESCO Global Alliance to Monitor Learning

As co-chair of the SDG Target 4.6 task force that is a component of the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML), UIL, together with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), played a central role in supporting countries in reporting on SDG indicator 4.6.1. This work, which was done in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), fed into the first draft of a comparative study on a national curriculum for adult basic education in GAL countries and will be used to help identify minimum proficiency levels in literacy and numeracy to be used as a global benchmark.

UIL also conducted several activities aimed at improving the availability of comparable data on adult skills worldwide in 2020; these activities included organizing an international technical workshop on the development of a short self-assessment questionnaire on literacy and numeracy skills for national household surveys, and the development of an online database of direct assessments of adult skills.



### Policy brief 12: Direct assessments of adult skills and competencies

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/policy-brief-12-direct-assessments-adult-skills-and-competencies>



### Policy brief 13: Adult numeracy: Assessment and development

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/policy-brief-13-adult-numeracy-assessment-and-development>



# Policy support



UIL supports UNESCO Member States in every world region in lifelong learning policy development and education sector planning from a lifelong learning perspective. We work closely with ministries and local and regional stakeholders to develop tailored and targeted policy solutions that widen learning opportunities and improve quality.

## Highlights in 2020

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**Increasing literacy in Afghanistan**

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**Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database – LitBase**

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**Collection of lifelong learning policies and strategies**

## Increasing literacy in Afghanistan

UIL has a long history in providing support to Afghanistan's Ministry of Education in order to increase youth and adult literacy skills. In 2020, we contributed to the revision of Afghanistan's National Literacy Strategy; provided technical support during the development of the country's new framework for youth and adult literacy and basic and assisted with the revisions to training modules for literacy educators.

Mr Mohammad Yasin Samim, Senior Technical Advisor at the Ministry of Education, Afghanistan, spoke to UIL about the country's plans to foster literacy, and stressed how integral the support of UIL is to this endeavour.



Mr Mohammad Yasin Samim, Senior Technical Advisor, Ministry of Education, Afghanistan

→ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYkgGLEUz6o>

### What is the state of youth and adult literacy and basic education in Afghanistan?

As you know, Afghanistan is one of the few countries in South Asia with high rates of illiteracy among its youth and adults. According to statistics, there are over 10 million illiterate youth and adults, which is a big number. However, since 2016, Afghanistan has made significant progress in its literacy rates: in 2016/17, the literacy rate was only 34.8%, but recently, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) announced that this has increased to 43%, which indicates an 8% increase in the overall literacy rate in Afghanistan. Even though a literacy gender gap still exists – the literacy rate for men stands at 55%; for women 29.8%. The literacy rate for youth aged 15–24 has also substantially increased: it now stands at 65%. Despite these achievements, however, the challenges are still massive and there are many people who need opportunities for continuing education in Afghanistan.

### What are the major challenges in achieving literacy in Afghanistan?

Based on the analyses that we have done for strategic planning within the Ministry of

Education, the major challenges include lack of funding, low organizational capacity (both at central and provincial and district levels), insecurity, and socio-economic factors such as poverty, socio-cultural barriers that hinder older people and adults, particularly women, from accessing education.

### You are currently working with UIL and the UNESCO Kabul Office on strengthening literacy in Afghanistan. What does this entail?

UNESCO has been a strategic partner for the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan since 2001; it has been providing support in policy coordination, fund management, and technical capacities in areas such as curriculum and teacher education. Under BESAF (Best Education System for Afghanistan), which is a three-year project funded by Sweden, UIL and UNESCO will work with the Deputy Ministry of Education in Afghanistan to support the development of a national youth and adult basic education strategy, the carrying out of a national assessment survey, curriculum development for youth and adult basic education, and professionalizing teacher training.

### How does Afghanistan benefit from UIL's support?

UIL is a professional and pioneering organization in youth and adult education. Its collecting and disseminating of best practice and experiences from around the globe and also the Central Asia region is a vital resource for the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan as we proceed with strategy development, the national assessment, and the teacher training and curriculum packages. We will need the expertise of UIL and its contribution in terms of providing advice, giving feedback and sharing the resources that we need for these areas.

### What is your vision for literacy in Afghanistan in 2030?

Our vision is that, by 2030, all youths and a substantial proportion of men and women, adult men and women, have access to equitable literacy and adult basic education opportunities that will enable them to actively participate in the society and the labour market and overall the development goals of the country.



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### Highlights 2020: Policy support

## Databases on literacy and lifelong learning



### LitBase: Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/effective-practices-database-litbase>



### Collection of lifelong learning policies and strategies

→ <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/lifelong-learning-policie>

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### Vice Chair of the UIL Governing Board

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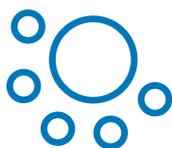
\* Member of the Standing Committee

\*\* Member of the Editorial Board  
of the IRE Journal

Organizational chart



## Team



UIL would like to express its sincere thanks to all staff, interns, trainees and volunteers who contributed to its work in 2020.

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## Financial Report

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Income in USD		2020
UNESCO	Financial allocation	784,000
Voluntary contributions	Core budget support Governments	1,414,000
	Host country Germany	2,247,000
Other income		263,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,708,000</b>
Reserves programme funds		3,160,000
UNESCO extra-budgetary programmes *		291,000
<b>Grand total funds</b>		<b>8,159,000</b>



67% Voluntary contributions  
17% UNESCO  
16% Other income

Expenditure in USD		2020
Governing Board and Standing Committee		10,000
Direct programme costs		3,504,000
Institutional development		285,000
Host country Germany premises		239,000
General administration including ICT		670,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,708,000</b>
Reserves programme funds		3,160,000
UNESCO extra-budgetary programmes *		291,000
<b>Grand total funds</b>		<b>8,159,000</b>



74% Direct programme costs  
6% Institutional development  
14% General administration including ICT  
5% Host country Germany premises  
1% Governing Board and Standing Committee

\* UNESCO funds administered by UIL

**UNESCO Education Sector**

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation on which to build peace and drive sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education and the Education Sector provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens national education systems and responds to contemporary global challenges through education with a special focus on gender equality and Africa.



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**Education  
Sector**

**The Global Education 2030 Agenda**

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'*. The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and the related commitments.



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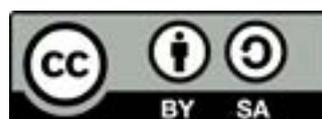
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