

# Civil Society Forum: ‘Education 2030: From Commitment to Action’<sup>1</sup>

**Civil society’s contribution to securing the right to education and lifelong learning for youth and adults**

*ICAE, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017, Suwon City, South Korea*

Civil society forum held for coordinated advocacy in lead up to CONFINTEA Mid-Term Review 24 October 2017, Suwon, South Korea. The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) played a major role in mobilising civil society organisations (CSOs) for the CONFINTEA 6 Mid-Term Review (MTR) held in South Korea. To ensure that civil society has a meaningful role and coordinated advocacy in the CONFINTEA MTR, ICAE organised a premeeting forum for CSOs to agree on key positions regarding youth and adult learning and education.

For the representatives of civil society from over 50 countries, this gathering offered the possibility to appraise the challenges and opportunities related to adult education and learning (ALE) in the current context, profile the importance of adult learning and education in the new global education and development agenda, and confront the challenges related to its implementation on both the national and the global levels.

The meeting also strategised how to advocate these positions strongly to governments and other decision makers. The civil society forum was held with the theme ‘Education 2030: From Commitment to Action’ with the sub-theme, ‘Civil society’s contribution to securing the right to education and lifelong learning for youth and adults’. Almost a hundred participants from different regions in the world gathered to share the imperatives for pushing governments to give their full attention to realising quality youth and adult learning and education in each country. The participants of the forum, led by ICAE, believed that the mobilisation of CSOs and social movements is necessary to support adult learn-

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<sup>1</sup> Izveštaj je pripremljen na osnovu ASPBE Newsletter-a, oktobar 2017. <http://www.aspbae.org/node/71>.

ers worldwide. Ensuring that the contributions and roles of CSOs are recognised in CONFINTEA MTR, the civil society forum was organised to:

1. Review progress on the Belém Framework for Action to inform the CONFINTEA 6 Mid-Term Review Conference.
2. Deliberate on the main challenges and opportunities for the right to youth and adult education and lifelong learning in the current policy and development context.
3. Strategise on its advocacy within the MTR processes and other related education and development policy arenas.
4. Celebrate civil society's achievements, learn from its rich and diverse experiences, forge solidarity, and collectively define coordinated ways forward.
5. Strengthen the global movement to secure the right to the education of youth and adults.

After the regional discussions, the participants, together with a panel of experts, shared their views on three thematic areas of youth and adult education:

- (1) literacy and basic skills
- (2) professional development and vocational skills, and
- (3) liberal/popular/community education and active citizenship skills.

### *Monitoring and supporting implementation*

The Civil Society Forum (CSF) looked at the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) and UNESCO's Recommendations for Adult Learning (RALE) and how these can reinforce the commitment to the universal right to education and learning. It was organized as a platform for civil society to strategise on its advocacy within the CONFINTEA VI Midterm-Review (MTR) processes and other related education and development policy arenas. Therefore, a Civil Society Statement was formulated and agreed upon at the Forum, which urged inclusion in the MTR outcomes and was delivered to representatives of governments, UN agencies and international organizations at the event:

### *Taking on a holistic approach*

The CSF concluded that ALE should be truly transformational, critical, empowering, participative and inclusive, so it can support the development and transformation of individuals, communities, societies and economies, according to individual needs. An intersectoral approach is needed, which acknowledges the urgent need for recognition of different learning pathways.

*Adult Learning and Education in the Sustainable Development Goals*

The CSF analyzed how it can support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed on by the United Nations in 2015. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) focuses on lifelong learning (LLL), but adult education is the weakest link in this chain. For the full realization of SDG 4, and indeed all the other SDGs, it was seen as necessary to discuss what kind of lifelong learning will need to be promoted and advanced.

*The least supported link*

CSF participants recognized that ALE is the least supported link in the lifelong learning chain, currently faces further cuts in funding at the national level in many countries. ALE's position should be strengthened, secured and fully recognised, in order to make sure that all adults are not left behind. The political commitment to promoting the fully inclusive understanding of lifelong learning is imperative.

*The role of Civil Society*

The Civil Society Forum and the active participation and contribution towards the MTR showed once more the important role civil society plays in ALE worldwide. Thus, as one of the key players, it should also be recognized as a partner in policy creation, planning, monitoring, and evaluation of policy implementation.

*Four years to go*

Given that the next CONFINTEA conference is four years away, this Civil Society Forum provided the opportunity to deliberate on the main challenges and opportunities for the right to youth and adult education and lifelong learning in the current policy and development context. The participants celebrated civil society's achievements, learned from its rich and diverse experiences, forged solidarity and collectively defined coordinated ways forward.

At the end of the Forum, CSOs agreed on a civil society statement which was disseminated and debated during the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review discussions.

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