

ADULT EDUCATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION: A GLOBAL PRIORITY – THE GABORONE STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION, JUNE 2004

We, the participants at the international conference on adult education and poverty reduction, held at the University of Botswana, Botswana from 14-16th June 2004, drawn from NGOs, Government ministries, international organisations, adult educators, academics, policy makers and development practitioners, from 45 countries around the world:

Have noted with concern that, as stated in UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report, many of our countries are in danger of not meeting their targets for poverty reduction, as agreed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We have also noted that the EFA report states that only a minority of country poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) have identified adult education as part of their strategy for poverty reduction in spite of ongoing evidence of the contribution of adult education in bringing people out of poverty.

In this statement we are taking forward the recommendations initiated by the UNESCO Institute of Education (UIE) Thematic Network on Adult Education and Poverty Reduction at the CONFINTEA Mid Term Review in Thailand, Bangkok 2003, and we complement the Mid Term Review's call for accountability and action to (i) integrate UIE and adult education NGOs into all programmes, conferences and summits which address education and (ii) declare that MDG goals must be related to adult learners as well as children.

We also share the concern of recent world social forums and other international campaigns, that: diversity and democratisation is endangered by poverty and inequality, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, environmental degradation, gender discrimination and social exclusion, unemployment and the marginalisation of adult basic and literacy education, worsened by the negative consequences of globalisation (Pietermaritzburg Declaration 2002).

Poverty is both a barrier to accessing education and exacerbated by insufficient education. Seventy percent of the world's poor are women. Other marginalised people who suffer disproportionately from poverty are indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, migrant and immigrant peoples and people infected with HIV/AIDS. Adult education at all levels is an essential ingredient both to compensate for earlier educational inadequacies and to empower people with the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills for sustainable participation in a constantly changing world. We see poverty as a complex phenomenon, with adult education helping to develop a culture of learning and thus breaking the endemic cycle of poverty

in poor communities. Government investment in adult education reduces the costs of poor health, low skills, and lack of participation in society and the economy. Poverty reduction is a vitally important component of adult education policy that must stand alongside political commitment to economic and community development, as it is the integrated, multi-agency approach that will build sustainable futures. We believe that donor policies for lifelong learning must include all levels of education for the development of knowledge, values, and skills for sustainable livelihoods and participation in all levels of society. Successful adult education, however, requires grass roots, bottom up development in dialogue with the poor themselves. Policies, programmes and legislation should reflect this and recognise that poverty cannot be resolved without the active participation of those living in poverty.

Therefore, this gathering of academics, adult educators, policy makers and development practitioners constituted by people from governments, education and training institutions, NGOs, adult education networks and international organisations, expresses its commitment to the reduction of poverty and empowerment of the poor in all areas of the globe.

We strongly urge governments to make adult education a central feature of their poverty reduction strategies and to allocate resources for all forms of adult education.

We also urge donor agencies to support adult education research for poverty reduction in order to mainstream and influence policy development.

To ensure that this statement results in action, we propose that a global network, emerging from the conference contacts, be established that can advocate, lobby, exchange and share initiatives for poverty reduction.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Specifically, action by governments, researchers and civil society should include the following initiatives and approaches:

- Recognise the broad conceptual and cross-sectoral base of adult education and the multi-definitional contexts for poverty as the basis for ongoing work in relation to, for example, health, vocational education, community development, income generation, and human rights activities.
- Formulate, in dialogue with key agencies such as the World Bank, UNESCO Institute for Education, German Adult Education Association (IIZ-DVV), International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) and Latin American Association for Adult Learning (CEAAL), regional Centre for Adult Education and Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean (CREFAL), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Southern African development Community (SADC), an international agenda on adult education for poverty reduction.

- Promote and organise adult education research that engages with and listens to the poor and that includes baseline data that reflects the different definitions of poverty.
- Recognise and promote the community-based approach to adult learning, that includes raising political awareness, recognition of indigenous knowledges, and starting where people are, ensuring governments link this approach directly with their poverty reduction strategies.
- Highlight the curriculum that is inherent in community development work so that workers in these sectors acquire the adult education facilitation skills that will enhance the work they already do.
- Lobby donors such as the World Bank to adopt a formal policy on adult education after entering into dialogue with the adult education community.
- Lobby for financial support for all levels of adult education in recognition that basic, literacy education is not enough for poverty reduction and that people living in poverty also need continuous training and access to relevant technologies.
- Stimulate multi-sectoral collaborations in dialogue with government, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, donors, researchers, practitioners, and communities of poor people.
- Encourage a stronger voice from the NGO, civil society world and the poor themselves in government strategies.
- Ensure that poor people have a voice in the allocation of resources that are applied to them.
- Encourage South – South dialogue as well as South – North dialogue.
- Recognise the need for a long-term view in realistic target setting that enables progress to be documented.
- Establish a website to provide the central communications/information point for the global network.

To ensure that action is monitored we propose that a thematic report on Adult Education and Poverty Reduction is submitted and discussed at CONFINTEA VI in 2009.

9th June 2004