

CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action Harnessing the transformational power of Adult Learning and Education

Preamble

1. We, the representatives of 142 Member States of UNESCO, and representatives of civil society organizations, social partners, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental agencies, youth and the private sector, have gathered in **Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco**, and online, **from 15 to 17 June 2022**, as participants in the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII). The conference takes place during a pandemic that has profoundly impacted education systems worldwide, including adult learning and education (ALE).
2. We gather to take stock of important challenges and progress made in ALE since CONFINTEA VI in 2009, and to establish a roadmap for the advancement of ALE over the next 12 years – towards 2030 and beyond.
3. We recall the **achievements of CONFINTEA VI**, including recognition in the 2009 Belém Framework for Action (BFA) of ALE as an essential element of the right to education, and its identification of five areas of action for ALE which remain relevant today: policy; governance; financing; participation, inclusion and equity; and quality. We also emphasize the value of UNESCO's Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) which, mandated by the BFA in 2009, has regularly monitored developments in ALE.
4. Supported by data from GRALE, we reflect on **major global efforts in promoting ALE and lifelong learning since 2009**. These include the commitment of the international community to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), greater recognition by the international community of the need to promote lifelong learning, as exemplified by SDG 4 'to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', the report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education, improved global ALE monitoring through the five GRALEs, the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report and other initiatives, including the Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning (GAL) and steps taken towards the integration of ALE in the global education agenda and architecture. A rights-based approach should therefore guide the implementation of the Marrakech Framework.

5. We underline the long-term structural impact of the **COVID-19 pandemic** and its contrasting effects on ALE. The pandemic has drawn additional attention to the need for governments and communities to develop and implement strategies for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies and learning policies that support youth and adults to cope with the effects of this crisis. We also emphasize the need to build strategies for reskilling and upskilling, which are necessary to meet the changing needs of societies and the world of work brought about especially by the green and digital transitions.

6. We recall the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015, and are committed to achieving the 17 SDGs. We recognize that lifelong learning is critical to all 17 goals and that, as a core dimension of lifelong learning, ALE is key to their achievement. We especially reaffirm our commitment to SDG 4, through which Member States have committed to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’. We recall the **Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development**, which reaffirms the importance of education for sustainable development, adopted in May 2021, and invite adult learners to help achieve its 16 recommendations. We also acknowledge the report from the International Commission on the Futures of Education (UNESCO, 2021), *Re-imagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*, which asserts the right to quality education throughout life and underlines the transformative power of education for building a sustainable future.

7. We strongly support the Commission’s call to ensure “gender equality and the rights of all” in and through adult learning and education, recognizing that gender norms can affect learners’ ability to engage effectively in education. Gender-transformative adult learning and education must be comprehensive, holistic and intergenerational, bringing together education actors with sectors such as health, protection and justice.

8. We uphold the **Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE)**, adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference in 2015, including its definition of ALE¹ and identification of three key fields of learning: literacy and basic skills; continuing education and vocational skills; and liberal, popular and community education and citizenship skills.

¹ Adult education is a core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all youth and adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies. Adult learning and education involve sustained activities and processes of acquiring, recognizing, exchanging, and adapting capabilities. Given that the boundaries of youth and adulthood are shifting in most cultures, in this text the term “adult” denotes all those who engage in adult learning and education, even if they have not reached the legal age of maturity’. (Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, 2015, p. 6)

9. We reaffirm that **ALE is a key component of lifelong learning²**, noting that ALE policies and practices apply to a wide range of ages, education levels, learning spaces and modalities, and recognizing that lifelong learning is the major engine of a learning society at different levels, involving individuals, families, organizations, workplaces, neighbourhoods, cities, and regions.
10. We strongly affirm education, including ALE, as a fundamental human right – a commitment which is critical in understanding and framing education as a public endeavour and a common good – as asserted by the International Commission on the Futures of Education.
11. We also recognize the continued, rich and diverse contributions of the international ALE community, including governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, for their contribution to the organization of CONFINTEA VII, including regional and sub-regional preparatory conferences, the outcome documents of which, alongside the BFA, the Suwon CONFINTEA VI mid-term review report, GRALE, RALE and UNESCO's Re-imagining our futures together report, have provided the basis for this framework for action.
12. At a time when societies are threatened by rising fanaticism and violent extremism, growing distrust in science and rising inequalities within and between countries, we reaffirm that ALE can constitute a powerful policy response to consolidate social cohesion, enhance socio-emotional skill development, secure peace, strengthen democracy, improve cultural understanding, eliminate all types of discrimination, and promote peaceful living together and active and global citizenship.
13. We commit to promoting the recommendations of this Marrakech Framework for Action as an integral part of the forthcoming Transforming Education Summit in September 2022. We recall the importance of this Framework, which will serve as a reference document for the Summit.

Principles and priority areas

14. Promoting ALE within a lifelong learning perspective: While recognizing that the priority areas of the Belém Framework for Action remain relevant, SDG 4 provides a unique opportunity to position ALE as a key component of lifelong learning, contributing to sustainable development and to the promise of peace that lies in UNESCO's constitution.

² 'In essence, lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and elderly, girls and boys, women and men) in all life-wide contexts (family, school, community, workplace and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands. Education systems which promote lifelong learning adopt a holistic and sector-wide approach involving all sub-sectors and levels to ensure the provision of learning opportunities for all individuals'.
(Education 2030 Framework for Action, UNESCO 2015, p. 30, footnote 5)

15. Building a new social contract: Inspired by the findings and proposals of Reimagining our futures together, ALE plays a key role in creating humanistic responses based on human rights, democratic societies, ethical principles, the mobilization of collective intelligence and an open dialogue informed by interdisciplinary knowledge.
16. In spite of remarkable progress during the past decades, including in women's literacy, many countries still struggle to reach adequate literacy levels, including digital literacy, and to bridge the considerable gender gap. In 2021, more than 770 million adults were lacking basic literacy skills, three out of five of whom were women (UIS). The benefits of literacy for individuals, families, communities, societies and the planet are well documented, and adult literacy must receive sufficient policy attention and financial support
17. Unlocking the potential of adult learning and education for climate action: Climate change represents a huge threat for humanity as well as for other species. It prompts us to question current production and consumption patterns, invent new industries and accept moral responsibility for future generations, recognizing that caring for the planet must become a global imperative. Hence, climate education must be mainstreamed in lifelong learning systems. ALE must be part of this green transformation. It gives youth and adults an understanding of the issue, raises their awareness and equips them with the knowledge and agency needed to adapt to and counter climate change, and develop resilience and agency for transformation. ALE can play an important role in empowering adult and older citizens so that they become role models for children and change agents at local, national and global levels. Community learning and citizenship education are key factors for sustainable development, including rural development, and to raise awareness of the impact of climate change. Furthermore, ALE institutions themselves can act as models for green transition in society by greening their curricula, facilities and management.
18. Promoting equal access of all learners, including older adults, to learning in digital environments: Technology is introducing important changes in the ways in which adults learn and are taught, as well as in the competencies and skills needed. It has become a powerful facilitator and a catalyst of individual learning. While technology can be a driver of progress in education, it can also create new barriers that make social or collective learning more challenging, widen existing social divides and create new ones. Equal access of all learners to learning in digital environments is a crucial prerequisite of dealing with these. This has implications for how adults engage as active members of society, and increases the importance of critical thinking, communication, empathy and social skills when navigating online environments to counteract mis- and disinformation. Building effective strategies, policies and instruments, bridging the digital divide, increasing access, addressing online power relations and preventing the abuse of technology are all critical in

establishing the transformative and emancipatory power of ALE. Effective digital pedagogies also require new models of teaching and learning in face-to-face, distance and blended formats.

19. Preparing adults for the future of work: Demographic shifts, the fourth industrial revolution, globalization and climate change are deeply transforming the economy and the labour market. These transformations have major implications for the nature of work, employment structures, the content of jobs, and the competencies and skills required. The linear education-to-work transition that was the dominant pattern for decades is becoming less relevant as, increasingly, adults follow complex trajectories over their working life. In this context, the task of ALE, through the shared responsibility of stakeholders, is to provide – in a flexible way – equitable acquisition of relevant knowledge, competencies and skills throughout the life course, including vocational guidance and other learning support to employment, decent work, career development and entrepreneurship. Demographic trends also indicate that the life expectancy of people across the globe continues to rise, contributing to the emergence of an ageing world. As, in an increasing number of countries, a large portion of the population will not be in work, the nature of ALE must be adapted, with more focus on preparing older adults for post-work activities, including to facilitate their continued meaningful contribution to societies and to place stronger emphasis on their well-being and enjoyment of all spheres of their lives. Moreover, the transformation of the economy required to achieve carbon neutrality and protect the environment will create an urgent need to reskill and upskill adults who are already in the labour market.
20. Creating a culture of lifelong learning: Lifelong learning will be key to addressing the challenges faced by humanity, from the climate crisis to technological and demographic change, in addition to those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the inequalities it has exacerbated. To achieve this, a holistic approach is needed, encompassing all types of ALE (formal, non-formal and informal), and all sectors and fields, various learning sites, including in-person as well as online and blended learning, and diverse learner groups. Thus, a learning environment needs to be created whereby inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning for young and old are established as a public endeavour that serves not only the world of work, but also individual wellbeing and the common good.

Action recommendations for transformative ALE

Establishing frameworks and governance arrangements

21. Recognizing the need for a renewed social contract for education, we invite UNESCO to initiate relevant expert consultations and intergovernmental dialogue on ways to strengthen the existing

human rights framework with regard to lifelong learning. This process should explore the most appropriate ways to translate the vision of a right to lifelong learning – with adult learning and education at its core - into reality, hence creating a culture of lifelong learning that is adapted to each Member State.

22. We recognize the value of multi-sectoral platforms to support the governance of ALE with all relevant and key actors, including in particular ministries, civil society organizations, youth, the private sector, universities and ALE providers. We also underline the importance of dialogue between workers and employers, and their organizational structures, which, in many countries, contributes to governance – particularly in terms of continuing professional development.

Redesigning systems for ALE

23. Recognizing the increasing diversity of ALE providers resulting from the emergence of complex learning ecosystems, we reiterate the need to strengthen the role of governments in establishing mechanisms and regulations and in allocating financial and human resources to support structures for ALE and to regulate, incentivize, stimulate, coordinate and monitor ALE as a public and common good within strengthened public education provision.
24. We recognize the importance of strengthening ALE at the local level, as a strategic dimension for planning, design and implementation for learning programmes, and for supporting and (co)funding training and learning initiatives such as community learning centres to be well-resourced with qualified adult educators. We recognize the diversity of learning spaces, such as those in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education institutions, libraries, museums, workplaces, public spaces, art and cultural institutions, sport and recreation, peer groups, families and others. This means reinforcing institutional capacities for promoting lifelong learning for all at the local level by, for example, encouraging learning city development, as well as fostering the involvement of local stakeholders, including learners, community groups and institutions.
25. Furthermore, in keeping with our commitment to creating flexible learning pathways within and between types of work, we underscore the importance of recognition of prior learning as well as the validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning, wherever appropriate and relevant, to include all sections of the population – particularly disadvantaged and underrepresented groups such as people with disabilities – into open and flexible learning ecosystems. In this regard, specific attention should also be given to including indigenous communities in all education and lifelong learning processes. Establishing flexible learning pathways is key to allowing mobility between different programmes, levels of studies and sectors of employment, and

for learners to choose their learning trajectories according to their talents and interests, taking advantage of the opening up of bridges across education sub-sectors and the labour market.

Ensuring quality of learning

26. We stress the key role of teachers and educators, including volunteer tutors and other professionals engaged in adult learning and education. We commit to implementing policies and strategies to upskill and further professionalize and specialize adult educators through pre-service, in-service and continuing training – in association with universities and research institutes – and by improving their working conditions, including their salaries, status and professional development trajectories. We further recognize ALE competency frameworks as strategic instruments for the professionalization of educators and the enhancement of their qualifications.
27. Emphasising the crucial role of face-to-face learning in ALE, we commit to promoting relevant, non-discriminatory and gender-responsive curricula and learning materials that will incorporate emerging fields of learning such as global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, education for health and well-being, socio-emotional skills, transversal and critical-thinking skills, and digital skills.
28. To enhance the quality of ALE, we highlight the importance of conducting research and evaluation to guide policies and practice to further promote inclusion, quality and relevance. This should include participatory research aimed at supporting ALE programme designers, teachers and participants.

Increasing funding

29. We commit to increasing public funding and resource mobilization for ALE and to preventing regression in existing budget allocations. As a component of lifelong learning, ALE should be funded through the contribution of a wide diversity of stakeholders, various ministries, employers and other private actors, local governments and learners. Such funding formulae should combine regular budgetary commitments with other sources and mechanisms, including blended financing and targeted measures for women and learners from vulnerable or marginalized groups. We are determined to increase public spending on adult education in accordance with country contexts aimed at progressively meeting the international benchmarks of an allocation of at least 4-6% of GDP and/or at least 15-20% of total public expenditure to education.³

³ These commitments were already made at the World Education Forum in Incheon in 21 May 2015 and adopted by 184 UNESCO Member States on 4 November 2015 in Paris in a High-level Meeting.

30. Considering the role that international cooperation plays in reaching an appropriate level of funding for ALE, and bearing in mind the potential contribution of ALE to advancing all 17 SDGs, we call for a broadening of the scope of global mechanisms for financing development cooperation in education, so that they also support ALE. In line with the commitments we made to achieve SDG 4, we therefore call on existing global funds for education, specifically the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait, to include ALE in the strategies, priorities and financial support they provide to their partner countries. We commit to work towards filling the funding gap to meet the SDG 4 adult literacy targets and to integrate skills training through the fulfilment of existing commitments related to official development assistance (ODA), including the commitments by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for ODA to developing countries.⁴

Promoting inclusion

31. We commit to placing diversity, including linguistic diversity, inclusion, accessibility and equity at the heart of our endeavours, recognizing them as priorities in increasing access to ALE among marginalized or disadvantaged individuals, and under-represented and vulnerable groups and communities. It is also imperative that the objectives of equity and inclusion be particularly mindful of the realities of, and responsibilities toward, Indigenous peoples. This commitment derives from the reaffirmation of education as a human right, which includes the right to participation as an enabler of empowerment and of active and global citizenship.
32. We commit to significantly increasing participation in both non-formal and formal ALE programmes, and encourage countries to set ambitious benchmarks for the participation of diverse groups of learners. To include vulnerable populations and adults currently unreached, we commit to promoting outreach and guidance systems to raise awareness of learning opportunities, expand participation and enhance learner motivation.
33. We reaffirm the importance of implementing reliable, valid, transparent and accessible gender-sensitive information systems for ALE, allowing the tracking of progress in participation and learner retention with a focus on under-served populations, as well as of facilitating the exchange of knowledge between government and non-governmental institutions, academia, civil society and Member States.

⁴ This commitment was already made as part of SDG17, target 17.2

Expanding learning domains

34. We reaffirm the vision of literacy as a continuum of learning and competency levels as a foundation for adult learning and education. We commit to strengthen considerably our efforts to implement related policies accordingly and to meeting the SDG 4.6 targets. This involves establishing comprehensive and evidence-based gender-transformative, cross-sectoral and inclusive literacy policies and implementation strategies.
35. We recognize the workplace as an important learning site. Establishing a culture of lifelong learning at work is important to help workers to secure and maintain decent work, adapt to new job requirements, and achieve personal development and fulfilment. We also recognize that workplace learning must contribute to building more inclusive and just societies. ALE promotes efficiency, productivity and well-being at work, and we call upon employers to invest in ALE in the workplace.
36. Recognizing the urgency and centrality of climate action for sustainability, we commit to promote education for sustainable development and to advance awareness on the causes and effects of climate change, so that all youth and adults can better understand urgent sustainable development issues and act as empowered citizens, by adapting their consumption patterns and lifestyles, and engaging actively in democratic debates and initiatives to protect and preserve the environment.
37. Recognizing the powerful role technology plays in ALE, Member States commit to identifying ways to reduce the digital gap and to promote digital literacy and skills, as well as to formulating new directions for learning alliances building on UNESCO normative instruments that frame access to knowledge (the 2019 Recommendation on Open Educational Resources and the 2021 Recommendation on Open Science) and the use of AI (the 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of AI) for learning. Hence, alongside promoting blended learning – which is an effective means of reaching out to marginalized people and communities most in need of ALE – we will also promote open education resources for the common and public good, and address concerns over equity and inclusion, privacy and ethics in relation to the use of technology for learning.
38. Considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we assert the importance of learning for individual well-being and public health. We recognize the need to strengthen these dimensions in ALE policies and programmes at national and local level, harnessing the positive impact of ALE on health – including for older adults. Learning for health and well-being underlines the importance of connecting SDG 3 and SDG 4, and of mainstreaming ALE and health in multi-sectoral policies and programmes.

39. We further highlight the importance of active and global citizenship, and of media and information literacy, in tackling societal and development challenges. We therefore encourage initiatives to strengthen citizenship education for adults with the aim of developing learners' capacities to critically evaluate information, make informed decisions, develop agency, and contribute significantly to their local communities and public debate.
40. We commit to using the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a roadmap for the development of transversal skills, recognizing how this agenda brings cohesion and synergy to the multifaceted goals of ALE for the years to come. Quality education and lifelong learning are important mechanisms for implementing SDG 4 and are also prerequisites for poverty reduction (SDG 1), health and well-being (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), gainful employment and decent jobs (SDG 8), inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities (SDG 11), just, peaceful, inclusive, violence-free societies (SDG 16) and climate action (SDG 13). Furthermore, adult education is part of the right to education and crucial for the realization of all human rights.

International cooperation for enactment and monitoring

41. In enacting the commitments contained within this Framework for Action, and in order to continuously exchange knowledge and good practices, foster peer learning and contribute to institutional capacity development, and in a spirit of international solidarity, we commit to further support and engage in international co-operation initiatives aimed at improving ALE and promoting lifelong learning.
42. We commit to paying specific attention to the following categories of Member State, which are facing particular challenges in achieving SDG 4 and other SDGs:
- conflict-affected Member States, considering their specific needs in terms of participation in ALE, including for refugees and displaced populations, and for capacity building;
 - Small Island Developing States (SIDS), considering their structural vulnerability, exacerbated by climate change;
 - African states, which face persistent education challenges and offer large opportunities for future development; and
 - Least Developed Countries (LDC), which continue to merit special attention and targeted support.

43. We invite UNESCO, as the lead United Nations agency for education, to support implementation of this Framework for Action in cooperation with Member States, ensuring periodic reviews of progress made.
44. We commit to taking this Framework for Action forward through relevant mechanisms at the global, regional, national, sub-national and local levels, drawing on the global architecture of SDG 4, which includes mechanisms and platforms such as the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE), the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML), the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL), the Global Education Monitoring report (GEMR), the SDG 4 Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the work of international partners – including non-governmental organizations – and country-level monitoring. We welcome the creation of the African Institute for Lifelong Learning, an initiative of the Kingdom of Morocco.
45. In the tradition of GRALE, we reiterate the need for reliable, valid, transparent and accessible information and gender-sensitive monitoring systems that can both produce relevant and accurate disaggregated data for monitoring periodically the enactment of this Framework for Action, and support digital platforms to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices between Member States and other key ALE constituencies.
46. We call on UNESCO to coordinate, through the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, a monitoring process at the global level to report periodically on progress in ALE, through dedicated instruments including a global report and a CONFINTEA VII mid-term review in 2028 to assess the progress made.
47. We also welcome the proposal of the Kingdom of Morocco to create a Post-CONFINTEA VII inter-ministerial commission, with a view to supporting the effective and participatory implementation of the recommendations of this Framework.
48. We therefore adopt the Marrakech Framework for Action to guide us in harnessing the transformational power of ALE within a lifelong learning perspective for a socially cohesive, fulfilling, inclusive and sustainable future for all.