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SPECIAL ISSUE ON CONFINTEA

Co-edited by Julia Denholm, Heribert Hinzen, Báalazs Németh, Khau Phuoc

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Message from PIMA President

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Bello (2022) suggests that today we face the genesis of a global social hurricane:

“The big problem for all of us is when the climate, economic, and political and ideological crises intersect, which they are doing right now, for they feed into each other, like moist humid air and warm ocean water do in the formation of a hurricane, and create a combined power that can smash everything in its path” (Bello, 2022, n.p.).

We all experience, to different degrees, the socio-ecological hurricane that is barreling down across the globe. As adult educators, lifelong learning practitioners, researchers, scholars, and activists, we know the power of adult learning and education (ALE) to respond, in concert with others, to many of the socio-economic, cultural, and ecological issues that are flying around. But we also know that its difficult to be heard, and to have ALE supported, against the noise of the hurricane!

It was for this reason that an alliance of civil society organisations rallied to engage actively in the once in 12-year global opportunity to advocate for ALE at CONFINTEA VII in Morocco in June 2022. The working together of a range of international, regional, national, and local networks and organisations, under the leadership of International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), was exemplary. It demonstrated collaborative organising, where we all shared limited resources of energy, time and money, towards a common goal. PIMA was happy to play its part.

In the fractured times in which we live, with inequalities between the political North and South growing exponentially and with the planetary crisis on all of our doorsteps, working together cooperatively allows us to practice and rehearse the common, just future we are working towards.

Thank you to the PIMA team of Heribert Hinzen, Julia Denholm, Nemeth Balazs, and Phuoc Khau for co-editing this important Special Edition of the PIMA Bulletin which reflects, in some depth, on CONFINTEA VII and other significant interventions, to promote, interrogate and mobilise for ALE.

Reference

Bello, W. (2022). “Extreme events are the new normal, and not just in the weather.” Presentation at State of the World Conference. Transnational Institute (TNI), 14 September 2022

Editorial Introduction

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Julia Denholm is the dean of Lifelong Learning at Simon Fraser University. Before joining SFU, she was dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and dean of Kálabay, the Sunshine Coast campus, at Capilano University. She previously held roles at Langara College as instructor and chair, English, and division chair, Humanities, and her academic career started at UBC, where she taught in the Department of English, the Faculty of Commerce and the Faculty of Applied Science, as well as through the Distance Education and Technology unit. A lifelong learner herself, Denholm is committed to community engagement and to the development of academically excellent continuing education programs. She has a PhD in educational studies and a BA (Hons) and MA in English literature from the University of British Columbia.

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Heribert Hinzen, Prof.(H) Dr. Dr. h.c. mult., is a senior consultant on adult education and lifelong learning for sustainable development. He worked almost four decades for DVV International in headquarters and in Sierra Leone, Hungary and Lao PDR offices. He is Honorary Professor at the University of Pecs, and teaches comparative adult education at the University of Würzburg. He served as Vice-President of ICAE and EAEA and now of PIMA. He is Honorary Fellow of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and a member of the Editorial Board of the International Review of Education – Journal of Lifelong Learning.

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CONFINTEA VII - ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT FOR ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION. EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Julia Denholm, Heribert Hinzen, Báalazs Németh, Khau Phuoc

Let us start by describing a number of activities that led to the idea of having a Special Issue of the PIMA Bulletin fully devoted to the preparation, implementation and outcomes of the World Conference on Adult Education. This global gathering of adult educators is called CONFINTEA, which derives its acronym from the French language as the *Conférence internationale sur l'éducation des adultes*.

Contexts and concerns

The contexts in which we see the work of PIMA are manifold. As a civil society actor we engage with other civil society organisations (CSO) which for the field of adult learning and education (ALE) means especially the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) and its regional and national members. We therefore supported ICAE throughout the process towards CONFINTEA VII as the UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education. PIMA members took part in CONFINTEA VI and served on the drafting group for the Belém Framework for Action (BFA), and they took part in the CONFINTEA VI Midterm Review (UNESCO 2018). However there are several PIMA colleagues who can look back much further as they joined previous CONFINTEA meetings as far back as 1972 in Tokyo, 1985 in Paris, 1997 in Hamburg, and even more of us 2009 in Belém. Advancing CONFINTEA VII many PIMA members were active in the regional preparatory meetings, and contributed to the analysis, review and writing of sub-regional reports.

Another important context in which we saw ourselves on the way to CONFINTEA VII was the *UNESCO Future of Education* initiative which started in 2019 and resulted in a report called *Reimagining our Futures Together: A new social contract for education* (UNESCO 2021). ICAE was invited by the Commission to contribute a perspective on ALE, and thus ICAE established a writers group, including PIMA members, to prepare the statement *Adult Learning and Education (ALE) – Because the Future Cannot Wait* (ICAE 2021). This actually followed on a much earlier invitation when ICAE came up with *Adult education and lifelong learning: Issues, concerns and recommendations* (ICAE 1994) as a contribution to *Learning: The treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first century* (Delors et al. 1996). To complete this cycle: In the year 1972 a first UNESCO International Commission of this kind came up with *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow* (Faure, et al. (1972), at a time when during CONFINTEA III key civil society actors joined hands and had a first meeting to pave the way to the founding of ICAE in 1973 - now advancing to turn to half a century of action for the development of ALE. (Hinzen 2022)

There are of course many more stories to tell, but at least three more should be mentioned. In March this year PIMA invited members to a webinar on *Why CONFINTEA VII matters* and where, after the introductions of the PIMA leadership and a lecture *Towards CONFINTEA VII in Morocco 2022 – Adult Learning and Education and the 2030 SDG Agenda*, the ICAE President reported on the most recent developments before participants joined in a lively discussion on the way ahead to Marrakech a few months on. Around the same time PIMA, in cooperation with the Centre for Research & Development in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning (CR&DALL) of the University of Glasgow, published a collection of articles from previous PIMA Bulletins titled *Global Collaboration and Advocacy for Adult Learning: Contributions of a Civil Society Network* (Duke, C. & Hinzen, H. 2022) to support further preparation advancing Marrakech and at the time creating opportunities for wider dissemination to interested ALE proponents, practitioners and students.

Also, and just-in-time before the start of the conference, a *Special Issue of the International Review of Education Journal of Lifelong Learning* came out on *Strengthening the future of adult education and lifelong learning for all: Building bridges between CONFINTEA and the SDGs* featuring PIMA colleagues as co-editors as well as

authors in close cooperation with researchers and colleagues from academia on a variety of subjects which are close to and followed up in this PIMA Bulletin, such as literacy, financing, community learning centres, and monitoring - all seen within a system of lifelong learning. One of the key recommendations therefore pointed to: “The governance of a country’s education system should be redesigned to take full account of all sub-sectors from a lifelong learning perspective, including formal and non-formal education and informal learning.” (Benavot et al. 2022, 187)

PIMA Special Issue Articles

This special Issue of the PIMA Bulletin is focused on the CONFINTEA VII process and its influence and impact on national, regional and global aspects of adult learning and education. Another important scope beyond the CONFINTEA process is the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA) and its specific dimension affecting participation, performance and partnerships in ALE from local to global. Authors have provided reflections into one of the sections of this Volume, namely, National Experiences, Regional Perspectives and Global Orientations. Our intention was to collect and share some valuable inputs from distinguished researchers and practitioners from the PIMA community to highlight the policy, practice and community aspects of CONFINTEA VII and to underline particular consequences and constraints as choices it may generate in local/regional, national/regional or in global contexts.

National Experiences

The national focus is supported by inputs to signal rather challenging aspects for ALE in the CONFINTEA VII and MFA processes. In her reflection upon the Australian context, Dorothy Lucardi underlines the difficulties ALA (Adult Learning Australia) and ACED (Australian Coalition for Education and Development) faced in having to balance governmental focuses with those of CSOs regarding CONFINTEA VII preparation, conference actions and potential implications of outcomes. This example very much highlights the dependencies of professional bodies upon government interests when having to work on ALE developments under UNESCO frames. Alan Tuckett from the U.K. focusses on his experiences in 25 years of CONFINTEA progress and uses CONFINTEA VII and MFA to underline their influence on financing, getting ALE closer to SDGs and sustainability. Sir Alan clearly emphasizes that more collaborations would be needed in the field and that ALE is far away from expanding partnerships as necessary to improve quality and cohesion.

Shirley Walters from South Africa elaborates upon the strong roles and influence of civil society as potential strength or, the other way round, weakness. Walters calls attention to some choices and limitations of a delegation from her county to represent CSOs and not having been able to represent official government approaches to ALE with all necessary consequences and perspectives over how to get ALE better recognised by government. Lauri Tuomi from Finland provides a thorough approach to the roles of advocacy work upon CONFINTEA VII, referring to both preparations and follow-up activities. Tuomi makes it very clear how developments on continuous learning and adult literacy could be recognised as key building blocks in implementing the Marrakech Framework in Finland together with necessary approaches to quality, sustainability and participation. Baratov, Choi and Hinzen reflect national follow-up work in Korea, initiating a process of disseminating CONFINTEA VII outcomes and creating interest in how to make use of commitments through partners amongst stakeholders. Their input also signals the importance of advocacy and dialogue on local, national, regional and international levels for partners in countries like Armenia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova and Ukraine.

Regional Perspectives

Ivor Baatjes from the Nelson Mandela University turns attention to MFA outputs to relate them to African realities and to argue for strengthening ALE for solidarity, collaboration and shared practices. He clearly underlines the importance of bridging the use of technologies and digital tools with those of social media – like

MOJA as the new internet-based platform for ALE – to get more visibility and recognition for local, regional and national struggles of ALE amongst vulnerable groups, like illiterate adults, poor and deprived communities. Ely Wakil describes the role and input of AHAED (Arab House for Adult Education and Development) in developing partnerships between civil society and governmental agencies in the preparations of CONFINTEA VII. She also highlights the responsibility of AHAED to formulate a common voice of civil society and to provide partnerships and collaborative actions with international bodies in adult learning and education. Shermaine Barrett makes it clear in her piece that countries of the Caribbean should help adults to effectively prepare for the future of work, to learn effectively through digital environments, and to learn how to cope with climate change with the support of redesigned ALE systems of the region.

Raffaella Kihrer points out the CONFINTEA processes have been very important for all regions of the world, including Europe and the European Union (EU), not least because they drive the development of European strategies and political initiatives and give additional impetus to implementation. She also underlines how debates leading up to the MFA clearly showed that practices and pedagogical approaches are important to show direction both for Europe and the “Global South”. Modé and Hiebner, relying on available data of GRALE5, provide an important narrative of low participation and stagnation in reducing access to ALE for vulnerable groups of adults in Latin America and Caribbean. They claim that the lack of political priority focused upon Youth and Adult Education, amongst other key issues, reduces government attention to improve policies, public budget and opportunities for learners.

Global Orientations

Here we even throw the net wider looking at some important areas and options for follow up in programmes for countries and regions in crisis or making use of the learning city paradigm. We have collected distinguished submissions describing a rather diverse picture with similarities and differences, or comparative analysis towards CONFINTEA VII and MFA with attention to both policy and practice. Almazan Khan profoundly demonstrates an advance in the vision of ALE that is emancipatory and transformative and champions the interests of marginalised groups, but she remarks that civil society was keen to ‘hold the ground’ and ensure that the new framework for action does not regress from earlier commitments to ALE – when comparing CONFINTEA VI and VII with its outcome documents of MFA and BFA. In an informal interview with Julia Denholm, Cecilia Palm recounts her experience as a participant in the CONFINTEA process and a member in the drafting group, noting especially the success of CSOs in influencing positive outcomes in the MFA.

Raul Valdes-Cotera connects the development of learning cities to some specific aspects of the CONFINTEA process, namely, to underline that in a rapidly urbanizing world, the need for appropriate and efficient local action supporting economic, environmental and social sustainability as well as resilience to climate change requires a shift towards learning regions, cities, communities and families, where local actors—from local governments to community members—collaborate to take ownership and autonomy in transforming urban, public, and digital spaces. Christoph Jost calls attention to the role and impact of ALE in crisis regions having been affected by war and severe violent political conflicts and thereby links SDG4 and SDG16 as an impact of MFA. Relevant actions from DVV International emphasize collaborative work in ALE between regions and cultures for the promotion of peace, understanding and respect and solidarity.

Dabu’s submission deals with the issue of how to get the full SDG4 agenda back on track for all learners through the Transforming Education Summit which was a few months after Marrakech, claiming that CSOs have strongly advocated for a real transformation in delivering the neglected SDG4 targets and are calling for ‘leaving no one behind’ in education, hence reiterating the call for greater attention and commitment to equity, inclusion and gender equality in education. Dabu concludes that further efforts will need to be made to fully advance the CONFINTEA VII action points and commitments in various global political processes. David Archer turns to rising matters of financing ALE in accordance with the 2021 Call to Action on Education Finance of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) so as to highlight specific dimensions governments should bear in mind referring

to raising investments, issues of equity and efficiency, and participating in international investments, but he also warns that national efforts ought to be supported and recognised by international bodies.

Timothy Ireland provides splendid examples of the dependency in between governments and CSOs, drawing on three cases from the Brazilian context during the last three editions of CONFINTEA to reflect how the political climate can limit the participation of civil society. He claims, in the context of MFA, that the pluriversal nature of the field of ALE requires the application of more than one analytical lens; one of civil society's principal challenges remains that of elaborating indicators and putting into place systems for the collection of more reliable data and information on what civil society does in the field of ALE and what its impacts are. Finally, the input of Katarina Popovic, ICAE Secretary General, points to some essential dimensions of CONFINTEA VII and its follow-up regarding the choices of and limitations to CSOs in terms of how to collaborate with governments and intergovernmental bodies so as to reach for consensus and mutuality for better participation and performance in adult learning.

Where from here?

PIMA just concluded the meeting of its governing committee and re-affirmed that the follow-up process to CONFINTEA VII remains high on the agenda. We have a chance and obligation to remind our governments what they collectively adopted through the CONFINTEA process, and this is a lot if we continue advocating for better policies, legislation and financing which are needed to really arrive at an institutionalization and professionalization of ALE which brings quality into the provision of and thereby participation in ALE for all with a lifelong learning dimension. Only then it will be possible for ALE to have an impact on all the other priorities of the sustainable development agenda where even now ALE is more of an "invisible friend" (Benavot 2018). It will mean opening up much more to the billions of adults who live and work in the traditional, marginalized and informal sectors of their societies and search for inclusive governance systems: "Education that transforms must be holistic. Adult education that transforms must acknowledge different knowledge systems, including Indigenous ways of knowing and being, which have been neglected and devalorised. Working towards these ideals is among the deepest challenges for the ALE movement going forward." (Benavot et al. 2022, 186)

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NATIONAL EXPERIENCES

CONFINTEA VII- AUSTRALIA

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Dorothy Lucardie is a well-known practitioner, researcher, and leader in the field of Adult Education in Australia and the Asia Pacific region. As a practitioner she has facilitated a range of adult education programs in higher education, community education and in industry. Dorothy has contributed to the leadership of the national peak body Adult Learning Australia as President, her advocacy for its work and her relationship building with international allies. She is the convenor of the Australian Coalition for Education and Development. Dorothy was the foundation President of the Friends of PASCAL International Association (PIMA) and currently serves as Secretary.

Adult Learning Australia has for many years supported and participated in CONFINTEA. The 1997 Hamburg conference saw a large contingent of delegates from AAACE (ALA predecessor), some who were part of the official Australian government delegation and some who attended as Australian adult educators. CONFINTEA VI in Belém 2009 was delayed and unfortunately did not see a large delegation from Australia, either government representatives or Civil Society Organisations (CSO) representatives from organisations such as Adult Learning Australia (ALA).

In the lead up to CONFINTEA VII held in Morocco, ALA and the Australian Coalition for Education and Development (ACED) had difficulties locating the contact within the Australian government who would take responsibility for Australia's national participation in CONFINTEA VII. In previous governments the responsibility was variously placed with departments within education or skills and employment portfolios or with Foreign Affairs. CONFINTEA was invisible on the Australian government agenda and there was limited bureaucratic responsibility allocated. With the recent election of a Federal Labour government departments were rearranged and split over portfolios muddying the water further. Nevertheless, investigation by ALA did manage to identify, contact, and advocate for Australian national government participation in CONFINTEA VII.

The resulting Australian national delegation to CONFINTEA included an official government representative who was based in Paris, but did not attend the conference in person, plus three representatives of ALA, President Annette Foley, CEO Jenny Macaffer and myself, who all participated virtually. To communicate with each other as the conference unfolded, we established a What's App group and were joined by ICAE President Robbie Guevara plus an additional government official in Canberra.

Prior to CONFINTEA ASPBAE ran April regional consultations where representatives of CSO attended, including myself and others from Australia. These consultations fed into a full day workshop run by ICAE on the day before CONFINTEA VII to finalise a CSO statement to be taken to CONFINTEA VII. Whilst there were approximately 50 people participating face-to-face in Morocco, over 85 people across the world were online for the full day. Although there were technical difficulties it was very worthwhile to come together and the output from the day was valuable to guide our participation and response to issues arising in the conference. Key components of the CSO statement "Adult Learning and Education – Because the future cannot wait" included: ALE is a fundamental human right of all youth, adults and older adults – both women and men—a public endeavour and a global common good; transformative ALE nurtures autonomy, emancipation, freedom and democracy, increases the agency of learners and embraces cultural, ethnic, epistemological and linguistic diversity; urgent need for the achievement of literacy for all; ALE's aim to support inclusion and participation; ALE requires strong financing aligned with regional and international benchmarks; the need to professionalise ALE; that gender equality

remains one of the main goals of ALE; vocational education and training (VET) leads to employment for decent jobs; the solutions to the problems of our world are not solely technological but pedagogical; and that civil society plays a fundamental role in ALE.

“As members and partners of ICAE, we remain committed and united for ALE as a fundamental human right and a precondition for social and ecological justice, wellbeing, change and transformation, because the future cannot wait” (ICAE, 2022)

CONFINTEA VII was a well organised hybrid conference with translation and easy access online to the different sessions. It was clear during the conference the high level of expertise that CSO participants brought to the proceedings. Individuals from ICAE and ASPBAE were involved as session chairs, speakers, and the conference raconteur. In the Australian delegation the CSO statement (above) was shared with our government representatives but the actual Australian government submission to CONFINTEA VII was developed by the Skills department and was not shared with ALA representatives before it was submitted. Unfortunately, the Australian government submission did not support the setting of financial targets for national governments and CSO representatives on the drafting committee had to advocate greatly to address this.

Their success was evident when 140 nations supported the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA) including commitments to financing which were significant.

“Increasing public funding and resource mobilisation for ALE and preventing regression in existing budget allocations, as well as 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.” ICAE website 2022

“Working 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 the gross national product (GNP) for ODA to developing countries.” ICAE website 2022

The Marrakesh Framework for Action (MFA) provides action recommendations for transformative ALE. They are to:

- Establish frameworks and governance arrangements
- Redesign systems for ALE
- Ensure quality of learning
- Increase funding
- Promote inclusion
- Expand learning domains

This will require “international cooperation for enactment and monitoring” (MFA, 2022) and concerted effort by nations including Australia. Adult learning Australia will be following up with the Australian government to discuss the MFA and to identify how this may be actioned by both government and CSO.

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AFTER MARRAKECH

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Every twelve years or so since 1949 UNESCO holds an international conference on adult education, CONFINTEA. I have been to three of them, and to two mid-term review conferences as well. Together they map the ever-widening gap between aspiration and practice in governmental commitment and follow-up in adult learning and education over a quarter of a century, yet they have also been a source of inspiration for practitioners and policy-makers who have come together to share experience and to co-design ways to learn our way through our shared challenges.

Hamburg 1997

CONFINTEA V was held at Hamburg in 1997, towards the end of a decade of major global conferences, including the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Population conference in Cairo in 1994, and the fourth Women's conference in Beijing in 1995. It marked the first event at which civil society representatives formally participated in the main event, "in recognition that so much non-formal and popular education was provided by NGOs...and professional and community groups" (Nesbit & Welton 2013, 2). It took an expansive view that claimed a key role for adult learning and non-formal education in planning human development for the 21st century, to build "a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue, a culture of peace based on justice . . . and the creation of a learning society committed to social justice and general well-being" (UNESCO 1997,1). CONFINTEA V saw active citizenship as central to the transformation needed to address a series of challenges arising from globalisation, inequality and exclusion, and that adult learning was critical in fostering inclusion and agency. Central to the task was the wholehearted inclusion and empowerment of women. I was delighted that the conference recommended the adoption by UNESCO of annual international Adult Learners' Weeks. Altogether the event, which engaged 140-plus governments, and participants from across the network of UN agencies, from the WHO and FAO to the International Labour Office and UNDP, fostered a utopian vision of adult learning and education's future role, a vision I found inspiring and energising.

Bangkok 2003

The mid-term review of CONFINTEA V, which was held in Bangkok in 2004, was by contrast anything but utopian. Representatives of member states were significantly outnumbered by civil society participants; UNESCO's documentation for the event was distinctly sketchy, and UNESCO's Assistant Director for Education, Sir John Daniel, told the event that adult educators were seen as boring, backward looking, sentimental and parentalist. By contrast, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) prepared a study of development since Hamburg of 16 countries chosen to reflect the full range of countries as measured by the Human Development Index. This report (ICAE 2003) was extremely well received and prompted the adoption at CONFINTEA VI in Belem of the commitment to produce a three-yearly Global Report on Adult Learning and Education.

Belém 2009

The Belém conference, originally planned for June 2009 was delayed for six months as a result of flooding. This resulted in a smaller cohort of ministerial attendees, and it came 18 months after the onset of a major financial crisis in North America and Europe. However, the conference was positively influenced by the energy generated at the civil society pre-conference, FISC, at which more than 1,000 participants, many of whom were indigenous peoples of the Amazon region. The FISC declaration was bolder than the official conference statement, but the main event adopted an International Learners' Charter, which promoted learners' involvement in governance, and in the co-design and co-creation of programmes, and agreed on common foci to measure developments over the next decade.

Despite youth and adult learning securing just two mentions in the 400 pages of the 2012 Rio Plus 20 Sustainable Development conference, by the time of the 2015 UN Sustainable Goals the case for adult learning and education at the heart of lifelong learning was recognised firmly in the fourth goal of the SDGs, and adult learning was also recognised as a key catalyst in the achievement of the full range of development goals. However, fine words were not matched by secure finance in the 2015 process.

Suwon 2017

By the time of the 2017 mid-term review at Suwon in Korea, it was clear that funding was under pressure as government, Overseas Development partner and UN agency funding all shifted towards easily measurable project funding. Nevertheless, the inspiring examples of learning cities in Korea, and the evidence of major successes in some countries' literacy programmes left participants with some hope that CONFINTEA VII would mark a turn for the better.

Marrakech 2022

CONFINTEA VII was held this June in Marrakech, Morocco at a time when a range of crises and global challenges interact and pose challenges for future policy affecting ALE—notably the impact of the COVID pandemic; the impact of climate change and the development of the green (and blue) economy; continuing conflict within and between countries; the impact of economic, technological and digital change, the emergence of AI and the attendant displacement of jobs; and the markedly rising gap between affluence and poverty; the continuing inequality and marginalisation affecting women, disabled people, ethnic, linguistic and other minorities; and increased migration and displacement of people within and across borders. It met seven years after the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The rise of populism and increasing numbers of authoritarian regimes also offered a background to discussions on active and democratic citizenship.

The Marrakech Framework for Action

The Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA) highlighted the importance of promoting inclusion, and respect for diversity and difference. Linguistic diversity, inclusion, access and equity need to be at the heart of programme design, and initiatives need to be developed in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. There is as well a need for reliable, and gender sensitive data to monitor developments.

The MFA once again acknowledged that education, including ALE is a human right which is critical to the exercise of other rights, and to the achievement of the SDGs more widely. It went on to rehearse a range of commitments familiar from earlier events, among them a call for governments to set overall strategy but to devolve decision making, and to work co-operatively with other governmental and non-governmental bodies. It noted the usefulness of learning cities and community learning centres, and the wide diversity of contexts in which adults learn. It recognised that professionally trained and properly paid teachers are at the heart of ensuring quality of provision, and the need for face-to-face as well as distance learning provision.

Funding?

All this was encouraging, but the continuing challenge in resourcing the work led to a widely endorsed call for an increase of funding—both public financing and from a wide range of stakeholders—and that government should take particular responsibility for funding targeting under-represented and vulnerable groups. Yet I left Marrakech with little hope that this call would be answered, nor that the potential role of ALE in achieving the SDGs would be realised. As the history of Education for All and its failure adequately to address adults' (and particularly women's) literacy needs over the last 30 years make clear it is too easy to make agreements in the heat of a conference and to ignore them in the cold light of day.

Nevertheless, I felt, overall, that for the 142 states and 49 ministers and vice-ministers attending (one third of the 1000 plus attendees were in Morocco, two thirds online), the conference was a success, although the process of six speakers per session followed by two or three ministerial statements scarcely fostered dialogue. There were, though, a number of inspiring presentations, and really fruitful dialogue in the interstices of the event.

There were encouraging signs of a wider recognition that literacies are context specific; signs too of a resurgence of focus on strengthening basic skills. Both Finland and Burkina Faso, for example, reported significant innovation and the key role of literacy in relation to the exercise of active citizenship was highlighted.

ALE and the SDGs

On ALE and the SDGs I was struck by a dilemma. In the UK where I am based, and at the conference, it is regularly noted that adult learning and education is not only a good in itself but the catalyst in the achievement of the other Sustainable Development Goals. Yet practitioners in health, agriculture or industrial training for example seldom see the educative dimension of their work in the same language as used by ALE. That was reflected in the reduced participation of the other UN agencies at the event. How then to secure effective sharing of skills across the social policy arena? One answer to that is possibly usefully pursued through learning cities.

Sustainability

On Sustainable Development Sweden outlined a major new strategy to prepare Sweden to take a lead role in the emerging green economy, and at the same time to leave no one behind, and to include migrants and the elderly as well as adults in the active labour market economy. There was a renewed enthusiasm for community learning centres, and at least a mention of the importance of engaging learner voices. There were a range of stimulating interventions on Open Educational Resources, most notably the founder of MOODLE's call for a range of not-for-profit platforms. Post pandemic there was a revitalised recognition of the benefits of face-to-face interaction, and also of the key challenge of securing skills in the design and delivery of blended learning

Finally, a lifetime of work in the field taught me, and the conference endorsed, that no single actor can secure all adults' learning needs. Governments national and local, employers, unions, voluntary sector agencies and practitioners in other social policy fields can all contribute. But looking at the 25 years between Hamburg and Marrakech I think we are further from realising that partnership now than we were at the turn of the century.

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IS CIVIL SOCIETY'S LEADERSHIP IN CONFINTEA VII A SIGN OF ALE WEAKNESS OR STRENGTH?

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I will tentatively respond to the question as to whether civil society organisations' (CSOs) impressive leadership at CONFINTEA VII is a sign of ALE weakness or strength, from the vantage point of my involvement in CSO's pre-CONFINTEA preparatory work and as a member of the South African National Delegation. Clearly my view is partial, based on my particular experiences.

In the South African delegation there were nine members, two from civil society, the Secretary-General of the National Commission for UNESCO, and 6 from the Department of Higher Education and Training. There were no politicians and the most senior officials were at Deputy-Director General level. CONFINTEA is a UN conference directed at Ministerial level. The South African delegation was relatively light weight. Two members were physically present in Marrakesh and the remaining members were on-line.

Amongst the majority of members, knowledge of CONFINTEA gatherings was very limited. In mid-March 2022 I had sent a query to colleagues asking what preparations were being made for participation in CONFINTEA. I learnt that there had been no movement and there was little knowledge of the processes towards responses to the draft Marrakesh Framework for Action (MFA).

Fortunately, as a coalition of CSOs, we had been working on civil society's role and responsibilities towards the meeting. We had received the draft MFA and together developed responses to it. Each of our organisations had posted recommendations for changes to the MFA. On hearing that South Africa had not been engaging, I was able to share what we had developed and this formed the basis for on-line engagement with a clutch of South African adult educators. The South African submission was shaped by the CSO's groundwork.

The main outcome of CONFINTEA conferences is the `framework for action` to guide work in ALE over the next 12 years. Only members of National Delegations can make proposals for amendments to the draft MFA. It was therefore very important for me to be able to share with our delegation the responses to the latest draft which we had workshopped in the Civil Society Forum organised by ICAE the day before the conference. The ICAE Declaration of the Civil Society Forum and the proposed MFA amendments with their rationale was very helpful. The proposed amendments were discussed in our delegation's WhatsApp Group – there was little quarrel with what was being proposed. Those in Marrakesh made the South African submission.

From the vantage point of one national delegation, it's clear that CSOs were very influential in shaping amendments to the draft MFA. As members of the South African National Delegation, we had not undertaken original work and were happy to engage with the work of others. The level of interest shown by the national delegation was low – the stakes were clearly not high, the issues not sufficiently compelling.

The lack of engagement by the South African delegation was not a surprise. I have experience over the years of Government's response to the production of the Global Reports on ALE (GRALE), five of which UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has produced since Belém. Participation has been perfunctory and the recommendations in the reports have had little impact.

At the best of times ALE is marginal within the broader education and training landscape. In the wake of the COVID pandemic, given the multiple crises of poverty, ill-health, inequality, gender-based violence, unemployment, educational disruption, environmental instability, violence, there seems little appetite for engaging with ALE even though serious responses to the crises implicate ALE. In South Africa, there are occasional rhetorical flourishes about ALE's importance but nothing substantial follows with resources attached.

In the leadup to CONFINTEA, we in CSOs heard of some governments approaching civil society for funding to attend CONFINTEA VII. Our hearts sank as the low status afforded ALE and CONFINTEA VII was there for all to see. Several governments have largely vacated the CONFINTEA space. This provided civil society with the opportunity to take leadership, which was done with aplomb, but perhaps because the ALE stakes are so low.

As civil society, we cannot let governments off the hook – the question then is how do we maximise the use of spaces like CONFINTEA to reinvigorate their commitments to ALE?

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THE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MARRAKESH FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION – CASE FINLAND

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Finland was actively involved in the process of preparing the Marrakesh Framework for action (MFA) as a part of the UNESCO CONFINTEA VII conference. The active collaboration and co-creation with many other UNESCO member countries as well as with the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and International Council of Adult Education (ICAE) before, during and after CONFINTEA VII conference was essential to ensure that the framework would include the common statements and goals. The collaborative process ensured the success of MFA to become a guiding framework for the national operations. In this paper the strategic approach for the implementation of MFA will be discussed and examples from Finland will be presented.

The advocacy before and during the CONFINTEA VII conference

The preparation period before the CONFINTEA VII conference was extremely important. Thanks to ICAE and EAEA, there was continuous dialogue between these associations. This dialogue had effect also on the national

level. In Finland the official delegation was set up in the beginning of 2022. Thus, the national dialogue was able to be started with Ministry of Education and Culture and non-formal adult education sector. These preparatory actions sped up the process in the Spring of 2022 when UNESCO started the dialogue with its member states.

During the CONFINTEA VII conference in Morocco it appeared to be essential for the Finnish delegation to have a 'hot line' to the 'back office' i.e. to the Ministry of Education and Culture. This 'hot line' (phone, whatsapp and email) ensured that Finland's delegation was able to react quickly when new versions of the MFA were delivered for comments. Also, it was extremely important to have a continuous dialogue with the representative of many delegations as well as colleagues from EAEA and ICAE.

Next, the strategic approach for the implementation of MFA will be discussed and four examples from Finland will be presented.

A reform on continuous learning in Finland

The Marrakesh Framework for Action emphasizes 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.

In Finland reskilling and upskilling are included in the parliamentary reform of 'continuous learning'. The aim is that everyone develops their skills and competence during their careers. Also, the aim is more equitable participation. As a result of the reform, e.g., a new service centre has been opened to support the implementation of the reform. Also, there is a long-term plan for the implementation. As the reform is agreed to by all parties in the parliament, its implementation is enabled even after the next parliamentary elections in the year 2023.

The non-formal adult education sector is actively involved in the implementation of the reform. The specific expertise of non-formal (or in Finland 'liberal' or 'popular' adult education) are e.g., the knowledge on basic and life skills, non-formal education supporting the well-being of adults as well as the competence development of under-presented groups such as immigrants and asylum seekers.

Adult literacy

In 2021 more than 770 million adults were lacking literacy skills globally; therefore, the Marrakesh Framework for Action calls for literacy strategies and implementation plans. Moreover, literacy should be seen from the wide perspective to include digital, media, visual as well as data literacy.

Finland has historically been one of the most literate countries globally, but today six in ten Finnish people think they no longer read enough. Therefore, a new national strategy for literacy was published. The vision of the strategy is that Finland will become the most literate nation by 2030. The focus is on multiliteracy. For the implementation of the strategy there are three lines: first, to create and strengthen the structures of literacy work; second, to strengthen multiliteracy; and third, to inspire everyone to read and develop multiliteracy skills.

Quality – The repository of Lifelong Learning

The Marrakesh Framework for Action emphasises the quality of adult education and lifelong learning. Also, one of Finland's messages for the MFA preparation was that the recognition of learning should be involved in the framework. In Finland today, the quality of non-formal adult education is based on the curricula development which aims to support the recognition and validation of learning. The new process for recognition was launched in 2019 and implementation has been started in the whole non-formal sector.

The data on the recognized learning will be entered in the National Registry and Data Transfer Service for Study Rights and Completed Studies (Koski service) maintained by the Finnish National Agency for Education. This

system may be called a repository of lifelong learning as all citizens have access to their own study register. The citizens can view their study attainment data through the “MyStudyInfo” service.

Sustainability

The Marrakesh Framework for Action emphasises the role of lifelong learning in realizing the 2030 sustainability goals (especially SDG 4) and in all the climate change actions needed globally. In 2021, the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development drew up a national 2030 Agenda Roadmap, which is a medium-term plan detailing the actions Finland needs to take to achieve the goals of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda) adopted by the UN in 2015.

The 2030 Agenda Roadmap aims to promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The principles are the following: ensuring fairness, equity and gender equality; facilitating the inclusion and participation of society at large; paying special attention to the most vulnerable ('leave no one behind'); ensuring long-term commitment and policy coherence; and taking global responsibility.

Important work has been started throughout the education system in Finland to include skills and knowledge related to sustainable development in teaching and education. In adult education, the eco-social education has been raised as one of the main means to support sustainable development.

Participation

The Marrakesh Framework for Action states that adult education is a fundamental human right, which includes the right to participation, empowerment and of active and global citizenship. In Europe the participation in adult education is only about 10.8 % of adults (women: 11.9 %, men: 9.8 %) aged 25-64 participating in adult learning in the last four weeks preceding the 2019 survey. In Finland participation in adult education has been traditionally quite high. Annually approximately 1/5 of the population attends non-formal adult education.

Despite of the fact that participation in adult learning in Finland is the second highest in Europe, some challenges still exist. There is a gap in participation between adults with low basic skills and those with higher skills. In this respect the reform on continuous learning as well as actions taken in the non-formal adult education sector both focus on the participation of under-presented groups. The means are e.g., the outreach activities, focus on guidance and support and specific models for the development of life- and basic skills.

Conclusions

In Finland the implementation of the Marrakesh Framework for Action may be seen to have started even before CONFINTEA VII. The preparatory period has been important in order to get insight into the topics that are considered important globally and, vice versa, Finland has been able to raise topics to the discussion which have been seen important in Finland. The collaboration and co-creation were the keys for the success.

Despite the governmental activities on the implementation of MFA, sectoral-level strategies have been published, too. Finland’s non-formal (or liberal) adult education sector has created its own road map for implementation. All national non-formal ALE associations were closely involved in the process to create the road map 2022 –2030. Also, on the sectoral level, the collaboration and co-creation are considered as methods to ensure commitment to the plans and their implementation.

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CONFINTEA VII FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS IN KOREA AND MOLDOVA

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Mr. Ravshan Baratov is active in the field of Adult Learning and Education since 2009, when he was starting out at the country office of D Ravshan Baratov VV International in Uzbekistan. In 2019 he then moved to Kyrgyzstan to take over the position of the Regional programme manager for DVV International's regional office for Central Asia. Since July 2022 Ravshan Baratov is now heading the new regional project of DVV International focusing on the Eastern Neighbours region with Ukraine and Moldova, as well as Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Kosovo.



Choi Un Shil is currently an Emeritus Professor of Ajou University, a chaired professor of Seowon University, and Chair of the Korean Community Education Foundation (KCEF). She also serves as Chair of the Korea Foundation for Lifelong Education (KFLE) and UNESCO EAC (Expert Advisory Committee) for Lifelong Learning Cities. Previously, she was a Vice-Chair of the Governing Board of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and worked as a jury member of UNESCO Literacy Prize. Choi Un Shil was also President of the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE), and Chair of the Korean Academic Society of Lifelong Education and Korean Association of Lifelong Education for several years.



[Click here](#) to read about Heribert Hinzen, Prof.(H) Dr. Dr. h.c. mult., in Editorial Introduction.

The Pre-CONFINTEA VII process could receive substantial attention, actually from the Suwon-Osan Mid-term Review Meeting in 2017 through to all the regional and sub-regional preparatory events in 2021 where especially the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and civil society organisations like the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) and DVV International got deeply involved.

We are now in the Post-CONFINTEA VII process which is of equal importance, and where the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA) needs to be informed by and implemented on global, regional, national and even local contexts. This article looks at two attempts to deepen respective advocacy efforts and prepare and widen potential engagement.

2022 UNESCO CONFINTEA VII Post Conference in Korea: Follow Up and Debriefing

This was the title for the event on 22nd September 2022 that took place in Gwangmyeong, which was actually announced as a first learning city in Korea several years ago and later became a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). The Korean Association of Lifelong Learning Cities (KALLC) was the organizer and the Opening Remarks were delivered by Park Seung Won, the Chair of KALLC and Mayor of Gwangmyeong. The cultural performance included the city choir as well as music on traditional Korean instruments which were highly appreciated by the more than 300 participants.

Three keynotes provided a deeper understanding of CONFINTEA: David Atchoarena, Director of UIL informed on the process and outcomes of the conference in Marrakech and presented a number of important areas of the MFA which will further contribute to the development of adult learning and education (ALE) in a lifelong learning perspective. The GNLC and each learning city can play a major role in this process as cities and their mayors should engage and support communities in their learning activities in a variety of formal, non-formal and informal ways.

Heribert Hinzen, former director of DVV International, had participated in the Marrakech conference on-line as a member of the German delegation and he especially concentrated on the inputs provided by civil society, mainly through ICAE, which were strongly devoted to the professionalization and institutionalization of ALE, and the role for community learning centres (CLC) in the implementation of ALE activities. ALE through CLC has been recognized by the 2021 Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM) where civil society actors were identified as the main providers of ALE.

Choi Un Shil, professor of Ajou and Seowon universities and Chair of the Asia Pacific Network of Learning Cities (APLC), had been invited to represent academia on the CONFINTEA VII Consultative Committee and she described how the learning cities in Korea could get involved in implementation of the MFA and respective action plans for each city as well as KALLC. Choi Un Shil also moderated a final panel where, in addition to the KALLC Chair and the keynote presenters, several journalists joined. They played the role of a sounding board on how well the CONFINTEA messages had been communicated so far and how they would make use of what they have understood in their future journalistic work.

An additional component of the event was a very interesting presentation by Javad Mahmoodi, Mayor of GNLC Bandar Kamir in Iran and Co-chair of APLC; this city is very close to wetland areas along the coast with sensitive mangrove swamps and therefore the aspects of environmental education are important elements in his approach as a learning city.

As a resume it can be stated that this first national follow-up event initiated a process of disseminating CONFINTEA outcomes and created interest in how to make use of commitments which the Korean Government and its delegation had adopted in Marrakech. There is certainly the need for further follow-up, but this is well placed in KALLC and its member cities through their mayors, municipality staff, and the variety of civil society and university networks.

Reflections on CONFINTEA VII results and the Marrakech Framework for Action

This on-line workshop took place on 4th October 2022. It was organized by DVV International's new regional project (Head of the project Mr. Ravshan Baratov) to strengthen advocacy and dialogue on local, national, regional and international level especially for partners in countries like Armenia, Bosnia & Hercegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova and Ukraine. Following the Russian invasion and war on Ukraine the Regional Office has been transferred temporarily from Kyiv to Chisinau which hosted this workshop where around 50 colleagues participated on-line. DVV International and the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) served as co-hosts.

The first presentation was delivered by Heribert Hinzen as an "Introduction to the CONFINTEA process and short wrap-up of achievements of previous declarations and reports". It looked especially at the civil society contributions to previous CONFINTEA events like the Bélem Framework for Action (BFA) from 2009, the Education Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE). All of these three had important inputs from civil society, and all three were adopted by the Member States of UNESCO. The new UNESCO Futures of Education Report also received ICAE attention; it includes strong statements on the importance of ALE in and through CLC. This was taken up by DVV International through organizing in Marrakech a workshop on CLC with case studies from several countries, and a number of straightforward recommendations.

The second contribution came from Katarina Popovic as Secretary General of ICAE. She had served on the CONFINTEA VI and VII Consultative Committees and the Drafting Groups for the BFA and the MFA and thus was versed to inform on process and results. Her presentation was a "Review of the CONFINTEA VII and the Marrakech Framework for Action". She pointed strongly to the critical findings of the 5th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) including "adult education does not reach those who need it most", and recommendations such as an "increase in adult learning and education financing [is] needed". In her analysis of the MFA she looked especially at action recommendations for transformative ALE which are related to "establishing frameworks and governance arrangements; redesigning systems for ALE; ensuring quality of learning; increasing funding; promoting inclusion; expanding learning domains." The final chapter of the MFA calls for "international cooperation for enactment and monitoring." Both keynotes were followed by extensive question and answer sessions to deepen the understanding further.

The next step in the workshop was a virtual panel on "Advocating and implementing CONFINTEA's recommendations and acknowledgements onto national policies. Approaches of state authorities and civil society organisations" moderated by Katarina Popovic. The first presenter was Lauri Tuomi, CEO of the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation (KVS) and Vice-President of EAEA. He reminded the audience how important a strategic approach and a roadmap for implementation can be. Anna Delort, Director of the Catalan Association for Education, Training and Research (ACEFIR) spoke on "Advocating for and implementing CONFINTEA VII results in national policies". She stressed the importance of interministerial entities on national and the cooperation of professional networks on regional level, and she reminded us that 2023 will be the European Year of Skills. The third presentation was by Larissa Lukyanova who is a Board Member of the Ukrainian Adult Education Association. She started with the implications of the war in Ukraine, but also demonstrated how much of local ALE developments could take place in recent years and how this could be further strengthened through new policies planned for ALE.

A discussion in breakout groups followed. Participants were invited to place their comments below the questions which had been posed by the organizers into a jointly operated padlet. The process of analyzing these answers and how to make use of them in practice is still on-going. Wrapping up first ideas from the group work results was part of closing the event.

More CONFINTEA VII follow-up needed

Both events showed that this kind of specific MFA follow-up is needed to deepen the understanding of the potential of ALE in the context of lifelong learning and the development of learning cities. There are certainly many points that can be singled out from the MFA and given higher attention like in these two cases. The financing of ALE and its importance in the triangle with policy and legislation is one of them, just like aspects of institutionalization and professionalization.

In as much as these advocacy efforts can be built within the yearly planning and roadmaps related to certain milestones like the midterm review of the MFA in six years, or the agenda of the SDG till 2030, it should be clear that civil society can be a driving force, but the work should be done as joint ventures together with governments and academia as no one can do it alone.

The interest in CONFINTEA VII and MFA implementation should be kept high up. It may be helpful to continue to inform each other on follow-up events – be they local, national, regional or global. We all can learn from each other.

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REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

THE MARRAKECH FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION IN AFRICA

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Introduction

The release of the CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA) (UNESCO, 2022a) creates a moment for critical reflection on adult learning and education (ALE) on the African continent, and the conceptualization of adult educational praxes towards the kinds of societies and continent we want. The MFA offers African activists, scholars, policymakers and civil society organizations a new moment to advance human rights-oriented and social justice adult education systems in a time of great transition. Moreover, the MFA moment calls for much greater solidarity, collaboration and collective action amongst the actors in this transdisciplinary field -- a moment of re-imagining and reinventing transdisciplinary adult education as a vehicle for social change.

The world is changing. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the socio-economic conditions of millions of Africans, especially the circumstances of the poor and marginalized; COVID has accentuated the vital contributions of adults working in life-making community activities (health, food systems, caring, etc.); climate change and the ecological crisis further exacerbated the conditions on the continent of which 'food and hunger' remains a prominent theme; the ecological crisis has resulted in an increase in climate refugees and migrants; workers in the informal economy continue to bear the brunt of the COVID crisis; conflict and an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) remain concerns in Africa; inequality between and within the continent has not diminished and poverty remains a recurring theme; and the embrace of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), in which digitalization is a key component, presents further challenges in several areas of life on the African continent. It is within this context that adult educators need to reflect on and frame possibilities as part of the MFA-moment.

The current realities of adult education in Africa suggest that the sector continues to face many constraints in building responsive, effective and transformative ALE systems. The data from the Africa Regional Report (UNESCO, 2022b) shows the ongoing struggles around adult education. Africa is home to 155 million 'illiterates' (66% women); funding and resourcing of adult education systems remain poor (less than 2% of national budgets where they exist); declaration of adult education policies and legislation is irregular and slow; the focus of adult education remains limited to functional adult literacy, and post-literacy programs seem to focus increasingly on human capital approaches to adult education with technical vocational education and training (TVET) as priority; and the role and work of civil society in adult education has not gained the necessary traction that it deserves. The Regional Report offers various recommendations related to systems-building areas such as policy,

governance, financing, stakeholder participation and quality. These systems-related issues are all important and should be addressed. In addition to this, the MFA itself provides a set of valuable recommendations that stakeholders on the continent should implement.

I want to raise five important points in the hope to generate a broader discussion amongst adult educators working in this transdisciplinary field, and in and across a pluriverse of community-based adult education programs and projects on the continent and elsewhere.

The Just Transition

The first and most urgent point is the growing debate around a just transition of which the climate crisis is critical. The focus on a just transition is about the role of communities in visioning alternative futures as opposed to a relentless adherence to political and economic systems geared towards an unsustainable future and the resultant threat to all forms of life. These systems are concerned with endless growth, extractivism, consumerism and technical innovation that propel us into deepening ecological crises and a hastening of the annihilation of the world's interlocking ecosystems (CIPSET, 2019; Kahn, 2010). Adult educators and activists working in several social movements, including labour, environmental justice, solidarity economy, food sovereignty and ecofeminism have emphasized the disproportionate impact of climate change on African communities, particularly poor, low-income and rural communities. The just transition now represents a variety of strategies that aim to transition communities to build thriving economies that provide dignified, productive and ecologically sustainable livelihoods, and value socially useful and life-making work, democratic governance and ecological resilience. Ecoliteracy and ecopedagogy are vital within the overall framework of a just transition. Adult educators on the continent should explore a variety of ways to centre life-affirming ecological pedagogical praxis that inculcates a deeper ecological consciousness that inspires actions toward the protection of all life forms. Developing planetary consciousness and a life-affirming ecological praxis could be foundational in dealing with the widespread forms of inequality and central to the humanizing project. Transition is inevitable.

Community food and related systems

The second point forms part of the praxes of just transition movements and deals with the issue of food security and food sovereignty. Africa has a rich history of food production and community food systems. Afroecology, for example, a philosophical, methodological and ethical tradition, involves the sacred relationships of indigenous people on the continent with land, seeds, water, air and food. It also treasures indigenous knowledges, experiences, cultures and ways of being within planetary life support systems. More recently, several scholars working across disciplines of social, human and natural sciences have pointed to the increase of climate change on food systems in Africa. Many African countries have experienced droughts and flooding which have had devastating effects on food production and resulted in humanitarian disasters and the loss of lives. Very recently, Madagascar's famine was described as the first in modern history to be caused by climate change. Once again, activists and social movements have raised the disproportionate impacts of drought -- a climate shock -- on the unemployed, the working class and the urban and rural poor. Consequently, scholars and activists continue to call for the development of community food systems as a longer-term solution to hunger and health and within the context of climate change. Within a food sovereignty framework, community food systems would return food production to communities as part of a commons. Today, there are several examples of community food gardens that have emerged which lay the foundation for the development of community food systems as integral to community life. Community food systems are intertwined with other vital issues including the right to clean water, quality public health and clean energy. Adult educators could play an important role in supporting communities to engage with these issues and to strengthen interventions that advance water, food, energy and health systems necessary to sustain life.

Adult education as community development

The third important point for adult educators is about the role of adult education within the national planning frameworks of governments on the continent. Many governments are incorporating adult education as a vehicle of skills formation that supports formal labour markets. (Vally & Motala, 2014). Policy changes in the sphere of adult education is a global phenomenon, one which should be understood in relation to the dominant global discourse of neoliberalism, human capital, supply and demand, the skills mismatch, and their association with employability and productivity. Steven Klees highlights how, as part of this dominant discourse, governments persist that “education leads to skills, skills lead to employment, employment leads to economic growth, economic growth creates jobs and is the way out of poverty and inequality” (Klees, 2017). This, Klees argues, is a neoliberal reform analysis that is false. It is therefore not surprising to see how vocational education has become the focus of governments as critical to economic development. TVET, a subsector of adult education, is gaining increasing attention -- much more than adult literacy. I want to suggest that adult educators in Africa engage more deeply with **vocational education as community development** and reclaim it as a vehicle to address community needs and interests. The development of vocational education in building community systems in the thematic areas of food, energy, water, health and shelter could be the focus.

Adult education and the 4IR

The fourth issue relates to the growth in the global and national focus on the ‘fourth industrial revolution’ as the ‘new phase’ of development that will address a wide variety of social and economic issues in societies. The 4IR is promoted as the new era that offers opportunities to improve human lives and lead the world out of crises and towards a better future for all of us. The 4IR is associated with several disruptive technologies, including artificial intelligence, that will combine as a transformative force that addresses a wide range of socio-economic problems (CIPSET, 2020). The 4IR is also shaping educational frameworks from schooling to higher education. Some of these technologies include learning management systems (LMS), technology enhanced learning (TEL), tactile training systems (TTS), massive open online courses (MOOCs) and many more. These tools are also associated with educational reforms geared towards job-preparation, upskilling and reskilling of workers. Digitalization and digital learning are integral components of these new technologies, and it is evident that most adult learners and educators on the continent have limited access to these technologies (MOJA, 2022). Although these tools could aid learning, the question is what role can and should the 4IR and its regime of technologies play in addressing inequality, poverty and the ecological crisis.

Pluriverse of hope and possibilities

The last issue is the vast number of innovative and transformative practices prevalent in communities across the continent. Africa is rich with innovation in adult education that reflects the many ways in which adult education contributes to the socio-economic transformation of communities. In fact, one of the great limitations in the scholarship of adult education is the lack of documentation/research on these ‘pluriverse of possibilities’ or ‘profiles of hope and possibilities’ that show the advancement that African communities are making in using adult education theory and practice as a vehicle to address the needs and interests of communities. Today this ‘pluriverse’ includes many orientations and methodological approaches in which governments, civil society organizations, as well as community-based formations or grassroots organizations use adult education towards the socio-economic development of communities. In some cases, governments partner with civil society organizations -- both local and international -- to conceptualize and implement new projects and programs. In other cases, civil society organizations combine their efforts with communities to use adult education as a vehicle to address a wide variety of community related issues. However, more and more we witness the agency in communities as instrumental to ways of addressing community needs. The growth in a vast array of autonomous formations is encouraging -- all inspired by community agency and resilience as people co-construct knowledge and use their agency to make their lives. It is in these activities that I find the ‘pluriverse of possibilities’ a useful way to capture the myriad of initiatives through which African communities address

immediate needs and interests. Whilst much of this work involves adult learning and education, it is not referred to as such.

The innovative practices are vast when one looks at the work of several social movements, multi/transdisciplinary formations and autonomous groupings across the continent. Some of the formations include organisations such as The Climate Justice Project; La Via Campesina Southern and Eastern Africa; South Africa Food Sovereignty Campaign, Eco-village Permaculture (South Africa, Uganda, Kenya); The Global Ecovillage Network-Africa; WoMin; and several other formations that integrate the themes of a just transition. In many local communities, people are turning towards building community systems of food, care and other life-making activities. All these spaces provide forms of literacy, learning and education related to the themes directly related to community needs and interests. These innovative practices begin to shift the focus of adult education away from traditional functional adult literacy approaches. What is required is to understand these innovations better, how to learn from them, and how to use them to build better adult education systems as vehicles for genuine social change.

In conclusion, the MFA offers adult educators working across the broad field of adult education with an opportunity to build solidarity, collaboration and shared practices. With the advance in technologies, we have at our disposal the use of digital platforms and other social media tools. Whilst transformative adult education emerges from practices on the ground, digital platforms and social media tools such as MOJA (mojafrica.net) are useful mechanisms for us to create regular dialogues about local, regional and national struggles in building adult education systems in the context of a great transition.

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AHAED INVOLVEMENT IN THE PREPARATION FOR CONFINTEA VII

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Introduction:

Suppose education is the gateway to development and a guarantee of its sustainability. In that case, civil society is the true echo of its added value payoff. The link between education and civil society is through direct developmental entrances represented in the dimensions of knowledge, culture, values, building of citizenship and participation in practice, the relationship of education to the labor market, and the rooting of lifelong learning. Simultaneously, these developmental entrances strengthen the links between formal and non-formal education and consequently reinforce the legitimacy of civil society interventions in education in terms of:

1. The trends of the education/learning system (its skills and knowledge, educational/learning content, spending on education).
2. Reformation and development of education methods, programs, and curricula consistent with the needs of citizens and the priorities of societal issues in line with the current developments.
3. Participation in the educational learning process in terms of planning and implementation.

Participation in the educational learning process in terms of planning and implementation.

From these perspectives, and the reality of its development responsibility, comes the Arab House for Adult Education and Development's interest in increasing the involvement of Arab civil society and partnerships with the national and governmental coordinating bodies in preparation for the Seventh International Conference on Adult Learning and Education CONFINTEA VII in Morocco 2022.

Intensive cooperation between the Arab House for Adult Education and Development “AHAED” and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and DVV International towards strengthening the partnership between Arab civil society and government agencies in the regional preparations for CONFINTEA VII

At the invitation of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), and the UNESCO office in Beirut to allow more space for civil society participation as a key partner in adult education policies and trends, and a candidate for more roles in the future, given the multiplicity and diversity of civil society institutions and the importance of making room for the largest number of participants; The Arab House for Adult Education and Development (AHAED) and DVV International have collaborated to hold a series of preparation and establishment activities in

the Arab region. These events included the organization of a virtual webinar on 11 August 2020 that brought together national coordinating bodies and civil society bodies concerned with adult learning and education. This symposium was the initiative to launch joint work to support national coordinating bodies in monitoring reports of progress in adult learning and education, and lifelong learning, which will feed into the Fifth Global Report to monitor progress in Adult Learning and Education and lifelong learning (GRALE). In addition to organizing a meeting attended by representatives from: Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Gulf states on March 17, 2021, and the speakers' interventions included the current situation and existing challenges in adult learning and education, priorities and recommendations in this field in preparation for the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education from the perspective of civil society organizations.

Develop a policy position paper that represents Arab civil society

The Arab House for Adult Education and Development led a series of events starting February 2021 that resulted in the development of a position paper in a high-level participatory manner, with the participation of more than 475 Arab organizations. This paper summarizes the trends of adult learning and education in the Arab world, its lived reality, in addition to the main challenges it suffers from, ways to overcome them, and recommendations that civil society and relevant authorities see as priority. This paper came to express a common vision and reality for those interested in education/learning issues in the Arab region, and it indicates that the human rights and development approaches are the only guarantee for achieving sustainable development, and this will only be achieved by taking into account life issues, especially promoting the values of peace, rejecting violence, promoting the values of citizenship, paying attention to women's issues, health, and the environment, introducing integrated education and paying attention to technology, especially in emergencies and crises. Therefore, civil society remains the racehorse for advancing adult education/learning; this is done through real partnership and networking with relevant government agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

The Arab House shared this paper with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, and it was also published and welcomed by international organizations working in the field of adult learning and education, such as the DVV International and the World Council for Adult Education.

In the summer of 2021, AHAED organized six preparatory meetings for CONFINTEA VII in six Arab countries (Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan) and published AHAED's journal special edition on CONFINTEA VII in Arabic and English. The participants addressed importance of the civil society role in the CONFINTEA process, especially with the representation of government agencies involved in the international conference and Arab civil society in this meeting. The importance of civil society involvement in producing the GRALE is justified especially from the perspective of lack of data on ALE in most of countries outside of OECD. Civil society is one of most important actors in provision of ALE and it is not possible to understand ALE and accordingly have good quality reports on ALE without data about ALE implemented by CSOs. The Egyptian experience was highlighted, because it was considered a pioneer in implementing a partnership between the government and civil society fulfilling the national survey for GRALE.

A meeting with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning as part of a study visit organized by the Arab House to the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) in October 2021

In a study visit organized by the Arab House for Adult Education and Development in partnership with DVV International to EAEA in Belgium and German Adult Education Association (DVV) and DVV International in Germany, the visiting delegation of representatives of the various networks in the Arab House met with the staff of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg responsible for Organizing CONFINTEA Operations.

In this meeting, Mr. Werner Mauch, leader of the CONFINTEA Preparation Team at the Institute, summarized the efforts that have been made and the next steps that will build on all global and regional preparations.

The participants from also reviewed the preparation processes, and discussed the possibilities of improvement and development within the ongoing partnership. Discussions centered around ensuring higher participation of the civil society in the international conference. In addition, the attendees discussed ways to develop and improve information sharing and the quality of monitoring country ALE reports by activating coordination and partnership mechanisms at national levels.

February 2022 preparing for Marrakech 2022

AHAED plays a significant role with ICAE and DVV International North Africa and Middle East offices in organizing the Civil Society Forum (CSF) in Marrakech to prepare for CONFINTEA VII starting February 2022. AHAED General Secretary and Board members contributed to the CSF held in Marrakech on June 14, 2022. AHAED's representatives were part of the drafting committee of Civil Society Forum's declaration in Marrakech.

AHAED participated during the official conference from 15-17 June 2022 in Marrakech in two parallel workshops. Interventions delivered by AHAED board members Zahi Azar, Refat Sabbah, and Elsy Wakil were expressing the vision of AHAED and CSO ALE providers from Arab countries contributing to setting ALE priorities for the coming years.

Conclusion:

AHAED realizes that, with its paths and innovations, adult education remains an entry point for preparing citizens' life and quality. Adult education makes learning available to all without discrimination. It's a holistic education for the development of citizens' aspects: it fulfills their personal, economic, social, political, and digital needs. There is no future without good education that offers opportunities and adult education is the real gateway to human development.

The human being in adult education is the focus of development, which will only be achieved in a free and democratic educational environment that believes in the humanity of people. Adult education is not a favor but a right.

Thus, civil society is the playing field for advancing ALE; if the intentions are true and wider spaces and areas are available to it, starting from planning, passing through implementation, to evaluation and impact measurement, this is done through genuine partnership and networking with the concerned government agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

“Adult education remains a sign of humanness and civilization of the human being, and a basic starting point for the progress and advancement of peoples.”

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REFLECTIONS ON THE MARRAKECH FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: A CARIBBEAN PERSPECTIVE

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One of the staples of adult education is the idea that it is a response to the social context in which it occurs. Consequently as I write this reflection on CONFINTEA VII it is important to establish the socio-economic context of the region. The Caribbean Community comprises 17 million people across 20 member states many of which have emerged from positions of massive foreign political domination to independence and self-governance. These countries consistently operate within very tight fiscal spaces with high public debt. The high levels of indebtedness result in increasing debt service payments which crowd out the productive expenditure needed to stimulate growth and for the sustainable provision of public services, one of which is the education of the citizens.

The prevailing contexts are compounded by double digit unemployment, in which youth and women are disproportionately affected; poverty and deprivation are persistent; income inequality is evident; security vulnerability is widespread and the poor are unable to sustainably improve their well being. One major concern of Caribbean countries therefore is how to position themselves globally while addressing the various socio-economic challenges which demand urgent and simultaneous attention. In recent times these demands have been exacerbated by the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic. In particular, tourist-dependent economies like those in the Caribbean were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

It is against this background that Caribbean countries must respond to the Marrakech Framework for Action which was the major output of the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII). The framework is meant to drive the actions of member states regarding the development of policies, incentives, regulatory frameworks, institutional structures and mechanisms for adult learning and education (ALE). In this reflection I will comment of some of the areas of the framework which I believe are critical to the Caribbean region at this time.

Principles and Priority Areas

Adult Education for the Future of Work

The Marrakech Framework identified a number of principles and priority areas governing the recommended actions. Among them is the need to prepare adults for the future of work given the transformation of economies and labour market resulting from demographic shifts, industrial revolution, globalization and climate change. This priority area is critical for the Caribbean region.

A primary concern for Caribbean governments is that of equipping adults with appropriate workplace skills and competencies that would support the economic growth of the countries and increase their ability to compete in the global markets. Workforce learning therefore seems to dominate the adult learning and education (ALE)

agenda within the region. Much attention is given to developing policy frameworks and systems to train adults for work.

Since 2009 the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA) has facilitated the establishment of several policy frameworks to address workforce education and training. The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) Regional TVET Strategy was launched in September, 2014. National Training Agencies/TVET Councils continue to be strengthened and reorganized to better co-ordinate TVET offerings, establish standards, and certify training and trainers. National Councils for Technical and Vocational Education/Accreditation councils have been established for the accreditation and quality assurance of workforce training.

Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQs) at the regional level and the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at the country level have been established to facilitate access to continuing education by youth and adults through the recognition, validation and accreditation of knowledge, skills and competencies gained through non-formal and formal education while establishing flexible learning pathways for youths and adults.

Several countries in the region have developed national qualification frameworks which serve to further strengthen the workforce training system by improving access to higher and different levels of education and training for youth and adults and facilitating educational and labour market mobility by classifying qualifications according to a set of criteria for different levels of learning outcomes.

More recently steps are being taken in some countries to develop guidelines, frameworks and standards for micro-credentials which will facilitate re-skilling and up-skilling of youth and adults via short courses in order to meet the demands of the future of work in the 21st century workplace.

Learning in Digital Environments

Another priority area identified in the Marrakech Framework is learning in digital environments. The framework acknowledges that technology is introducing important changes in the ways in which adults learn and are taught as well as in the competencies and skills needed, but it notes that it can create new barriers that make social or collective learning more challenging, thereby widening existing social divides and creating new ones. This is an area of challenge within the Caribbean region which the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare for all to see. In many Caribbean islands adult education all but stopped during the pandemic given the dependence on face to face, onsite delivery of ALE.

Technology and digital literacy is very important not just because of their impact on the learning process but also to enable adults to develop the digital skills and competencies now needed to live their daily lives as access to many essential services are being transitioned to the digital modality. This includes access to banking facilities, collecting pension earnings for the elderly, and getting health care to name a few.

Prior to COVID-19 a number of regional and international organizations have worked within the region to develop the regions capacity to design and deliver Open and Distance learning (ODL). These entities include Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN), the World Bank, the EU and CIDA, and The Commonwealth of Learning. However the region continues to struggle with issues such as:

- inadequate funding and resource mobilization;
- limited capacity for or coordination of leadership for ODL in the region;
- lack of an appropriate management structure for ODL across the region;
- the need for comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and reporting system with clearly defined indicators within countries;
- limited and inadequately resourced learner support services in most institutions which use ODL for programme delivery;

Additionally, educational institutions/providers in most of the Caribbean countries have inadequate personnel trained to develop, deliver and support programmes and courses offered through open and distance learning. Whereas there is recognition that some work is being done to address these issues much more needs to be done, and in short order, given the rapidity with which our societies are becoming more and more digitized. Critical among the things to be done is the need for regional policies to govern the development and implementation of digital learning. In this regard there is a draft Caribbean Regional Policy Framework for Open and Distance Learning but there is no evidence of its adoption, and such a document would also require an update given the current post COVID-19 context.

Adult Learning and Education for Climate Action

As part of its priority area the Marrakech Framework acknowledge the potential of adult learning and education for climate action recognizing climate change as a huge threat to humanity as well as for other species. The document calls for climate education to be mainstreamed. This is a critical area for the Caribbean region given the geographic location of many of the countries which makes them extremely vulnerable to the physical and economic impacts of climate change. The Region continues to be buffeted by the ever-present reality of meteorological and geological hazards. In recent times we had three significant events in 2021: the La Soufriere Volcanic eruption in St. Vincent and the Grenadines which also impacted a number of other surrounding countries, Hurricane Elsa, which adversely impacted Barbados and Saint Lucia and a 7.2 magnitude earthquake in Haiti, which claimed 2,200 lives (Caribbean Development Bank, 2021).

Action Recommendations for Transformative ALE

Redesigning Systems for ALE

Among the recommendations for action in the Marrakech Framework is the need to redesign systems for ALE. Within the Caribbean structures and systems to enable strategic adult education interventions are lacking in many countries. This would lead one to question the capacity of those countries to manage, monitor and evaluate policy implementation in this area. No country in the region has articulated an adult education policy or dedicated strategic plan. Rather adult education is included as a sub-section in the education policy of the Ministries of Education.

Few countries have established institutions with adult education as the focus. In most countries in the Caribbean adult education is offered by many entities, public, private, non-governmental and many churches at the community level. In this regard also more needs to be done in terms of the recognition and validation of non-formal learning across the region as a large proportion of adult education provision particularly in terms of active citizenship, continuing education and basic skills, personal development, liberal, popular and community education are made available through civil society groups, non-governmental organization (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs).

Much has been articulated in the various education policy documents in terms of expected outcomes in relation to access and quality of the education provisions. However, there are some areas that need attention if those goals and objectives are to be met. Among these is the need for improvements in the service delivery. A critical dimension of service delivery is the need for improvement in the quantity and quality of teachers. But, teacher professional development continues to be an area of major concern in the region and needs to be given attention. It is recognized and acknowledged though that this requires adequate funding and the need for institutional capacity building which are current challenges to be overcome.

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CONFINTEA VII: A CRITICAL TURNING POINT FOR EUROPEAN POLICY ON ALE?

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In a recent blog post for EPAL (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe), I wrote about how CONFINTEA VII became a civil society success story. Indeed, I believe that the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA) resulting from the conference in Morocco is a great success of civil society organizations, which had intensively discussed and negotiated with each other and with national governments and ministries over a long period of time leading up to the conference. We are now at the beginning of a 12-year implementation phase (until the next CONFINTEA), and the most important question is what this will look like at the regional and national levels.

When talking about CONFINTEA, I have often heard it said from European stakeholders that it is mainly relevant for adult learning and education (ALE) in non-European regions that are “less developed” than Europe. I would like to counter that these processes are very important for all regions of the world, including Europe and the European Union (EU), not least because they also drive the development of European strategies and political initiatives and give additional impetus to their implementation. And, as I also pointed out in my blog article for EPAL, the debates leading up to the MFA clearly showed that there are practices and pedagogical approaches even in remote parts of the world or the “Global South” that can point the way forward for all of us.

Most importantly, however, the MFA comes at a time when Europe is facing perhaps one of its greatest crises since World War II. When, after two difficult years due to Covid-19, the prospects for the opening of European countries and the transition to a cycle of economic growth finally looked positive, Russia attacked Ukraine. This has led to a war on European soil that is still ongoing and plunged Europe not only into a humanitarian crisis but also into an energy crisis that, at the time of writing this article, is affecting the entire European continent and is likely to worsen in the autumn and winter, with cities and regions all over Europe fearing “a massive social crisis” in its wake (European Committee of the Regions 2022). Uwe Gartenschlaeger, President of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and Deputy Director of DVV International in Germany, said in a public statement (DVV International 2022) that these circumstances call for a stronger and more holistic ALE.

Where do EU policies on adult learning of recent years and the MFA overlap, and where does the recently approved MFA set the tone? There are a few areas I would like to highlight here: ALE as a fundamental right, or a human right; policy coherence and governance of ALE; funding; participation in ALE; and quality of ALE.

Whose right to learn?

Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU from 2012 says that “everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training”. The European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted by the Member States of the European Union in 2017, goes a step further by saying that “everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.”

None of these texts, however, explicitly mention ALE. Assuming that education and lifelong learning *implicitly* include ALE, is an *explicit* mentioning necessary? The experience of the ALE sector shows that the clear mentioning of ALE as a fundamental human right is of great importance for the political support of the sector. In debates about education and lifelong learning, ALE is often sidelined or seen as a “nice additional educational offer” to “real” education in formal education. This disregard for ALE and its role in society, for individuals, communities, but also the economy, leads to a vicious circle of poor funding of the sector, low supply of learning offers, low participation, and so further. If the right to lifelong learning is taken seriously, ALE must also be taken seriously and mentioned accordingly.

It is all the more gratifying – and we see this as the result of continuous civil society advocacy in the process that led to the MFA – that the latter cites ALE as an important sector of education: “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.” ALE as a common good makes it worthy of protection and political support, which is a precondition for achieving higher numbers of adult learners and a continuous development of approaches, methodologies, and quality of learning offers.

Include civil society in ALE for policy coherence and good governance

As civil society, we have long been calling for policy coherence for ALE to effectively implement policy at any level. ALE in particular is affected by a split into different ministries or departments at the decision-making levels: depending on the country and region, it can be located in general education, labour market and social affairs (and, in some cases, exclusively there), industry, health, development cooperation, environment, etc. Effective cooperation between these sectors, coordination of initiatives and policy instruments that make ALE policy coherence the guiding principle of decision-making, must be central.

The New European Agenda for Adult Learning (NEAAL), adopted in 2021 (Council of European Union 2021), gives special attention to policy coherence, recommending to “Enhance effective liaison between the relevant ministries as well as with stakeholders, such as social partners, businesses, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations with a view to improving coherence between policies on adult learning and broader socioeconomic policies.” The NEAAL promotes a whole-of-government approach, which can be made possible through coordination at the national, regional and local levels. The MFA goes in a similar direction, recognising “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.”

Both the NEAAL, in its Area 1, and the MFA emphasise the importance of cooperation of all relevant stakeholders for a stronger governance. However, due to the principle of subsidiarity of legislation, European strategies and initiatives remain rather vague when it comes to governance of ALE, leaving it open to EU Member States how exactly governance should look at the respective levels of policy-making. As civil society, we want a seat at the

table in decision-making processes, alongside state actors and public authorities, other civil society and actors such as the social partners, public employment services, and social services, among others.

From EAEA's analysis of implementation processes of ALE policy, we can see that the level of inclusion of civil society – which is, in most European countries, a main provider of ALE – is generally a good indicator of the strength of an ALE system. In countries where there is a direct interaction between ALE providers, government departments in charge of ALE, and other stakeholders, ALE systems are more resilient as well as flexible to adapt to necessary change.

Investment in adult learning and education contributes to quality

While there is no benchmark for the financing of ALE at the European level, the MFA shows a very strong commitment to the funding of ALE¹, stating that the signatory parties 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.” However, according to data of Eurostat (Eurostat 2022) from March 2022, the most recent figures from 2020 indicate that EU countries spend, on average, 0.1 percent of their GDP on ALE² (of a total of 5 percent of the GDP on education), therefore missing the benchmark of the Marrakech Framework for Action of “at least 4-6% of GDP” quite substantially.

The MFA also calls for a stronger 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.” It presents a very ambitious funding strategy for ALE, which now needs to be translated into European and national policy-making. Although the formal education sectors, due to their more or less compulsory nature, are likely to remain at the forefront of education budget negotiations, ALE should not be overlooked; especially considering that the potential learner group is an absolute majority of the population – namely all adults. This group will even become larger in the ongoing demographic change, requiring more substantial and sustainable funding for ALE.

This is also one of the points where we, in our work at the European level, regularly encounter contradictions in policy-making: while greater participation in ALE is seen as important and even considered necessary across the board, there are no clear commitments to greatly increased funding. The EU has recently (re)discovered the potential of Individual Learning Accounts as an instrument to improve participation in ALE as well as to fund ALE offers. On the other hand, however, there are currently no strategies at the EU level to improve structural funding for ALE to make learning provision more plannable and efficient, and to ensure its quality through solid teacher training and support for infrastructures.

European strategies, including the NEAAL, Upskilling Pathways and the New Skills Agenda for Europe, while emphasising the need for quality in ALE through professionalisation of adult educators, peer learning networks, etc., are rather cautious when it comes to the direct link between funding and quality. The New Skills Agenda for Europe (European Commission 2020) mentions that the EU budget can facilitate “Investment in the quality, equity and labour market relevance of education and training systems to ensure that people are equipped with the key competences needed in the labour market and in society” and proposes as its Action 12: “Improving the enabling framework to unlock Member States’ and private investments in skills”, without, however, looking at

¹ in line with the commitments made at the World Education Forum in Incheon in 21 May 2015

² Eurostat data refer to “education that cannot be defined by level”, i.e. education that cannot be classified as pre-primary, primary, secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary or tertiary. We have to assume that this is mainly non-formal ALE, but this could also include other types of non-formal education, e.g. in youth and sports. The data do not provide any information on this. The lack of reliable data on ALE funding is a major concern of EAEA.

the question of how investment can contribute to quality. If there is to be quality, the sector needs more funding to develop training and development opportunities for adult educators, to create infrastructures in which adult learning staff and learners alike can flourish, and to make it more inclusive.

Where, in all this, are the learners?

The EU calls for higher participation in adult education: “At least 47 % of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2025,” and “At least 60 % of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2030.” (Council of the European Union 2021, p. 24). This is much clearer than the MFA, which talks about “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.” This wording is, on the other hand, also a small success of civil society in the run-up to CONFINTEA VII, because without our lobbying there would have been no commitment to increase participation rates and set national benchmarks.

However, there is one big question that comes up when looking at these strategies and initiatives at the European and international level: how are adult learners included, except for participation figures? Although the above strategies repeatedly emphasise that the implementation of measures must always take into account the needs of learners, they do not indicate how these needs can be appropriately incorporated into policy-making processes, and how adult learners themselves will be given a voice.

How can we ensure the inclusion of those who are the main stakeholders and beneficiaries of ALE? Where and when are they consulted, and is there a structural anchoring of the inclusion of adult learners in policies and initiatives? Although CONFINTEA VII and the subsequent MFA, as the points above show, are in part more ambitious than European strategies, the role of adult learners does not find a place here either.

We need to create a greater understanding that involving learners is not just purely about who has the power to make decisions. This is also about core values of ALE, including inclusion, active participation in democratic processes, and transcultural understanding. In a transformative approach to ALE, these values must always be experienced values. Organisations such as AONTAS in Ireland are pioneering the inclusion of the learner voice in ALE through their National FET Learner Forum.

Let’s be more ambitious, everywhere in the world

To conclude, looking at the MFA through a European lens, I believe that it can provide a decisive impetus to the European level to be even more ambitious in the implementation of ALE strategies and development of new initiatives, and that it promotes a more holistic approach to ALE. Bringing together the European and international perspectives on ALE is a must if progress is to be made in this area. In view of the challenges mentioned at the beginning of this article, I believe that this is absolutely necessary. ALE probably cannot save the world, but it can initiate processes to address these challenges together.

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CONFINTEA VII AND MFA AS NEW TOOLS IN COMPLEX TIMES, PERSPECTIVES FROM LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Youth and Adult Education (Y&AE) has a long history and has been a central concern for civil society movements and networks in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Over the last decades, multiple voices have been increasingly demanding the right to education for all youth and adults as a responsibility of the State. At the same time, this demand co-exists with a variety of experiences of community and popular education—which

have often been the society's alternative response to policies and actions that prioritise school-based education—that has historically excluded several groups³. As a matter of justice, Y&AE must compensate for marginalisation in traditional educational settings and enable the exercise of fundamental economic, social and cultural rights.

Data of the recently published GRALE V⁴ gives some insights into the current situation of Y&AE in LAC. Although 75% of the countries in the region that took part in the survey reported progress in improving the access to and participation in adult education since 2018, participation rates are still low. In 42% of the countries, the participation rate is under 1%. Especially people that are experiencing multiple forms of discrimination are excluded, such as women, indigenous and native peoples, Afro-descendants, people with disabilities, people deprived of liberty, older people and the LGBTIQ+ community⁵. 21% of the countries were unable to provide information on participation rates, which shows that monitoring adult education is not a priority in the region and must be a key point in our advocacy agenda. However, 42% of the responding countries also reported to have increasing participation rates, which shows an increasing interest in the field of adult education.

A major concern is related to the low political priority given to Y&AE in the region. Only 33% of LAC governments considered it a priority (OREALC UNESCO, 2020), with serious implications to policies, public budget and opportunities for learners. Moreover, the emergency responses in the context of COVID-19 have not included relevant measures to Y&AE, causing instead a double discrimination.

The preparation phase for CONFINTEA VII, thus, became a crucial moment to raise attention to Y&AE in the LAC region. The Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), together with other civil society allied networks and movements, began even before 2021 to carry out a mobilisation process to build up collective positions and reflections from the region. There have been several debates, webinars, art festivals and knowledge exchange from grassroots organisations, teachers and students themselves, along with an important participation in the official Latin American Sub-regional Pre-Consultation, led by OREALC-UNESCO.

In this path, the creation of the Regional Networking Platform for Y&AE⁶ has been a milestone. Inspired by Paulo Freire's perspectives and teachings as well as the multiple concrete experiences of the popular education movement in the region, and with CONFINTEA VII on the horizon⁷, members of the platform advocate for a new Y&AE, which should be popular, free, secular, inclusive, emancipatory and transformative. An education that should be free of colonial, sexist, patriarchal and racist features.

The platform defends that this educational modality must be of quality, with cultural and social relevance. In face of the surge of tendencies that attempt to privatise education, the right to Y&AE must be guaranteed free of charge. A standardised vision must be overcome with a conception of Y&AE that is based on diversity and

3 <https://redclade.org/en/noticias/paulofreirevive-y-es-vital-para-fortalecer-nuestras-democracias/>

4 <https://redclade.org/publicaciones/pronunciamento-de-la-plataforma-de-redes-regionales-por-la-educacion-de-personas-jovenes-y-adultas-hacia-la-confintea-vii/>

5 <https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/global-report/5th-global-report-adult-learning-and-education-citizenship-education>

6 <https://redclade.org/publicaciones/pronunciamento-de-la-plataforma-de-redes-regionales-por-la-educacion-de-personas-jovenes-y-adultas-hacia-la-confintea-vii/>

7 The Platform was created to combine efforts in the area of Y&AE and build strong partnerships within the region. The platform consists of the Latin American Association of Popular Education and Communication (ALER), the Council of Popular Education of Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL), the International Federation Fe y Alegría (FIFyA), the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), the Network of Popular Education Among Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (REPEM) and CLADE.

interculturality. From this point of view, Y&AE not only has a high educational value, but is also a commitment to the transformation of reality and social structures.

While the final Marrakesh Framework for Action (MFA) does not reflect all aspects that the regional movements considered important, the framework certainly includes central points that are worth highlighting. Particularly considering our current complex context marked by setbacks, rise of authoritarianism, deepened inequalities, persistent forms of discrimination and racism, as well as gender violence and all the new forms of disinformation, fake news, manipulations and hate-speech.

At CLADE, we understand CONFINTEA VII and the MFA as an opportunity and an important tool to be used strategically and combined with other human rights instruments in the multiple struggles for the strengthening of Y&AE on our regional and global agendas. On the one hand, the MFA establishes a human rights approach to adult education and includes important aspects such as the working conditions for teaching staff and the role of technology within education. On the other hand, the conference is an important moment of mobilisation, especially for organisations of civil society.

The human rights approach to education, i.e., understanding available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable education for everyone as a human right, is central to CLADE's work. We believe that it is key to providing transformative, public, secular and free education for all, throughout life and as a responsibility of the State. However, the approach to education more prominent among governments worldwide and in LAC is that of education as an instrument for economic growth, and especially adult education is often closely linked to the basic skills and supposed needs of the labour market. This approach disregards the learners' needs and the power of adult education to tackle social and gender inequalities, to build a more sustainable future, a paradigm shift, socioeconomic relations that respect territories and communities, food security policies, social construction of the habitat and collective production of knowledge.

The MFA affirms education as a fundamental right and declares that its implementation should be guided by a rights-based approach (par. 4; par.10), which are important achievements that have been the top priority in the global advocacy efforts, led by the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE). The MFA is consequently an important reference to push governments towards a rights-based approach to Y&AE.

Another important aspect for quality Y&AE is the teachers and other education professionals. Their working conditions are crucial in order to guarantee the dignity and appreciation of such challenging positions that come with great responsibility. At CLADE we believe that adequate working conditions include decent salaries, career prospects and training and this was also part of the LAC's civil society decalogue of recommendations and propositions for CONFINTEA VII. We thus welcome that the MFA addresses this aspect as it stresses the key role of teachers and educators in adult learning and education (par. 26.). The framework encompasses not only professionalisation through training, but also an improvement of working conditions such as salaries.

The third aspect included in the MFA we want to highlight is technology within Y&AE. Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, technology is very present in the realm of education. While it can be useful for reaching learners who would otherwise be hard to reach, the digital gap is very much an issue in the region of LAC, both in terms of digital literacy and access to devices and an internet connection. This topic was also included in our decalogue, claiming the right to information and communication technologies. Other relevant issues that we perceive regarding the use of technology in education are questions of privacy and ethics, especially in the context of privatisation. It is thus an important point that the MFA addresses these concerns and additionally promotes the creation of open education resources (par. 18; 37).

We believe that the biggest challenge lying ahead is to make use of the visibility created by the conference and to continue to mobilise, to keep up the momentum for the strengthening of Y&AE at global, regional and local political agendas. This is only possible with a broad commitment of governments and mobilisation of civil society,

that is not limited to only a few organisations and stakeholders, but including particularly communities, teachers and students themselves, drawing on the richness of experiences and voices from the region. It is crucial to locate Y&AE at the heart of the broader context of the defense of human rights, gender equality and social justice.

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GLOBAL ORIENTATIONS

HOW HAVE CSO EFFORTS FARED IN SHAPING THE MARRAKECH FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION?

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The UNESCO 7th International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA 7) was convened on June 15-17, 2022 in Marrakech, Morocco to take stock of efforts around adult learning and education (ALE) and shape policy directions for ALE within a lifelong learning perspective, in the framework of the 2030 Agenda and beyond. The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), a long-standing global civil society network advocating for ALE, led an international civil society response to effectively influence the CONFINTEA 7 directions, discussions and agreements. Culminating a series of country-level stock-taking, regional and sub-regional preparatory consultations and conferences, the final unities achieved in the CONFINTEA 7 processes are outlined in the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA), *"Harnessing the Transformational Power of Adult Learning and Education"* - a new framework for action to guide policy and practice on ALE for the next 12 years, as adopted by 142 UNESCO member states.

A major part of civil society's attempt in CONFINTEA 7 was to help shape the new framework for action for ALE that is responsive to current realities, is ambitious in confronting challenges and soundly anticipates future needs. CSO envisaged that the new framework should affirm that education and adult learning and education (ALE) are human rights, and are common and public goods. It should advance a vision of ALE that is emancipatory and transformative and champions the interests of marginalised groups - committed to 'leaving no one behind'. Recognising that CONFINTEA 7 follows and builds on earlier important multilateral processes on education and ALE, civil society was keen to 'hold the ground' and ensure that the new framework for action does not regress from earlier commitments to ALE as codified especially in the Belem Framework for Action, the SDGs and Education 2030 Framework for Action and the UNESCO Recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (RALE).

Meeting these aspirations was no easy task. CONFINTEA 7 was, after all, convened in a period of great challenge. The UN Secretary General's Report for the 2022 High-Level Political Forum made the grim observation that in many countries, "years, or even decades, of development progress have been halted or reversed" and that "... the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis and the impacts of the conflict in Ukraine and elsewhere – are putting the very viability of achieving the SDGs by 2030 at great risk".

Under this reality, ambitions tend to be far more tempered and generosity more measured.

So, how then did civil society advocacies fare in this context?

A review of the advocacy documents and position papers of ICAE reveals that overall, there were substantial successes in strengthening the MFA - enabled by the well-coordinated and sustained advocacy efforts of civil society, especially through ICAE. However, there remained limitations in the final agreements that need attention in the follow up of CONFINTEA 7.

ALE as a human right, ALE for transformation

The Marrakech Framework for Action was categorical in **affirming education, including ALE, as a fundamental human right**. Strongly supported by civil society advocacy, the MFA adopted the International Commission on the Futures of Education's articulation of **education as a 'public endeavour' and a 'common good'** and underlined the **transformative power of education** for building a sustainable future (Paragraph 10, MFA). CSOs also strongly supported how the MFA articulated the integral relationship between **adult learning and education (ALE) and the SDGs and SDG4**, how **ALE is a key component of lifelong learning**, contributing to sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs (Paragraph 14, MFA). The **holistic and intersectoral character of ALE** is well underscored in the MFA owing to CSO input (Paragraph 20, MFA). CSOs supported a provision in the MFA calling for UNESCO to steer a country-led process on ways "to translate the vision of a right to lifelong learning – with adult learning and education at its core - into reality", thereby strengthening the human rights framework with respect to lifelong learning (paragraph 21, MFA). CSOs have however cautioned that the process articulating the *right to lifelong learning* should not lead to an erosion of existing commitments to the right to education already guaranteed by human rights conventions. Efforts should thus focus more on further strengthening the *right to adult learning and education*.

The contextual challenges and trends that impact on and inform ALE policy and provisioning are outlined mainly in the MFA's 'Preamble', 'Principles and Priority Areas' and the 'Action Recommendations on Expanding Learning Domains'. These sections were strengthened by inputs from civil society. CSOs, for instance, underscored the value of **ALE not only for work** or meeting economic ends, but for "**individual well-being and the common good**". CSO assertions on the importance of **ALE to fight violent extremism, fanaticism, inequalities and promote social cohesion, peace, non-discrimination and active citizenship** found prominence in the MFA. The important role of **ALE in individual well-being and public health** was underscored in the MFA with CSO support. CSO analysis also sharpened the sections related to online-learning, cautioning against an over-reliance on technology-based learning, recognising that huge numbers of learners from marginalised communities have limited or no access to digital learning opportunities. CSOs drew attention as well to **structural impediments to online learning**, specifically the power imbalance in access and control of technology and digital information which was referred to in the final document. CSOs welcomed the strong references to **education for sustainable development and ALE for climate action** in the MFA although they unsuccessfully advocated for reference to ALE for 'climate justice' that grounds responses to climate change within the recognition of the differentiated historical contributions to global warming and differentiated impact on peoples and countries of climate change. CSOs also preferred greater reference to how ALE could effectively address the challenges of **wide scale unemployment, under employment, working poverty, precarious work**, than has been articulated in the MFA. CSOs, especially from the Asia Pacific, were disappointed in the lack of ambition in the commitments to **adult literacy** in the MFA – indicative of the regrettable trend of dwindling policy priority in this area. While it affirmed commitment to meeting the SDG 4.6 targets, the MFA represents a lost opportunity to agree concrete action points towards meeting these aspirations. The earlier Belem Framework for Action was far more explicit in strategies and measures to promote adult literacy.

On ALE governance

A key CSO advocacy was for definitive language on state responsibility in quality ALE provisioning within robust public education systems. CSOs advocated successfully for the provision in the MFA that emphasises 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** ... within **strengthened public education provision**” (Paragraph 13, MFA). It also recognised the importance of “**multi-stakeholder platforms to support the governance of ALE** with all relevant actors”, including of **civil society**. (Paragraph 22, MFA). Civil society advocacy contributed well to a greater reference to strengthening institutional capacities to deliver ALE at the **local level** with the participation of different relevant stakeholders including explicit reference to **learners**, recognising the diversity of learning spaces and modes of provisioning including **community learning centres** (Paragraph 24, MFA). The earlier Belem Framework for Action’s (BFA) language on governance was however more purposive and ambitious: where the MFA *recognised the need* for strong ALE governance structures, the BFA *committed to* specific concrete actions to strengthen ALE governance that could also be more easily tracked such as commitment to the creation of multi-stakeholder mechanisms for ALE policy development and implementation (Paragraph 13, BFA).

On equity and quality

Supported by sustained CSO efforts, commitments to **increase greater participation in ALE, and ensure equity and inclusion** remained strong elements in the MFA, as in the earlier Belem Framework for Action. These reinforce as well the SDG-SDG4 commitments to “leave no one behind”. The MFA has concrete commitments such as in encouraging countries “to set ambitious marks for the participation of diverse groups of learners” and in “promoting outreach and guidance systems to raise awareness of learning opportunities, expand participation and enhance learner motivation” (Paragraph 32, MFA). The BFA was more explicit however in committing to *financially* support equity and inclusion-oriented adult education strategies (Para 15, BFA).

While both the MFA and BFA called for the development of flexible learning pathways, the recognition of prior learning as well as the validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning, the MFA was more explicit in the aspiration to bring in **disadvantaged and underrepresented groups** particularly **people with disabilities and indigenous people into open and flexible learning eco-systems, and lifelong learning systems** (Para 25, MFA).

CSOs lobbied successfully for a more prominent reference to **gender** in the MFA. The MFA Preamble had a paragraph dedicated to commitment to gender equality and gender- transformative ALE. Various action points in the MFA were also attuned to gender including commitments to promote gender-responsive curricula and learning materials (Paragraph 27, MFA), the development of gender sensitive information systems for ALE (Paragraph 33, MFA), gender-transformative literacy policies (Paragraph 34) and gender-sensitive monitoring systems supporting the implementation of the MFA (Paragraph 45, MFA).

Civil society actively supported preserving provisions in the MFA that underscored the critical role of teachers, educators and other ALE personnel in ensuring **quality ALE**, and advocated as well for explicit commitments towards their upskilling, professionalization, improvement of their working conditions, status and pay. CSOs however preferred retaining mention of the need to address the huge lack of qualified teachers in ALE and the scarcity of programmes and institutions to train professionals – thus, better contextualise responses of policy makers, going forward. This was however struck out of the final document.

On ALE financing, monitoring and follow up

The commitments to **education financing** were much strengthened with CSO input. CSOs lobbied successfully to secure language ‘committing’ to increasing public funding and resource mobilization for ALE, reversing an earlier weaker formulation of merely ‘recognizing the need’ for increased funding. Explicit reference to prevent

regression in existing budget allocations was also incorporated as proposed by CSOs. Likewise, the promotion of financing modalities that risk greater education commercialisation and privatisation was toned down in the final version of the MFA. The MFA reaffirmed education financing-related targets outlined in the Education 2030 Framework for Action and offered a specific call for the existing global education financing mechanisms such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to include ALE in their funding priorities. Civil society was however unsuccessful in advocating for more concrete commitments to ALE financing, with an earlier proposed target of ‘at least 4% of education budgets allocated to ALE’ being deleted from the final agreements. CSOs also argued without success for commitment to implement tax justice measures as a strategic means to raise the resources for education and ALE.

CSOs made important contributions to the provisions related to the **monitoring and follow up of the MFA agreements**. They successfully lobbied for the inclusion of ‘Least Developed Countries (LDCs)’ as a category of member states to receive priority attention. CSOs argued to secure the MFA provisions recognising UNESCO’s leading role in the follow up processes and to promoting the MFA within the SDG and SDG4 mechanisms. Commitment to a defined monitoring process, the release of a global report on ALE and the convening of a Mid-term review of the MFA implementation in 2028 were also supported actively by CSOs. CSOs surmise that the planned “Post-CONFINTEA VII interministerial commission” would offer opportunities for higher-level policy attention to the MFA follow up. They will however closely monitor how civil society and other relevant ALE stakeholders will be involved in the commission’s efforts. CSOs were however unsuccessful in lobbying for stronger commitments to address the huge data gaps in ALE, which has been recognised as a clear factor in impeding financing and policy priority to this sector. The earlier BFA had far more definitive language on strengthening ALE data such as the development of “comparable indicators for literacy as a continuum and for adult education” for example, or “initiating regional monitoring mechanisms with clear benchmarks and indicators” (Paragraph 17, BFA). The CONFINTEA 7 processes have also not offered ample space to effectively appraise the current monitoring mechanisms, specifically related to GRALE, which has faced difficulties in participation and limitations related to access to credible data. The MFA offers no steer in recognising and addressing such issues.

CSOs are poised continue their advocacies, track the efforts to meet the MFA commitments and sustain the push for policy makers to do far more for ALE. No sooner had the CONFINTEA 7 conference in Marrakech ended when ICAE announced their promise to “take the core principles and commitments of the Marrakesh Framework for Action (MFA) into grounded, relevant and in some cases urgent action, together with our regional members, our strategic partners and of course our own local communities.” With its more than 800-strong national and regional membership, ICAE is well-placed to continue to offer a powerful civil society voice and contribution towards realising the right to quality, transformative adult learning and education.

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EXPERIENCE FROM THE DRAFTING GROUP

An interview with Cecilia Palm

Cecilia Palm cecilia.palm@folkuniversitetet.se



Cecilia Palm, Secretary General of Folkuniversitetet in Sweden and member of the ICAE Executive Committee since 2020, nominated by the four Swedish members of ICAE.

[Julia Denholm]

I'm hoping that you will talk about your experience in Marrakesh and what some of the outcomes were, and really, whatever you'd like to share with the PIMA membership.

[Cecilia Palm]

Looking back, I realize that much of my experience wasn't really about what happened in Marrakesh. There was so much preparation before, and the work that was done ahead of time by ICAE and its members was very, very, important. I would never have guessed that starting around two years ahead was almost too little time, but fortunately there were people who had been through this before, so they knew.

The work of ICAE was made more difficult by the fact that a lot of the conference preparation was done at the last minute: the invitations came late, and the first draft of the Marrakesh Framework of Action was also late. It was distributed in April, and we had a very short time to react to it.

Our first task after coming to Marrakesh was to meet with the members of the ICAE Executive Committee whom I hadn't met before. We had been working together for two years, but we had never met.

And when we got there, we had just received a rewrite of the Marrakesh Framework of Action.

There were several rewrites, but the one we had at the beginning of June was very changed compared to the one before, for the worse, and I think that some of the participants had heard that this rewrite would be final.

In this version, they had removed a lot of the commitments and had changed "commitments" to so many other expressions. I didn't know that there were so many different ways of replacing "we are committed to." It was "we recognize the importance of", "we stress the need for", "we encourage" and around ten other expressions not at all as strong.

And so, coming to Marrakesh with this draft in which there were fewer commitments. The fact that the draft MFA was overall less forward looking than the framework from Belém 12 years before was very frustrating.

So first of all, there was a meeting of the Executive Committee to work on what should be changed in this draft, and then there was a Civil Society forum, with a number of people, some of whom—but not all—were going to be at the big conference.

Consequently, this Civil Society forum was an important gathering of all the members of ICAE and other Civil Society representatives.

At the Civil Society forum, we managed to agree on a declaration to be presented during the first day of the conference, and we also worked on the advocacy asks. We talked about what the most important things to change in the framework of action were.

[Julia Denholm]

So when you met at the at the Civil Society forum you agreed on a declaration to take to the first day of CONFINTEA, and then that's where you identified the advocacy priorities?

[Cecilia Palm]

Yes. There was a small working group that had prepared these things, and the Civil Society forum was an occasion to test these advocacy asks on the people present through group discussion and so on.

Lots of people, even ICAE Board members, were not allowed in the conference. Instead there were sessions organized at the ICAE hotel, so those who were not at the main conference could watch together and comment the sessions, and sort of participate from not so far away.

The first thing that happened on day one of the conference was that the drafting committee began to work. That committee included representatives from each of the UNESCO regions. Among them were ASPBAE Secretary-General Helen Dabu from the Asian region and ICAE Secretary-General Katarina Popovic, who I think was on this committee because she had been the civil society representative on the Advisory Committee. Both Helen and Katarina had worked on this paper for a long time and knew what they (and CSO as well as many countries) wanted.

The drafting committee work ran parallel to the main conference. Many exchanges took place: each regional representative in the drafting committee obviously had to confer with national delegations of the region, but correspondence between national delegations with CSO representatives was also frequent. Several countries had included CSO representatives in their delegation: Switzerland, Finland, Sweden to name but a few that I know of.

So there was quite a network. In terms of influencing, I don't think we could have done more. We really used all the possible connections we had to arrive at the Marrakesh Framework of Action, with many more—and stronger—commitments.

It is also key that the advocacy asks we had listed as the most important ones were integrated in the final version. Moreover, the final version was voted on and accepted without contestation. No one opposed it. No one asked questions. It was adopted by acclamation at the final session, and that was in the main conference.

[Julia Denholm]

So a success, correct?

[Cecilia Palm]

Yes.

[Julia Denholm]

It feels like a huge achievement.

[Cecilia Palm]

It does. We did feel that we were successful.

[Julia Denholm]

Because it started out sounding quite gloomy.

[Cecilia Palm]

Quite. I mean, imagine that the new declaration had been less committing than the one from 12 years ago, that would have been really bad.

There's a lot of text, which makes it difficult to spot the changes between the two frameworks. In fact, an early request from Sweden was to shorten the text in order to clarify the message. Some of the CSO representatives, like Katarina Popovic, were likely aware of the softening of the language, but they have a long experience.

But there is a lot of text, and it's not easy to cover all of it and compare it to what was in place before. I did an attempt preparing for a presentation, and that's when I found these differences. A lot of the things that we achieved with the advocacy asks had been in the previous framework for action.

[Julia Denholm]

So the success for the Civil Society forum was restoring those advocacy pieces.

[Cecilia Palm]

Yes, exactly.

[Julia Denholm]

Could you talk a bit about what is new in the MFA compared to the Belém Framework of Action (BFA)?

[Cecilia Palm]

One of the things that the more experienced members of our group insisted on was to use the term ALE as much as possible. When a text says "lifelong learning" instead of explicitly mentioning ALE, it's possible to sort of evade ALE. The term ALE was fortunately restored to the MFA in a few important places.

In the MFA "ALE is a key component of the lifelong learning process" is stronger than in the BFA where they wrote "significant component"

And there's also this phrase saying "we strongly affirm education, including ALE, as a fundamental human right". In practice, even when it comes to SDG 4, initiatives and follow-ups mainly concern children, which is why it's so important to really highlight ALE.

One of the frustrations concerns the Global Partnership for Education, which is a channel for distribution of development funds from many countries to education in the world. They decided in 2020 or 2021 that they would spend a major part of their funds on education for children, which is another reason why, at the end of the MFA it's important to place specific emphasis on ALE.

The MFA specifically mentions this in 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.

That's paragraph 30.

[Julia Denholm]

And what has been the reaction to that?

[Cecilia Palm]

I'm not sure. There are many countries on the GPE Executive Committee, and I know that some of them, even within Europe, have agreed on the strategy of spending most of the money on children's education.

What I'm afraid of is that there have been so many events this year. For instance, CONFINTEA is only organized every twelve years, yet a couple of weeks after Marrakesh, preparation began for the Transforming Education Summit, which is about lifelong learning, and the program seems to be mainly about education for children and young people.

It's strange, isn't it, to feel that you have had a great success, and then you leave Marrakesh with the nice feelings of having achieved something. Soon you realize, okay, it's quickly forgotten. And I'm not experienced enough to know whether the MFA will have an impact yet.

We have to keep saying to governments, politicians, and public servants working in this area "you have actually signed this agreement. You have to remember what you what you agreed to."

We must keep the enthusiasm up. Working in Sweden, I'm trying to say, "hey, remember adult education abroad. Make your voice heard because we do have quite a lot of choice and good practice in adult education in Sweden that might be of use to others." We are fortunate.

[Julia Denholm]

Having something so accessible in Sweden and then not being able to open it up to other people must be frustrating. It sounds like there was a lot of frustration with the experience.

[Cecilia Palm]

Yes, but there was a lot that was hopeful and inspiring as well. There were many country representatives, and of course you can always speak of what happens in your country and make it sound good, even when maybe it isn't. But I did feel that much of what I heard was sincere, and it is sad that some countries have such terrible difficulties in making real what they would like to do. There is the challenge of language barriers within a country for instance; that was made obvious as a major difficulty in some countries.

There was a session about learning cities that was very positive. A lot of things from South Korea, where apparently, they have gone all in for the learning cities, and they had many examples to show. I was also surprised to see an example from Sweden, not exactly a learning city, but it's still the same kind of idea involving the population in making the city better and making it a learning city, that's the concept.

I think that although we may be in some ways disappointed, the thing to remember is that that these Civil Society networks are so important, and that by working together we can really make our voices heard. ICAE has succeeded in being where things happen. They were part of the UIL Advisory Committee for this conference; they were represented on the drafting committee, and ICAE is also participating in the high-level political forum process following up on SDG 4. It's not as if ICAE is a sort of international island, with no connections. On the contrary, there really is a strong network building up to this.

In some regions there are very strong umbrella organizations like ASPBAE or EAEA, and in other regions there are several organizations working side by side.

I think it's important to try and gather everyone somehow, to make it like an Eiffel Tower, with less close connections at the base that all come together to shape and support the top.

And then at the top, you have several experienced members, including our president Robbie Guevara, who have been working very hard in view of CONFINTEA. The ICAE staff, with Secretary General Katarina Popovic have an incredible amount of experience. I feel they have much more experience than I have, but we all contribute as best we can.

[Julia Denholm]

I love the Eiffel Tower metaphor. It's a great image to conclude with.

[Cecilia Palm]

I don't think I have anything to add. Thank you for doing this.

[Julia Denholm]

Okay, it's lovely to meet you. What a pleasure!

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CITIES AS ENGINES FOR A LEARNING SOCIETY

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Raúl is Team Leader at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg, Germany and coordinator of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. For almost twenty years he has worked in international organizations in the field of public policy, lifelong learning, youth and adult education, and educational planning. He has been a forerunner for adult learning and education policies and for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non formal and informal learning outcomes in several countries around the world.

He has led various research and advocacy projects; most recently Making Lifelong Learning a reality: A Handbook" (2022). Raúl holds a Ph.D. in Education.

Following the adoption of [the Marrakech Framework for Action \(MFA\)](#) by representatives of more than 140 countries at CONFINTEA VII in Marrakech, Morocco, in June 2022, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has promoted the new framework and revived the commitment of Member States to realize the right to lifelong learning and to enhance governance, investment in, and the quality of adult learning and education (ALE). Moreover, it draws special attention to the development and implementation of education policies within a lifelong learning perspective and within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Over 1,000 participants took part in the conference, which examined the importance of embracing a culture of lifelong learning and discussed, among other things, the relevance of learning spaces as indicated in the new framework:

“9. We reaffirm that ALE is a key component of lifelong learning, 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.”

As expressed by the adult learning community and other education subsectors during the conference, creating a learning society means reimagining learning spaces and avenues beyond traditional educational institutions like schools or universities. In a rapidly urbanizing world, the need for appropriate and efficient local action supporting economic, environmental and social sustainability as well as resilience to climate change requires a shift towards learning regions, cities, communities and families, where local actors—from the local government to community members—collaborate to take ownership and autonomy in transforming urban, public, and digital spaces.

The ability for such a transformation needs a clear understanding of the diversity of contexts in which learning spaces are organized and, more specifically, mechanisms to inform and build the capacities of key stakeholders across sectors to advance the sustainability agenda in cities.

The concept of learning cities has proven to be very successful to link global goals to local communities. Learning cities provide an excellent example of how local actors can promote ALE and lifelong learning as an essential ingredient to foster an environment that is socially just, ecologically sustainable, economically productive, politically democratic and culturally vibrant. The learning city approach is an effective strategy to engage citizens, mobilize a diversity of development sectors, institutions and community groups to provide learning opportunities to all, while making the city a better and more sustainable place to live.

The transformative potential for a sustainable future is illustrated by the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (UNESCO GNLC), where multilevel governance partnership is at the heart together with the learner in the center of the process.

The UNESCO GNLC continues to expand and, this month, 77 cities from 44 countries join the network in recognition of their outstanding efforts to make lifelong learning a reality for all at the local level. The UNESCO GNLC today includes 294 cities from all around the world that successfully promote lifelong learning across their communities.

During CONFINTEA, two workshops focused on the learning city initiative in terms of (1) its relation to territorial and African dynamics and (2) how building a learning city can lead to a resilient society. UN agencies, national organisations and different sectors demonstrated that the sharing of inspiration, know-how and best practices lies at the heart of intersectoral approaches for supporting the implementation of learning in local communities. This synergy between sectors in cities is easier than at national level as a smaller scale is more conducive to bringing different views and voices together.

During the workshops, we learned of the development of local policies, plans and designs for safe, inclusive, and accessible learning spaces for all to support cities to become more compact, integrated, connected, socially inclusive, and resilient to climate change. The workshops also revealed how lifelong learning can contribute to the development of capacities at the national or global level to realize the full potential of learning cities, with relevant examples shared such as inclusive urban planning in Kenya and the multidimensional experience of building learning cities in the Republic of Korea.

Though normally ALE and lifelong learning policies and strategies are developed at the national level, they are often shaped or at least mediated at the local level. When it comes to the implementation of the MFA, the local level is vital, as it is often the nucleus of complex stakeholder relationships that transcend levels of implementation and sectors. Building learning cities can effectively enhance access to and participation in ALE and lifelong learning, contributing to the creation of more sustainable living environments.

If we want the MFA to translate to concrete action, the learning city initiative must play an important role.

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ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION IN CRISIS REGIONS- GLOBAL POLICIES AND PRACTICAL LEARNINGS

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Christoph Jost is the Director of the International Institute of the German Association for the Education of Adults (DVV International), an organization working with about 200 partners in more than 30 countries. DVV International is a professional organization for adult education and development that aims at supporting the set-up of sustainable adult learning and education structures. Christoph has about 18 years of work experience in the field of education and development. Before joining DVV International he worked with an international education institution and with two development consulting firms. Christoph is member of UNESCO's Coordination Group of CCNGO (Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030) and member of the executive board of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE).

Countries in the Middle East, Asia and the African continent are affected by conflicts, but more recently so are neighbouring European countries such as Belarus and, with the outbreak of war in February 2022, of course Ukraine. The potential of adult learning and education (ALE) to prevent conflicts, develop impacts in times of war and post-conflict is increasingly recognised in global policy documents such as the Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA) that was adopted at the CONFINTEA VII Conference in June 2022. On the practical side, the implementation of adult education measures has proven to be highly relevant and effective in conflict-affected countries. Thus, the following article examines the role of adult learning and education in crises regions both from a global policy and a practical point of view - taking observations, contributions and learnings from DVV International into account.

ALE in Crises Regions - Global Policy Context

The Marrakech Framework for Action (MFA) is the most recent and relevant global policy document for adult learning and education. At first glance the outcome document does not seem to put particular importance on the role of adult learning and education to counteract crises. Thus, one needs to look deeper into the MFA and complimentary reference documents and policy processes at global level. Comparing the MFA with the former Belém Framework for Action adopted at CONFINTEA VI in the year 2009, there is now a strong linkage with the Agenda 2030 and their corresponding sustainable development goals (SDGs). Para 6 of the MFA outlines that “[...] 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” and later stresses in Para 40 that “quality education and lifelong learning are important mechanisms for implementing SDG 4 and are also prerequisites for [...] just, peaceful, inclusive, violence-free societies (SDG 16). Linkages between adult learning and education and SDG 16 have also been analysed in other publications such as “Youth and Adult Education in the Agenda 2030” (DVV International, 2019).

The MFA further addresses the potential of adult learning and education for preventing extremism and supporting social and (inter-)cultural learning in Para 12: “At a time when societies are threatened by rising fanaticism and violent extremism, [...] 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 [...].” The key outcome document of CONFINTEA VII commits to paying specific attention to certain categories of Member States, inter alia, conflict-affected countries, and their specific needs in terms of participation in ALE, including for refugees and displaced populations (MFA, Para 42).

The importance of active and global citizenship gets particular notice in the MFA and the latest edition of the Global Report for Adult Learning and Education (GRALE V) to tackle societal and development challenges. The MFA highlights the importance of media and information literacy and encourages “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 (MFA, Para 39). GRALE V launched at CONFINTEA VII provides recommendations for promoting active and global citizenship and summarizes that citizenship education is a key tool in the global response to contemporary challenges: “Responding to contemporary challenges, such as the mass movement of populations fleeing war [...] demands populations of engaged, active, critical citizens (GRALE V, 2022, page 19).

Looking deeper into the GRALE V report and the chapter on financing, two issues directly or indirectly related to citizenship education - particularly required for working in the context of war, conflicts and crises - become evident. Firstly, especially in low-income countries, adult learning and education is co-funded through international development cooperation. Secondly, the results of member state surveys showed that governments tend to provide higher priority to the funding of literacy, numeracy and basic skills and TVET than citizenship education (GRALE V, page 70-73).⁸ Thus, it can be concluded that the potential of adult learning and education to provide significant contributions in crises regions is receiving more attention at the global policy level but that this is not yet fully reflected in priorities and funding by national governments and often left to non-governmental and civil society organisations specialised in peace education, conflict prevention and development cooperation.

ALE in Crises Regions – Relevance and Implementation Experiences

DVV International is one of the aforementioned expert organisations and has its focus on adult learning and development. Though thematic priorities differ among the more than 30 partner countries, an increasing need for strengthening civil society and promoting crises-related activities could be observed during the last years. This is due to the simple fact that political instability has been increasing in many partner countries.

Concrete working experiences made during the last years revealed that adult education can play an important role in the context of crises but requires a high level of crisis response capacity. In addition, there is a need for up-to-date teaching and learning approaches in order to be able to make important contributions to crisis management through youth and adult education. DVV International has tried-and-tested approaches to work in crisis-prone countries including a due integration into security architectures of partner countries. The recent past has clearly shown that major crises and, as in Ukraine, even a state of war can quickly arise. In such cases, it is first of all important to react rapidly and ensure the safety of staff and local partners. If framework conditions allow, new work approaches are sought in order to be able to continue education and training programmes. In

⁸ Overall, about half of the countries reported that ALE is co-funded through international cooperation agencies; in low-income countries this share increases to 85%. Many countries shared examples of ALE spending in relation to two fields of learning highlighted in RALE (UNESCO, 2016a), specifically literacy and basic skills, and vocational training, clearly showing that the third field of learning, citizenship education, tends to be neglected.

this context, both transnational and virtual formats come into play, such as those already used during the Corona pandemic.

In the last years, special attention has been paid to DVV International's project activities in Afghanistan and Belarus, and by no means least of all, in Ukraine. The most drastic experience in 2021 was certainly Afghanistan. DVV has no office of its own there, but is involved through a local partner organisation. Over the past 20 years, the Afghan National Association for Adult Education (ANAF AE) was supported and developed through a large number of affiliated learning centres in order to address massive educational backlogs among youth and adults. The Taliban's seizure of power presented ANAF AE and DVV International with major challenges because the work is aimed in particular at improving educational opportunities for girls and women. Despite all limitations and patriarchal ideas of the Taliban regime, ANAF AE has so far been able to provide education to female participants. One of the reasons is certainly the embeddedness of learning centres in local communities and the due compliance with gender-segregation. Though future prospects are unclear, DVV International and ANAF AE intend to continue working in Afghanistan as long as meaningful contributions to women rights are possible and the overall framework conditions allow.

A painful experience as regards shrinking spaces of civil society organisations was made in Belarus. In the summer of 2021, state authorities did not renew a permit for the operation of DVV International's office in the country. The office in Minsk had to close at very short notice and staff had to be discharged. Contact with Belarusian partners and experts in the country and in the diaspora had been planned to continue at the end of 2021 through a regional project managed from Kiev. This however became extremely difficult due to the war in Ukraine that began in February 2022. Cross-border measures with onsite participation of Belarussian people in Ukraine are currently hardly feasible. Thus, adult education measures initiated by DVV International are now planned in virtual format or with the Belarussian diaspora in other countries of the region.

Until the outbreak of war in Ukraine, DVV International worked with eleven civil society providers of non-formal adult education at eight locations (Sumy, Poltava, Melitopol, Nikopol, Mykolaiv, Kyiv, Vinnytsia and Lviv), piloting innovative educational programmes and inspiring and accompanying numerous local civil society initiatives. Despite the most difficult of circumstances, local partners are still active in education work although some had to relocate to safer areas at short notice or change to digital formats. The learning centres proved how flexible adult education can naturally be and quickly reorganised their course offerings. They now mainly offer first aid courses, educate people about disinformation and train them in critical thinking in order to be able to cope with the flood of information. The learning centres are also involved in helping refugees and internally displaced persons, organising shelters and soup kitchens, and sewing protective equipment for the soldiers, as well as being involved in civil defence measures. Further courses adapted to the war situation such as art therapy and other forms of coping with stress and trauma, are also offered. Working in cooperation with selected German "Volkshochschulen" (adult education centres), the Ukrainian adult education centres also provide advice in virtual formats on how to design and expand the range of educational opportunities for Ukrainian refugees in Germany.

One may ask why DVV International is active at all in crisis regions and their neighbouring states. The work has its justification not only in the Institute's vision to provide lifelong learning, world-wide and for everyone but also in German and global policy agendas. The new German government coalition agreement concluded in 2021 provides for further strengthening of civil society actors, especially whose scope is challenged by shrinking spaces. The key partner and sponsor of DVV International, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is increasingly focusing on the least developed countries, which are potentially more vulnerable to conflict. With the 2030 Agenda the United Nations has set itself the goal of "leaving no one behind" and, with the education goal (SDG 4), the focus is on promoting lifelong learning. In poor and fragile countries, literacy rates are often extremely low; education systems are poorly developed, chronically underfunded and of low quality, especially in remote areas and rural regions. This is where the work of the Institute enters the picture, with the fostering of sustainable youth and adult education structures and demand-driven approaches

that strengthen the community, that include income-generating measures, that prevent or seek to deal with conflicts, enable reconciliation, strengthen participation and promote transitions into formal education systems.

In conclusion it can be stated that the global policy level is paying more attention to adult education in crisis regions. However, many governments have not recognised the potential of adult education in that very field and leave actions mostly to civil society organisations and international development actors. The practical work experience of DVV International and its partner organisations revealed that adult education can offer relevant and effective approaches – precisely tailored and designed with local partners – to proactively confront conflicts, provide support through continuing education and strengthen social cohesion

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TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT (TES): THE LONG ROAD AHEAD TO GET THE FULL SDG4 AGENDA BACK ON TRACK FOR ALL LEARNERS

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Helen Dabu is the Secretary-General of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), a regional CSO network in the Asia Pacific advancing the right to education and transformative adult learning and education. She is a lawyer and has served as a CSO representative in global education policy bodies and contributed in bringing the voices and concerns of Southern CSO constituencies to global platforms. She is currently the CSO representative to the Sherpa Group of the SDG4 High Level Steering Committee and served as CSO representative in the Transforming Education Summit (TES) Advisory Committee.

When the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG), Mr. Antonio Guterres, called for the convening of the Transforming Education Summit (TES) as part of his [Our Common Agenda Report](#) presented to the UN General Assembly in September 2021, he made his core aims clear which included, amongst others, to get SDG4 back on track. In his own words, he specifically expressed:

*“...I will champion lifelong learning for all and convene a **Summit on Transforming Education in 2022 to accelerate progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4**. The Summit will forge a common vision for education, building on the forthcoming work of the International Commission on the Futures of Education and other recent progress including the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education fund and the establishment of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism.” (Page 49, UNSG’s Our Common Agenda Report)*

From the time this Report was released, processes were set in motion to inform the Summit preparations and outcomes leading to the main Summit during the high level week of the UN General Assembly in New York on 16-17 and 19 September 2022. Amongst its governance structure, a TES Advisory Committee was set up, co-chaired by the UN Deputy Secretary-General (DSG), Ms. Amina Mohammed, and the Minister of Basic Education and Senior Secondary Education of Sierra Leone, Mr. David Moinina Sengeh. The TES Advisory Committee, consisting of constituency-based representatives, offered strategic guidance to all actors and stakeholders leading to the Summit. ASPBAE and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), both representing the UNESCO Consultative Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 (CCNGO Ed2030), occupied the two (2) civil society organisation (CSO) seats in the TES Advisory Committee.

What the CSOs have strongly advocated for throughout the Summit processes informed by national, regional and global civil society consultative engagements

First, the CSOs, have strongly advocated for a real transformation in delivering the neglected SDG4 targets, framed within a rights-based, inter-generational, climate-saving and gender-transformative agenda for education.

One of the aims of the TES is to revitalise national and global efforts to achieve SDG4. This Summit was organised at a critical time, when the COVID-19 pandemic and other contextual challenges brought unprecedented setback on education, at less than a decade into 2030 when the SDGs, including SDG4, are aimed to be achieved. This criticality emphasised the need for governments to seriously commit to and concretise their efforts to deliver and attend to the most neglected targets in SDG4 including functional literacy, early childhood care and education (ECCE), disability-inclusive education, adult learning and education (ALE) including the most recent commitments made in the [CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action](#), women’s and girls’ education, support for teachers, global citizenship education and education for sustainable development, amongst others.

Governments and partners also need to put in place gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments; they need to mainstream gender issues in teacher training and curricula monitoring processes, and eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence in education institutions.

Greater attention to climate change is also needed such as by promoting climate change education being mainstreamed in schools, in youth and adult learning and education (ALE) programmes and in the overall lifelong learning systems. This will require expanded literacy on climate change and climate justice.

Second, CSOs strongly called for leaving no one behind in education, hence reiterating the call for greater attention and commitment to equity, inclusion and gender equality in education, including strong attention to those in emergencies and conflict-affected countries and contexts.

The CSOs have noted in so many debates and discourses throughout the Summit processes the strong emphasis on digitalisation and online learning. But CSOs have emphasised that the risks and opportunities of the rapid

education digitalisation must be thought out within the realities of the widening digital divide and the gaps in access to technologies. Therefore, there is a pressing need to develop and mainstream context-responsive, effective, flexible, and inclusive learning options, pedagogies, and curricula, that are made available in no-tech and low-tech modalities, such as through the media, radio and television, self-learning modules, and those that promote mother tongue-based multilingual education.

Equally important is the provision of learning support and further enhancement of literacy skills, soft skills, and critical thinking skills to all learners, especially the most marginalised groups, including women and girls, marginalised youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees and those living in emergencies and conflict-affected contexts. Further, the ideals and discourses to transform education should be set against the realities of each country.

Third, the CSOs have strongly called for sustainable financing for education that strengthens public education systems and will truly reach the most marginalised.

CSO representatives from developing countries called on Member States from developing countries to be empowered and recognised, within the spirit of multi-lateralism, as sovereign states and not as bank clients to be constantly offered with loans as the overwhelming solution to address financing shortfalls in education and social services. Instead of loan-based solutions to address financing gaps, CSOs called for greater attention to ensuring sustainable domestic resource financing for education through tax justice mechanisms that have been agreed upon by 184 UNESCO member states in the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA).

The transition toward a strong, resilient and transformative public education will require higher and sustainable education financing. There is also a need for transparency and greater participation of parents, teachers, youth and students, and CSOs in the education planning and budgeting at different levels.

Lastly, CSOs called for the protection of the space and role of CSOs, youth and students, teachers, parents and marginalised groups to engage in and inform the education policy processes at all levels – from community, national, regional and global levels.

The civil society constituency have strongly emphasised this in the various meetings of the TES Advisory Committee amidst the restrictions and limitations in engagements in education policy processes encountered in various contexts, especially in countries where democratic systems and spaces are under threat.

Greater clarity was also sought by the existing movements of CSOs, particularly the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the UNESCO CCNGO Ed2030, on an emerging education movement that may have greater political and financial backing out of the Summit process. On this matter, it is important to assert that any new movement for education should recognise and build on the existing movements of CSOs (through GCE and CCNGO Ed2030), of teachers (through the Education International) and of youth and students (through the Global Student Forum and grassroots youth formations) as many of these CSO formations have been in existence for many years or decades, and they continue to play a critical role in advancing a more transformative and progressive agenda for the right to education and SDG4.

What Emerged from the TES and What Lies Ahead

There are various ways by which the TES Outcomes, both in terms of process and substance, can be assessed, but much of these will need to be unpacked and analysed further in the coming months as the TES outcomes follow-up mechanism for its implementation and monitoring will be pursued through the SDG4 High Level Steering Committee (HLSC), the main body in-charged of post-TES follow up. ASPBAE and GCE, representing CCNGO Ed2030, currently occupy the CSO seats (for the period 2022-2023) in this global SDG4 monitoring and coordination architecture.

As a strong point on the TES outcomes, the [TES Call to Action on Education Financing](#) provided significant recommendations to transform education financing.

Another important outcome of the process is the launch of the [Youth Declaration on Transforming Education](#) which substantially aligned with the CSO advocacy agenda, enabling the inclusion of youth and students in education policy processes at all levels and beyond a tokenistic approach. The youth and students who have been engaged in shaping the Declaration committed to promote intergenerational, intercultural, and interreligious dialogue and cooperation in education systems across all communities, countries, and regions to create a better world built on solidarity, diversity, empathy, mutual understanding, and respect.

Amongst others, the Youth Declaration asserted to the decision-makers the need for an intersectional, intersectoral, and cross-cutting approach based on the principles of human rights, sustainable development, gender equality, climate justice, inclusion, equity, equality, and solidarity across all actions to transform education and its systems at the global, regional, national, local, and grassroots levels. It emphasised the need to eradicate all legal, financial, and systemic barriers preventing all learners from accessing and fully participating in education, and called for the recognition and investment in non-formal education programs and organizations as an integral part of the right to education. It strongly promoted academic freedom and support for teachers by providing them with quality and relevant training, professional development, necessary facilities, appropriate working conditions, and an innovative, safe and enriching environment.

The [TES Call to Action on Gender Equality](#) is also an important outcome which called on governments to put gender equality at the heart of education sector plans, budgets and policies. It called for supporting coordinated, cross-sectoral, intersectional and intergenerational collaboration across Ministries, civil society, grassroots youth organizations and other actors working on education, health, nutrition, gender, protection, youth, employment, economic, social and climate justice to safeguard rights and promote equal educational pathways, formal sector employment and related outcomes.

On the UNSG's Vision Statement, a key outcome from the TES, a strong point is the use of the four pillars of education from the Delors Report – learning to know (though the UNSG used 'learning to learn'), learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be – to frame the recommendations.

On the weakness of TES outcomes, including in some parts of the Vision Statement and a range of Calls to Action, these could have been strengthened further in terms of their articulation of the right to education for all by concretising efforts to attend to the education of the adult population, in addition to children and youth, who continue to be deprived of this fundamental right. For instance, the "TES Call to Action to Address the Learning Crisis" failed to align with the broader aims of the TES Action Track 2 (AT2) as captured in its discussion paper which is on 'Learning and Skills for Life, Work and Sustainable Development' focusing on youth and adults. In particular, the [TES Action Track 2 Discussion Paper](#) emphasised that *"To address the complex set of challenges faced by our societies today, it is important to adopt a lifelong and life-wide approach to education and learning. This means addressing and responding to the learning needs of all individuals, regardless of their age, socio-economic or educational background, geographical context or employment status in a flexible way."*

There was certainly a notable call for the right for lifelong learning throughout the TES process and in the various outcome documents which emerged, nevertheless, and as cautioned by CSOs, lifelong learning can only be concretised if no one – children, youth or adults – will be left behind in this framing, also ensuring that the current guarantees under the right to education will not be undermined.

As such, throughout the TES process and including in the session co-organised by GCE with its regional members, including ASPBAE, and with UNESCO CCNGO Ed2030 and the governments of Argentina and Malawi during the TES Solutions Day (17 September) in the UN Headquarters, the CSO constituencies strongly called for the integration of [CONFITEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action](#) commitments into the TES Outcome documents.

This was successfully added in page 14 as a linked reference in the [Discussion Paper on TES Action Track 5 \(Financing Education\)](#) emphasising the need for ambitious action on financing adult learning under the action on all levels of education (early childhood through primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational, adult). But beyond this, there was limited uptake in other areas of the TES outcome documents although there were key messages that resonated with a number of action areas in the Marrakech Framework for Action. Certainly, further efforts will need to be made to fully advance the CONFINTEA VII action points and commitments in various global political processes such as the TES, ensuring that a genuine transformation in education will benefit all learners – children, youth and adults.

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TRANSFORMING THE FINANCING OF EDUCATION - OUTCOMES FROM THE SUMMIT

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It is not easy to synthesise the full set of outcomes from the Transforming Education Summit that took place a week ago today - but a major breakthrough was made in respect of the financing agenda. The [Call to Action on Financing Education](#) launched on the Leaders Day is a bold assertion of what needs to be done to transform the financing of education over the coming years. In summary it calls for:

More investment, reinforcing the benchmarks of 4-6% of GDP and 15-20% of national budgets, emphasising the need to increase real investment per student and to increase tax to GDP ratios through ambitious and progressive tax reforms with linked commitments towards education.

More equitable spending, increasing allocations to the 40% and 20% of families with lowest incomes or most vulnerable; tracking and reporting investments in a disaggregated and gender responsive way; prioritising pre-primary and investing more in lifelong learning.

More efficient spending, through increased accountability, improving teacher workforce development, linking sector planning and budgeting, and encouraging a whole-of-government approach.

More international financial contributions, reasserting the 0.7% of GNI for aid and establishing for the first time a benchmark that 15-20% of aid should be earmarked for education; seeking more support from multilateral development banks, including through IFFED; helping countries to increase fiscal space and addressing debt distress; and agreeing on new approaches for financing education of refugee and displaced people.

More international support for national efforts, including:

- Prioritizing global actions on taxes, supporting international reforms that can help countries increase their tax income in a rapid and progressive way, shifting international financial institutions country-level dialogue to be bolder and more progressive on tax reforms, and ensuring global rules do not push countries into “race to the bottom” strategies in terms of taxes and harmful tax incentives. This includes global action on tax loopholes, agreements on a global asset register, the reduction of illicit financial flows, unfair trade taxation, acting on tax havens and promoting a process for setting fair global tax rules.
- Revising the international financial and debt architecture to ensure sufficient financing can be mobilized in support of long-term, sustainable development objectives, including by removing conditionalities that require cutting expenditure on education as a pre-requisite to attain new financing, and using innovative tools such as debt-for-education swaps.
- Supporting action on debt relief, restructuring, and in some cases, cancellation, for any countries spending more on debt servicing than education.
- Urging the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international financial institutions to remove existing obstacles such as public sector wage constraints that prevent increased spending on education; and champion policies that will allow significant new recruitment of professional teachers wherever there are shortages.
- Finding new solutions and mechanisms that can unblock funding and advance the case for a new allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) and reallocation of existing SDRs to countries most in need to invest in education.
- Creating new norms and formulas to help Ministries of Finance and Governments as a whole factor in long-term returns to investment in education so that education spending is not seen purely as a consumption expenditure in medium term expenditure frameworks and other planning / budget documents.

This radically re-frames the traditional discussions about education finance that normally focus only on international aid or the share of the budget going to education. For the next few years this broader agenda should frame the finance work of the **Global Education Cooperation Mechanism** and the **Education 2030 High Level Steering Committee**. Progress should be tracked by **UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring Report** and discussed at the annual **Global Education Meeting**. This agenda should inform the financing work of the **Global Partnership for Education**, including the dialogue that it supports between Ministries of Education and Ministries of Finance at country level.

Crucially TES should lead to a new dialogue at international level with the **International Monetary Fund** about how their policies impact on education. One of the biggest disappointments of TES was that the IMF Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva, who was due to speak, pulled out at short notice. The TES Finance agenda should be on the formal agenda of the coming Annual or Spring meetings of the IMF, with progress tracked every year in those forums. As this agenda makes abundantly clear, breakthroughs on financing education cannot be made unless there is a substantial and sustained dialogue between the education community and key actors working on tax, debt, macro-economic policy and the overall financing of the public sector workforce. It will be important too for a higher-level strategic discussion on education financing to take place in the **World Bank** – far above the usual discussions with the Bank’s education department.

There is a lot of work to be done to convert this call to action into substantial commitments and pressure will need to be sustained nationally and internationally. Thankfully there was a powerful **youth and student voice** at

the Summit - and it is important to ensure that representative youth and student movements are at the table at every level, articulating with teacher unions and connecting with wider **education movements** (something that is envisaged at the Global Campaign for Education [World Assembly](#) in November in Johannesburg). To advance this full financing agenda it will be important for education movements get out of the education bubble, to engage in more strategic processes of change, connecting with Ministries of Finance and Heads of State and finding new alliances with tax and fiscal justice movements, feminist movements and other public service movements (for example at the [Our Future is Public](#) conference in Chile later this year).

Let me know if you have any thoughts on what more we can do to convert this call to action into concrete action nationally and globally.

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THE ICAE SPOTLIGHT REPORT FOR CONFINTEA VII (2022) - ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION - BECAUSE THE FUTURE CANNOT WAIT

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The dilemma posed at least every twelve years as CONFINTEA comes around again is whether the CONFINTEA process give us a true picture of the global state of the art of ALE.

CONFINTEA is, as its statute as a category II UNESCO conference leaves no doubt, an inter-governmental conference in which the onus of reporting is placed firmly on the shoulders of national governments. In other words, what information is supplied concerning adult learning and what constitutes ALE in a specific territory are decided by government.

A brief historical review of ALE reveals that adult education was, and continues to be reared and nurtured by a large spectrum of organisations including churches, universities, trade unions, political parties, social movements, community groups, professional associations etc. Civil society organisations, local community groups and social movements have been and continue to be at the fore, and the major providers of adult learning and community education.

The CONFINTEA process was conceived almost at the same time as UNESCO, and UNESCO as a multilateral global agency is funded by member states. Hence whilst UNESCO encourages national governments to work and consult with other actors performing in the field of adult education and more recently ALE, the rules of the game are established by member states. Delegations which take part in these conferences can include representatives from civil society but the decision as to who takes part belongs, in the last instance, to governments. In the

current context of democratic backsliding, it is relatively easy for governments not to include civil society representatives in their delegations.

Although the CONFINTEA reporting process is deemed the responsibility of governments, and whilst, in previous cycles, the space for civil society to participate in this process was never guaranteed – it always depended on a relation of forces in a specific territory – it was more open to negotiation. Member states were encouraged to produce reports on the state of ALE nationally in processes of consultation with fellow stakeholders.

Three examples from the Brazilian context during the last three editions of CONFINTEA, illustrate how the political climate can limit the participation of civil society:

- In 1996, prior to CONFINTEA V in Hamburg, the Ministry of Education and other partners initiated a process of consultation involving meetings at state, regional and, finally, national levels. At the national meeting, held in Natal in 1996, a report which was the result of a long collective process was debated and approved. In January 1997, during the Latin American and Caribbean regional meeting held in Brasília, the Brazilian delegates were surprised to find, when it came to the Brazilian government's turn to present its report, that the ministry ignored the result of the democratic process and substituted it with an internally produced report.
- Twelve years later, in 2008, a similar process took place in which an initial text was discussed by all stakeholders (government and civil society) in each and every state, concluding with a national meeting in Brasilia when the report was again exhaustively debated and voted. The final text was then faithfully presented at the regional meeting held in México City. It was also translated into three languages and circulated at the conference in Belém.
- Fast wind forward to 2021. It is an apparent secret of state who produced the document which was submitted to UNESCO as part of the GRALE reporting process and no-one had access to the text. Despite formal requests made to UNESCO to supply information on focal points in each country for this reporting process, no information was supplied.

The new dynamic, established in 2021-22, was in part induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. National reports for GRALE V based on a standard questionnaire substituted the former national reporting process which provided information necessary for the constructing of regional reports. In 2021, 'outcome documents' were produced based on the virtual regional meetings following a standard pattern and size with a resulting lack of depth and detail. A ten-page synthesis of these regional reports was then prepared by UNESCO and circulated at the conference in Marrakesh⁹. It should be noted that the involvement of civil society in the preparation and mobilization processes for the Regional Meetings varied from region to region as did the duration of the meetings.

The GRALE V report was formally presented and launched in Marrakesh on the first day of the conference. In other words, the findings of GRALE had little influence on the outcome of the conference.

As the ICAE Spotlight report points out, despite the invaluable contribution of CSOs to the creation of Education for All as a global movement, "we witness retrograde tendencies in many countries - shrinking space for civil society, the rise of authoritarian regimes which weaken democratic processes, resulting in a restriction on the space for the voices of all people, especially the most marginalized. There are also fewer opportunities for broad-based dialogue on education and more limited involvement of civil society in government policy and planning processes".

⁹ UNESCO. A transformative agenda: Outcomes of the CONFINTEA VII regional preparatory conferences. Hamburg: UIL, 2022.

There is little doubt that the context in which the CONFINTEA VII took place was the most complex and challenging since the beginning of the cycle in 1949. Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic provided the immediate backdrop to the process, other unravelling crises further deepened the complex conjuncture it faced: climate change, the impact of new technologies, artificial intelligence and digitalization on life and work structures, the invasion of Ukraine, the global demographical movement, ecological, political and economic migration, etc. The result was a qualitatively different preparatory process for CONFINTEA with a drastic loss of transparency, participation and the spirit of partnership.

Even in times of greater democratic transparency and citizen participation, the pluriversal nature of the field of ALE requires more than one analytical lens being applied to it. The elaboration of an alternative view to the official version is always salutary. Given the limited nature of the official regional 'outcome documents' which sought to "identify current key issues on ALE in each region and suggest benchmarks and recommendations for CONFINTEA VII", ICAE considered it opportune both to document what each region saw as its principal trends, issues and challenges and its recommendations for the final CONFINTEA outcome document, and to systematise what it considers to be the core values and the key structural components of ALE. The document concluded with the **ICAE AND GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY MANIFESTO – 2022 Adult Learning and Education - because the future cannot wait**. The report was translated into four languages and published on-line in preparation for the Civil Society Forum and the main Conference.

Despite the obvious need for civil society to collaborate and work with UNESCO, its member states and other partners (and there is a growing recognition that other members of the UN family are equally important partners when implementing policies of adult learning) there is also a need for civil society to affirm its own identity and the principles which orient those activities. Whilst data collection is on the whole a challenge for all ALE practices whether they be formal, non-formal or informal, it tends to become an even greater challenge for those actions which the RALE classifies as focused on "active citizenship, through what is variously known as community, popular or liberal education." (RALE, p.7) Maybe one of civil society's principal challenges remains that of elaborating indicators and putting into place systems for the collection of more reliable data and information on what civil society does in the field of ALE and what its impacts are.

The Suwon-Osan Confinteia VI Mid-term Review Statement affirmed that ALE continued to face a series of fundamental challenges since Belém including a lack of adequate ALE policies and legislation, the absence of basic coordination mechanisms and necessary funding. The reasons for this are multiple as Benavot (2018) suggests – the low priority given to ALE by Ministries of Education, diminishing donor support, the absence of sustained private investment, the weak data-reporting mechanisms and this despite the effort implicit in the elaboration of five Global Reports on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE).

Conceptual discussions in recent years by several of the international multilateral agencies have tended to emphasise lifelong learning to the detriment of ALE. Whilst there is a certain consensus over the importance of lifelong learning as an overarching strategic and philosophical concept which could be applied to all learning and education practices, this has tended to dilute the comprehension of the priority which ALE requires if it is to contribute to confront the current crises and challenges faced by the planet earth. To that end, UNESCO's **Reimagining our Futures Together** report captures the continued relevance of ALE and its multiple roles, conceived as a means to help people:

find their way through a range of problems and increases competencies and agency. It enables people to take more responsibility for their future. Furthermore, it helps adults understand and critique changing paradigms and power relationships and take steps towards shaping a just and sustainable world. A futures orientation should define adult education, as much as education at all moments, as an education entangled with life. Adults are responsible for the world in which they live as well as the world of the future. Responsibility to the future cannot be simply passed on to the next generations. A shared ethic of intergenerational solidarity is needed (UNESCO 2021, p. 115).

As the ICAE Spotlight Report concludes “For civil society this constitutes an invitation, a challenge and a responsibility which cannot be declined.”

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CONFINTEA VII – DID THE GAME CHANGE?

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Long awaited, postponed, and burdened with expectations - CONFINTEA VII happened in a changed world, where adult education is seeking its place and role. This leaves us trying to analyse, look through and understand the changes, tendencies and challenges.

As a member of the national delegation of the Republic of Serbia at CONFINTEA VI in Brazil and the representative of global civil society at the CONFINTEA VII in Morocco, as ICAE Secretary General, and a member of the Drafting Committee for the Framework of Action at both conferences, I was not only participating, but also observing, analysing, comparing...

When we met in Brazil in 2009 for CONFINTEA VI, the worries and the feeling that we live in time of multiple crises was quite new. But in Marrakech, it was an already established idea, accepted reality and non-negotiable framework. And this wasn't the only big change.

FISC, the Civil Society Forum in Belém, organised by ICAE, was a huge event, with a great cultural programme provided by the organisers; it was a gathering of not just civil society, but various partners, and an event supported and welcomed by everyone. But at the same time, the participation of civil society in the Drafting Committee for the Belém Framework for action met resistance from many countries. In the hours and hours of discussion, day and night, more than 200 amendments submitted by the countries present were analysed; there was a fight over every single word and many of the suggestions of civil society did not make to the final document. Most regrettable was the loss of the recommendation on financing adult education.

Exactly the opposite happened in Marrakech. COVID-19 was a good reason (or a very convenient excuse) to limit the number of participants, including civil society representatives. The pandemic—and the reduced number of participants as its consequence—brought an attempt to have a more open online participation and to increase the number of people that could follow the sessions. But with all its potentials, technology showed its limits as well, and online participation offered minimal opportunities to engage.

Since two other fora, the youth forum and the business forum (held for the first time) were held online, the onsite Civil Society Forum (CSF), that was meant to be only online, engaged more than 100 participants physically present in Marrakech, and more than 100 online. It was perceived by the organisers as a 'discomforting' insistence of civil society at the beginning, with the constant reminder that this is an intergovernmental Category 2 conference, with not much space for civil society. But ultimately, CSF was greeted by UIL, and its result were presented at the plenary session of the CONFINTEA VII.

Non-transparent preparations for GRALE 5, unclear authorship of the draft Marrakech Framework for Action, new and a somewhat unclear role division between UNESCO and UIL, made the preparations (both content-wise and logistics-wise) tedious and stressful, especially in a short time. There was a process of public online consultation for the Marrakech Framework for Action, open to everyone, but again within very limited timeframe. ICAE organised a 10-day campaign in social media, an action that motivated more than 200 submissions to the consultations (this would be mainly from CSOs given there was a separate process for member states). ICAE contributed to the process with some key document outputs: a Spotlight report drawing from the regional consultations, the Manifesto that guided the CSF Declaration, and contributed to the MFA, but also with the interventions across all the different onsite processes, such as the parallel sessions of CONFINTEA VII, the Drafting Committee and having ICAE executive Committee members in important roles at the Conference.

Once we were there and the Drafting Committee started to work, it turned out to be easier than expected. On the side of UIL, the fact that the number of Drafting Committee members was reduced to the representatives of the world regions contributed a lot to the focused, efficient discussion. Instead of extensive exchange of various opinions about adult education, in a conference-style (which was the case in Belém), with the clear cut at the end: who has the right to make the decision, discussions in Marrakech were focused on pre-prepared paragraphs, with a limited number of late interventions.

In Marrakech, exchange and continuous communication with the national delegations, as well as the exchange with the members of Drafting Committee, were of crucial importance. Well prepared arguments, data, good

communication - and the final version of Marrakech Framework was a good document at the end, including even the recommendation on financing and the clear benchmark.

On the side of civil society, extensive preparations and the intensive advocacy campaign proved to be fruitful. Even after the very first draft, that was circulated only among the members of the UNESCO CONFINTEA VII Advisory Committee, UNESCO was open for the comments of the civil society members in the Advisory Committee, and accepted most of them. ICAE continued to be a very active actor, that brought its extensive experience in ALE to the process. This included the engagement and opportunities for civil society organisations to participate across the regional consultations, active membership in the Consultative Committee, and finally a seat in the reduced membership of the Drafting Committee. ICAE and its members have stayed vigilant and actively engaged across all the different opportunities to participate, bringing its unique perspective and contextual realities.

So, it seems that something changed in the relationship towards civil society participation in the CONFINTEA process. While it was decreased, the impact on the final document increased. Part of the answer has been mentioned. But could it also be that UNESCO's attitude towards its own document changed? Is it only due to the different language use that Marrakech Framework for Action is promoted as a win in terms asserting 'the right to lifelong learning' instead of the 'right to adult learning and education', extensively discussed in Marrakech? Is it just by accident that CONFINTEA VII and MFA were hardly mentioned at the Transforming Education Summit, although this was clearly promised in the MFA?

We know that the context has changed. But has the game changed, and/or has its rules?

Deeper analysis will be needed to answer these questions, but also monitoring of the next steps and actions. The organisers haven't provided their perspective yet, since the Advisory Committee hasn't met after the conference, to evaluate and to plan. But the follow-up process has started already. Who will be in a driving seat, with what concepts and approaches, and to what ends, we will see.

ICAE as global civil society organisation has been the constant in the CONFINTEA process; we have been actively engaged across the last three CONFINTEA, we have continued to work in partnership with UIL, to advocate for ALE in the SDGs in the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and active in the process of analysing and promoting the report 'Reimagining our futures together — A new social contract for education'. But we will also continue to critically reflect on what has changed and, more importantly, we will continue to make efforts to be part of shaping that change.

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Welcome new PIMA members

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My research brings critical perspectives to the study and practice of education. My trajectory is grounded in ten years of experience as an early career researcher, popular educator, and educational consultant in Chile and Canada. As a researcher, I draw on intersectional feminist approaches and Indigenous theorizing to problematize the persistence of colonial and extractive relationships in educational settings. I am committed to working with communities to support leaders by moving away from managerial to more relational and collective approaches to leadership. Moving forward, I will be working on climate justice education and the reconceptualization of leadership in both formal and non-formal education.

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Dearbháil is an experienced and passionate advocate and adult educator. She is the CEO in AONTAS the National Adult Learning Organisation in Ireland. She has over 10 years' experience in the sector including advocacy, teaching in adult and community education and higher education and managing European-funded projects. Dearbháil was shortlisted for the President's Award for Excellence in Academic Teaching in Dublin City University in 2020. She is the Vice-President of the European Association for the Education and is on the Editorial Board of ELM Magazine, an education publication in Finland, and the Board of Dublin 8 Community Education Centre. Dearbháil represented Ireland as a national delegate, assigned by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in Ireland at the UNESCO CONFINTEA VII conference in Morocco in 2022.

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Dr. Kathryn L. Braun is Professor of Public Health and Social Work at the University of Hawaii, where she teaches courses on systematic review, proposal writing, and qualitative and mixed methods. She is the Barbara Cox Anthony Endowed Chair on Aging and Principal Investigator of Hā Kūpuna National Resource Center for Native Hawaiian Elders at the Thompson School of Social Work & Public Health. She also works with the UH School of Medicine as Lead of the Investigator Development Core for Ola HAWAII, a federally funded Research Center in Minority Institutions, and the Lead of the Professional Development Core of PIKO, a federally funded IDeA Center; for both projects, her role is to develop indigenous and minority researchers to win grant funding for research to help reduce health disparities in Hawai'i. Dr. Braun is known for her work in community-based participatory research in cancer and gerontology, and she has published more than 200 peer-reviewed journal articles on these topics. She has been a mentor for the National Mentoring Research Network (NRMN) since 2016. She is a fellow in the Gerontological Society of America and is current President of the Active Aging Consortium Asia-Pacific. She is a former Peace Corps Volunteer (the Philippines), and a former Fulbright Scholar (South Korea). She loves to travel and has been to about 120 countries.



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Special issue on CONFINTEA

PIMA (Friends of Pascal International Association) is incorporated in Victoria, Australia, as Friends of PASCAL International Association. An expanding global network of diverse individual adult and lifelong learning educators, activists, and scholars, it contributes to 'out-of-the-box' thinking to address contemporary local/global crises and issues. The Network aims to

- provide an international forum for the exchange of information, innovations and research on Place, Social Capital, Environment and Lifelong learning
- promote the recognition of the role and impact of Place, Social Capital, Environment and Lifelong learning on the quality of life for all inhabitants of the planet
- provide advice and expert opinion on Place, Social Capital, Environment and Lifelong learning in community, national and international contexts

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