

CONFINTEA VI Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (2009)

UNESCO's Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) will be hosted by Brazil in 2009. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), as the UNESCO unit in charge of adult learning, non-formal education and lifelong learning, is coordinating the preparation of the conference, in cooperation with UNESCO Headquarters and Regional Bureaus and the CONFINTEA VI Host Country.

In line with the tradition, CONFINTEA VI will be a UNESCO Category II intergovernmental conference. The conference itself as well as the preparatory and follow-up processes will provide platforms for policy dialogue and advocacy on adult learning and education within and across countries at global level, with a large participation of UNESCO Member States, United Nations agencies and international development partners, civil society, research institutions, and the private sector.

The previous five CONFINTEA conferences took place in Helsingor (Denmark) in 1949, Montreal (Canada) in 1960, Tokyo (Japan) in 1972, Paris (France) in 1985, and in Hamburg (Germany) in 1997. CONFINTEA V, which was considered a landmark conference, established a holistic understanding of adult learning and education within the perspective of lifelong learning. Adult learning and education were recognized as key tools to address current social and development challenges all over the world. However, the recognition and strong commitment expressed in 1997 did not lead to the corresponding integration, policy prioritization and allocation of resources for adult learning and education, either nationally or internationally.

Overall Orientation and Objectives

CONFINTEA VI aims to renew international momentum for adult learning and education, and to redress the discrepancy between the insights and discourse on the one hand and the lack of systematic and effective policies and conditions for adult education and learning on the other hand.

The CONFINTEA VI preparatory process, conference and follow-up will enable a global review of the state of the art of adult education and learning, and will serve as a sounding board for the most relevant and emerging political, cultural, social and economical issues in relation to international education and development. CONFINTEA VI will offer the opportunity to articulate adult education and learning with the major current international policy frameworks in relation to education and development: the Education for All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment

(LIFE) and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). Finally, CONFINTEA VI will engage in producing the tools (e.g. benchmarks) to ensure that previous and future commitments to adult education and learning are implemented.

Concretely, the objectives of CONFINTEA VI are:

- to push forward the recognition of **adult learning and education as an important element of and factor conducive to lifelong learning**, of which literacy is the foundation;
- to highlight **the crucial role of adult learning and education for the realization of current international education and development agendas (EFA, MDGs, UNLD, LIFE, and DESD)**; and
- to renew political momentum and commitment and to develop the tools for implementation in order to move **from rhetoric to action**.

CONFINTEA VI will focus on improving the **quality of adult learning and education** as a field in itself, and concentrate on three to four priority issues.

Expected Outcomes

In pursuance of the above objectives to advance the recognition as well as the horizontal and vertical integration of adult learning and education and the shift from rhetoric to action, CONFINTEA VI will aim at accomplishing the following results and products:

- advocacy, political momentum and commitment for adult learning and education within and across countries generated;
- synergies with the EFA, UNLD, LIFE, DESD agendas and the MDGs at national and international levels ensured;
- links and interfaces with other areas (e.g. health, agriculture) created;
- national and international cooperation (between governments and civil society, bi-lateral organizations and UN agencies) increased;
- new national and international financing possibilities (e.g. commitment of international development organizations and south-south cooperation) developed and applied;
- professional growth and quality in adult education improved;
- empowerment of all actors (policy makers, professionals/practitioners, researchers, and the private sector, and adult and out-of-school learners) enhanced;
- internationally applicable/adaptable tools (e.g. benchmarks) to measure progress and to ensure implementation produced; and
- a final conference document (e.g. “framework for action”) which includes the tools adopted.

Process, Strategies and Activities

As an overall principle, CONFINTEA VI will be based on **partnerships** between UN Agencies, international development partners, civil society, research institutions, the private sector and learners in all preparatory activities.

CONFINTEA VI being a UNESCO Category II intergovernmental meeting, the preparatory process will include the following pillars:

- **National reports** on the state of the art of adult learning and education at country level, which will be prepared by UNESCO Member States under the leadership of the UNESCO National Commissions on the basis of questionnaires and selected indicators; and
- **Regional preparatory meetings**, which will assess the overall regional state-of-the-art of and the challenges for adult learning and education. These meetings will be prepared and organized in cooperation with the respective UNESCO Regional Bureau and hosted by a UNESCO Member State in 2008.

The preparatory process will also entail:

- **Thematic consultation and reviews** (coordinated as well as independent), including links with other trans-national or national adult education conferences/events, as well as virtual consultations carried out by UIL or under the leadership of a partner organization; and
- The **collection of research-based evidence** on the benefits and importance of adult learning and education, including:
 - selected cases of successful/effective adult learning and education practice,
 - commissioned studies (e.g. by UN agencies and other organizations/actors) to help understand barriers and to highlight options in adult learning and education,
 - commissioned studies summarizing and disseminating already existing research results in the field of adult learning and education to practitioners and policy makers,
 - stories and voices of adult learners and out-of-school youth, and their participation in the consultation as well as in the analysis, and
 - the preparation of a Global Adult Education Report.

A critical element in the preparatory and follow-up strategy will be the development of **benchmarks** on adult learning and education in order to provide the tools to measure progress and to ensure implementation. The benchmarks will serve as input for CONFINTEA VI and will be further discussed, refined and adopted during the conference, and constitute one of its crucial outputs.

A **communication and advocacy strategy** will complement the preparatory process.

To support UIL in coordinating the preparatory process, a **Consultative Group** has been set up, which is functioning as the key conceptual unit and advisory committee. The Consultative Group includes approximately 10-15 persons with an education expert profile, reflecting an institutional, geographic and gender balance. Their members represent UNESCO Member States, UN Agencies, development agencies, inter-governmental bodies, international or regional non-governmental organizations and academicians, the CONFINTEA VI host country and UNESCO (Headquarters, Regional Bureaus and UIL).

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