



Report of the Global Conference on Promoting literacy for a world in transition: Building the foundation for sustainable and peaceful societies

International Literacy Day 2023

Paris, 8 September 2023

The report presents an overview of the global celebration of International Literacy Day (ILD) 2023 held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France on 8 September 2023. Under the ILD2023 theme of ‘Promoting literacy for a world in transition: Building the foundation for sustainable and peaceful societies’, the Global Conference explored how literacy and numeracy can be better promoted as part of lifelong learning to achieve more peaceful and sustainable societies as envisioned by the international community through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The global celebration also included the award ceremony of the 2023 edition of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes with six outstanding laureates from Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, Finland, Pakistan, South Africa and Uganda.

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Published in 2023 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

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Report of the Global Conference

Introduction

[International Literacy Day 2023](#) (ILD) was celebrated [across the world](#) under the theme ‘Promoting literacy for a world in transition: Building the foundation for sustainable and peaceful societies’ at the critical juncture of the midpoint towards the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the global level, the [Global Conference on ‘Promoting literacy for a world in transition: Building the foundation for sustainable and peaceful societies’](#) (Paris, 8 September 2023) was organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as both an online and in-person event. It brought together nearly 200 in-person participants and many online participants, including His Excellency Mr Kouaro Yves Chabi, Minister of Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education, Benin and the Chair of the Steering Group of the Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning; Her Excellency Ms Dipu Moni, Minister of Education, Bangladesh; Her Excellency Ms Maria Brown Perez, Minister of Education, Ecuador; and His Excellency Mr Cheikh Oumar Anne, Minister of National Education, Senegal, as well as representatives of governments, partners, laureates, young people, and the media. (For a full list, please see the [list of moderators and speakers](#)).

The Global Conference included an [award ceremony of the 2023 edition of the International Literacy Prizes](#) (ILP). The six laureates from Finland, Pakistan, South Africa, Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, and Uganda were awarded the 2023 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prizes and UNESCO Confucius Prizes for Literacy by Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education of UNESCO who represented the Director-General of UNESCO. The ceremony was graced by the presence of Her Excellency Ms Sang Mee Bak, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Korea to UNESCO, His Excellency Mr Jin Yang, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the People’s Republic of China to UNESCO, and Ms Rana Dajani, Chair of the ILP Jury.

The Global Conference reflected on how literacy and numeracy can be better promoted as part of lifelong learning to achieve the vision of a more peaceful and sustainable societies to which the international community committed through the SDGs.



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Opening Session

Moderator: Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, Education Sector (ED/PLS), UNESCO

Opening remarks:

- Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO
- H.E. Mr Kouaro Yves Chabi, Minister of Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education, Benin and the Chair of the Steering Group of the Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning
- H.E. Ms Dipu Moni, Minister of Education, Bangladesh
- H.E. Ms Maria Brown Perez, Minister of Education, Ecuador (video message)
- H.E. Mr Cheikh Oumar Anne, Minister of National Education, Senegal
- Mr Laeek Siddiqui, SDG4Youth Network representative



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Following the projection of an [International Literacy Day 2023 video](#), the Opening Session started under chairpersonship of **Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, Education Sector (ED/PLS), UNESCO.**

Noting that ILD2023 is taking place at the critical juncture in the overall SDG4 journey, **Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education (ADG/ED) of UNESCO** highlighted the significant literacy progress over the 60 years, as well as significant remaining challenges with 763 million non-literate youth and adults, 244 million out-of-school children and adolescents, and 70 per cent of ten-year olds in low- and middle-income countries being unable to read a simple text. Uncertainties due to the impact of COVID-19 crisis and evolving skill needs such as literacy in a digital world call for us to increase our efforts and transform our thinking, approaches, and actions.



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She recalled some steps already taken for transformation, notably the Transforming Education Summit (September 2022) and the preceding work of the UNESCO International Commission on the Future of Education which proposed to build a new social contract for education embracing multiple perspectives and visions. Additionally, the Marrakech Framework for Action adopted at the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII, June 2022) set out a bold vision on literacy for transformation within a lifelong learning perspective. Ms Giannini said that education is a passport for greater freedoms, and literacy is a stamp to activate the power of the passport to cross various boundaries existing in our interconnected societies. She reaffirmed UNESCO's commitment to

literacy promotion, including the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning which leads the CONFINTEA VII follow-up and the Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning, stressing the distinctiveness of ILD2023 as an opportunity to recall why we need a stamp on our passport.

H.E. Mr Kouaro Yves Chabi, Minister of Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education, Benin and the Chair of the Steering Group of the Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning started his intervention by saying: that literacy is a wonderful opening tool that gives people an opportunity to access knowledge and skills relevant to shape peaceful, fair, inclusive sustainable societies. The ILD2023 theme resonates with global agendas and future visions of countries. Mr Chabi then shared Benin's literacy efforts, including two flagship programmes: a literacy campaign for adults who missed schooling in both national and French languages and a targeted campaign for traditional



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medical practitioners and fishermen to enhance their technical and vocational skills. In addition, Benin's active participation in the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning's (UIL) action research programme on Measuring learning outcomes in literacy and basic skills (RAMAA), translating assessments related to literacy and numeracy into three national languages. There is also a programme for decentralized management for literacy through capacity development of various stakeholders. He stressed that literacy should be included in various development projects. He called for concrete actions, especially to enhance the learning content, linking literacy with broader knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, and to foster partnerships for a whole-of-government approach.



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After expressing her admiration to those who tirelessly promote literacy, **H.E. Ms Dipu Moni, Minister of Education, Bangladesh** emphasized the urgent need to transform learning spaces through integrated, inclusive approaches to lifelong literacy learning, given the worldwide disruptions of literacy efforts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, by which 24 million learners, particularly girls and young girls, have been exposed to vulnerability and potential exclusion from formal education. Literacy is a precondition to unleash the transformative power of education. It is 'crucial to what makes us human. Literacy helps us organize and express our thoughts, build empathy, respect for different viewpoints and helps us to capture and convey ideas'. Bangladesh's efforts for promoting literacy as part of lifelong learning, including the two-decade long non-formal education policy, has born fruit with a substantial increase in adult literacy rates from 54 per cent in 2011 to 74 per cent in 2023. However, disparities in literacy access and attainment remain, which requires targeted interventions. Ms Moni reiterated the crucial role of multistakeholder partnerships, involving development partners, communities, and young people. She ended by emphasizing the need for a renewed political commitment to fostering a social contract that places education at its centre as a human right.

H.E. Ms Maria Brown Perez, Minister of Education, Ecuador, at the outset of her video message, stated that we all have the right to literacy and lifelong learning, which are important for integral development of individuals and construction of informed, participatory and adaptable societies. Under its inclusive education policy, Ecuador's Ministry of Education promotes flexible education for youth and adults in different modes, including semi-presential and distance education. In the current academic year (2022–23), 187,700 young people and adults are striving for obtaining bachelor's degrees, including 7,000 on-site students, 166,400 semi-presential ones, and 14,300 distance learners. Finally, Ms Perez stressed that education not just empowers individuals but becomes an engine for a positive change to lay the foundation for more equitable, sustainable, and peaceful societies.



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Recalling the commitment made in 2015 to achieve the SDGs, including enhancing quality, and inclusive education and lifelong learning, **the H.E. Mr. Cheikh Oumar Anne, Minister of National Education, Senegal**, recognized the remaining complex challenges and the need for significant transformation of education systems as addressed at the Transforming Education Summit (September 2022). Despite the repercussions of COVID-19 and other challenges, Senegal remains committed to building the inclusive education system which includes youth and adult literacy, allocating 22 per cent of the national budget to education. Within a subregional education policy framework, Senegal implements a national programme on 'Basic Education for Youth and Adults', offering diverse alternative education options, including literacy

classes, community school, bridging schools, and religious education systems. Senegal has also fostered interministerial collaboration for several ongoing initiatives. To capitalize its human capital for building more peaceful and sustainable societies, Mr. Cheikh Oumar Anne emphasized the urgency of meeting learning needs of a high number of non-literate individuals.

Mr Laeek Siddiqui brought in youth voices as of a **representative of the SDG4Youth Network**, which is a constituent of the SDG4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee, the apex body for global education cooperation. In the lead-up to ILD2023, nine network members conducted a study in collaboration with UNESCO to identify literacy challenges faced by young people. Seventeen interviews in seven countries and four UNESCO regions, with slightly over 50 per cent of respondents being female, revealed several issues, including language barriers, post-migration integration, limited education access, lack of mentorship and guidance, the digital divide worsened by the pandemic, economic hardships, limited opportunities for skills development, mental health concerns, and climate change threats. These findings resonate with the challenges outlined in the Youth Declaration for Transforming Education, developed with half a million young people across 170 countries and submitted to the UN Secretary-General during the Transforming Education Summit (TES, September 2022). Mr. Siddiqui invited governments and partners to commit to ensuring the Youth Declaration implementation. Peaceful and sustainable societies can be only achieved through the meaningful engagement of young people around the world in the process.



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Keynote speech: Lifelong literacy and numeracy — The imperative for building sustainable and peaceful societies

Moderator

- Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director of ED/PLS, UNESCO

Keynote speaker

- Mr Timothy Denis Ireland, Professor, Federal University of Paraiba, Brazil and Chairholder of UNESCO Chair in Youth and Adult Education

Main points of speech

Mr. Timothy Ireland, Professor, Federal University of Paraiba, Brazil and the holder of UNESCO Chair in Youth and Adult Education,

started his keynote speech by emphasizing the need for a new transformative narrative in education and literacy for our world in transition. In the face of the existential threats to humanity posed by global challenges, including climate change, such narrative is central to understanding the root causes of issues, unlearning outdated beliefs, and relearning other knowledges and ways of knowing besides the prevailing western epistemologies. The report of the UNESCO's International Commission on the Futures of Education, the Marrakech Framework of Action (June 2022), and the Transforming Education Summit report all call for a paradigm shift in education which is currently in a 'deep crisis'. More of the same is not a viable solution. Mr Ireland identified five characteristics of required transition in education: 1) a shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism, 2) from humanitarianism to ecological justice, 3) a shift from learning *about* the world to learning *with* the world, 4) expanding the notion of humanity to embrace 'more-than-humanity', and 5) from universality to pluriversality to cherish diversity.



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Noting the interconnectedness of literacy with different areas of the SDGs, he reminded the need for the integration of literacy into various social policies and called for the reintroduction of adult literacy rates into the Human Development Index. He then articulated how literacy contributes to shaping the new narrative. As Paulo Freire said, literacy enables people to read not only 'a word' but also 'a world', which facilitate valuing multiple ways of knowing and indigenous wisdom. This Freire's approach to literacy is integral to popular education which offers an alternative paradigm with its tremendous transformative and emancipatory potential. Popular education is concerned with 'good living', in which education and learning is understood as 'processes to become' and to achieve the well-being and collective happiness in harmony with the nature. Mr Ireland ended his speech recalling Paul Bélanger's alert, noting transformation may take some time: 'The planet will only survive if it becomes a learning planet.'

Questions and answers

Subsequently, Mr Ireland responded two questions. Regarding a new social contract required for transforming education, any movement for transforming education, which is an expression of society and development, should take a bottom-up approach with dialogue between policy-makers and civil society. The United Nations has a fundamental role to provide a platform for negotiation and reflect on long-term solutions beyond immediate fix of issues faced by humans. Concerning how

governments and organizations can ensure diverse voices are heard, the need to start with ensuring diverse voices in people's mother languages was stressed. There are some positive trends of more diverse voices and perspectives being heard through the ongoing reordering of international power relations and efforts for fostering cultural and linguistic diversity, with which he feels hopeful.

Panel 1: Enhancing governance and financing of literacy for Peace and Sustainable Development

Moderator

Mr. Abdel Rahamane BABA-MOUSSA, Secretary-General of the Conference of Ministers of Education of the States and Governments of the Francophonie (CONFEMEN).

Panelists

- **Harnessing the potential of learning cities for sustainable development and peace:** Dr Abdulrahman M. Alasmi, Director-General, Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States.
- **Multilateral efforts for promoting literacy for peace and sustainable development:** Ms Rebecca Telford, Chief, Education Section at the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).
- **Partnership for system enhancement and resource mobilization for literacy:** Ms Raphaëlle Martinez, Education Policy and Learning Team Lead, Global Partnership for Education.
- **Building a holistic and inclusive systems to promote literacy for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons:** Ms Hoda Jaberian, Programme Coordinator, Section of Migration, Displacement, Emergencies and Education, Division for Education 2030, UNESCO.
- **Literacy for the futures we want: Youth voices and actions:** Ms Diana Cristancho Diaz, SDG4Youth Network representative.

Key questions

1. What are the major trends and issues in governance and financing for literacy, especially youth and adult literacy at global, regional and national levels?
2. What is a one major change necessary to enhance governance and financing for literacy to promote sustainable development and peace?



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Main points of discussion

This session, moderated by **Mr. Abdel Rahamane BABA-MOUSSA**, Secretary-General of the CONFEMEN, explored the prevailing trends and challenges related to governance and financing for literacy at different levels, with a special attention on marginalized groups such as refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons. Following the panel discussion guided by two key questions, three participants raised some issues regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities, the available statistics on the marginalized people, and the need for increasing financing for adult literacy and education.

Regional platforms, such as the Global Network of Learning Cities, play a pivotal role to enhance policies and actions for promoting literacy as part of lifelong learning at the regional, national, city, and community levels.

Dr. Abdulrahman M. Alasmi, Director-General of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf (ABEGS) shared an example of regional cooperation through the regional forum of the Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) established in May 2023 in collaboration with the UIL. This Arab regional network intends to promote lifelong learning at the regional, national, and community levels through information exchange, peer learning, and specific activities to contribute to achieve sustainable development and peace. It also strives for enhancing lifelong learning policies at different levels and mainstreaming gender equality and youth within them. Engaged with a range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, universities, and the private sector, and using a digital platform, this regional network collaborates with other GNLC regional networks and supports community-level, contextualized activities to provide diverse lifelong learning opportunities, especially for the disadvantaged populations. An Arabic language teaching programme for non-native speakers, such as migrants, is a case in point. The GNLC is a cost-effective and time-saving solution for promoting literacy and lifelong learning towards sustainable development and peace. As a key element for enhancing governance and financing, Mr Alasmi highlighted the importance of a lifelong learning perspective and stressed the importance of teacher training and curriculum.

More hosting countries have eliminated policy barriers to refugees' access to education systems. But governance is still to be enhanced through interministerial cooperation for better integration of refugee education and literacy learning in policies, plans, programmes, and financing.



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Ms. Rebecca Telford, Chief of the Education Section at UNHCR, started with illustrating broad trends of displacement linked with multiple crises, such as conflicts and climate change, in which trends of governance and financing for literacy are situated. In 2023, our world became home to the highest number of refugees in history, which indicates the non-temporary nature of the issue. In 2022, 67 per cent of all refugees are in protracted situation, impacting their education, access to services, and social

cohesion, hindering peaceful societies. Literacy and foundational skills are the core to finding solutions for refugees and host communities, as well as language development where refugees' home, local and host-country languages tend to be different. Mother language-based, multilingual education for early years of primary school is a potential solution (e.g., Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo), but integration often takes precedence. To foster the sense of belonging and agency, teachers and refugees may not opt for using refugees' mother languages. For greater impact and scaling-up of effective practices, there is the sheer need to enhance our knowledge in literacy and language development for refugees, which is still limited, except where the refugee component is included in national systems and learning assessments, disaggregated by protection's data.

Regarding trends in governance and financing, a main governance challenge at the country level is coordinating and navigating between different ministries, typically a minister of education and a ministry in charge of home affairs/refugee management for managing literacy programmes, policies, and financing, as exemplified by Ethiopia and Pakistan. Many other countries also involve a ministry of social affairs that deals with literacy. A positive trend is that the majority of hosting countries have eliminated policy barriers for refugees to access national education systems, which has gradually increased refugee participation in language and literacy learning.

Taking a good example of Kenya, she highlighted the importance of a good plan, such as the Kenyan one that articulated humanitarian and peace initiatives along with functional literacy and support for social cohesion, which can facilitate resource mobilization and coordinated work across the humanitarian and development nexus. She stressed the need for enhanced governance and the integration of refugee issues in long-term planning and financing to ensure predictable funding and multi-year commitments to refugee education, if we are to achieve the SDG4 for all.

Noting the national leadership and inclusive partnerships as the critical factors for enhanced governance and financing for literacy, Ms Telford stressed the important notion that everyone matters and has a role to play, which helps us finding solutions with or within families, communities, and youth networks. As represented by a Kuma camp in Kenya, in which 80 per cent of children in secondary school are over age, boundaries between school and alternative learning are increasingly blurred. We need to include refugees in conversations of countries and partners such as ILD2024 and the Global Refugee Forum (December 2023).

The national leadership and inclusive partnerships are the two important elements to enhance governance and financing for education and literacy. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, such as the Global Partnership for Education, can bring governments and partners together to support foundational learning, promote an evidence-based approach to policymaking and programming, and to integrate literacy into national education sector plans.

Ms. Raphaëlle Martinez, from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), mentioned that the GPE does not focus on youth and adult literacy but supports marginalized children and youth through alternative learning. She highlighted three major global trends and issues, to which the GPE is responding. The first trend is an increasing focus on foundational Learning and literacy at the global and national levels, supported by some governance systems such as the [Global Coalition for Foundational Learning](#) created at the Transforming Education Summit. In the case of the GPE, the partnership compacts that support national education reforms serves as a delivering mechanism, bringing partners such as partners, including UNESCO, the United Nations Children’s Fund, and the World Bank under the national leadership. Of over 20 partnership compact countries, many of them are prioritizing foundational learning (e.g., Cote d’Ivoire, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Zanzibar, Uganda). The GPE also supports children with disabilities through enhancing inclusive programmes and data collection. Second, an evidence-based approach to dialogue and programming is increasingly becoming an important element to attract funding support for literacy. The GPE is committed to an enhancing evidence-based, equitable, system-level approach, covering wide-ranging areas, such as teacher preparation, curriculum, early childhood care and education, and assessment. In the Central African Republic, for instance, support is given to use Sango, a lingua franca spoken by most of the population, as a language of instruction in early years of primary education, along with pre-and in-service teacher training. In Bangladesh, the GPE provide funds for youth and adult literacy t through non-formal education programmes created for Rohingya refugees. Lastly, beyond ensuring adequate financing for education to meet the international benchmark of 20 per cent of public expenditures, collaboration around national education sector plans does play a role. Ms. Martinez stressed the need to integrate literacy interventions into national education sector plans since the plans can connect formal and non-formal education systems and serve as negotiation tools to secure domestic and international financing for education and literacy.

Regarding the second question about one required change to enhance governance and financing for literacy, Ms. Martinez stressed the importance of linking literacy with broader objectives of peace and sustainable development. The recent GPE study shows a positive correlation between education levels, including literacy rates, and a country's stability. Greater advocacy to increase financing for youth and adult is also required. For education to contribute to peace and security leaving on one behind, we need to invest in ensuring the country leadership and inclusive partnerships at the national, regional and international levels.

Aligning partners’ efforts with existing national policies, frameworks, and initiatives is essential for successful interventions. Collaboration and partnerships are also important to support gender-sensitive, community-based initiatives and literacy programmes that integrates learning of other knowledge and skills for better livelihoods and well-being.

Ms. Hoda Jaberian from UNESCO highlighted key trends and challenges in providing education to crisis-affected populations, particularly refugees and displaced persons from a lifelong learning perspective. A positive trend is progress in national policies and financing for youth and adult literacy. The Fifth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education reported that 66 per cent of reporting countries had improved their policies for adult education, including literacy, while half of reporting countries has increased financing for adult education. However, realities in adult literacy for refugees on the ground are still far from these global trends, and there are little relevant data

available. Youth and adult literacy of crisis-affected persons are systematically excluded in the situation, in which most of the global humanitarian funding for education, being only 3 per cent of the total funding, tend to be geared to formal education for children. Yet, three out of 10 young people in crisis-affected countries lack basic literacy skills and two-thirds of these are women. The gender gap remains acute in West and South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, in favour of men.

In response to these challenges, UNESCO promotes innovative, gender-sensitive, context-specific solutions. In Afghanistan, for instance, community-based literacy classes with teacher have proven to be effective, along with skills development programmes. Improving access to quality digital solutions for marginalized populations is another area in which UNESCO works with other partners. Ms Jaberian further supported the two comments raised by Ms. Martinez, namely the need for national leadership and inclusive partnerships to effect changes in governances and financial literacy. In the crisis-affected situation, it is important that partners respect and align their interventions with existing national policies, curriculum, teacher training, national qualification, and certification systems to avoid fragmented solutions. Partnerships with organizations such as the International Labour Organization also help integrate literacy development into other learning such as skills development for livelihoods and well-being and connect them with employment opportunities. To conclude, she shared examples of UNESCO's efforts in Haiti, Sudan, and South Sudan, where literacy has been promoted through community-based education initiatives, the development of learning centres, teacher capacities, curriculum, and policies to empower refugees for learning at higher levels of education and to enter the world of work.

Governments and partners need to increase domestic and external funds for education, ensuring allocations for marginalized individuals, such as persons with disabilities. Young people can play an important role in advocacy, policymaking, intervention, and public-private partnerships, as demonstrated by the Youth Declaration (2022).

Ms Diana Cristancho Diaz, representing the SDG4Youth Network, highlighted some trends in governance and financing for education. First, inadequate financing remains a major issue despite education being a right and a public good. National budget allocated to education is still to be increased in many countries. She also mentioned the importance of financing for supporting people with disabilities departing from a skills deficit approach. She urged GPE and other partners to extend funding support of multiple forms to more countries and reminded the importance of financing for transforming education as raised the international conferences held in 2022 (e.g., CONFINTEA VII, Pre-Summit, and the Transforming Education Summit). In addition, Ms. Diaz emphasized the importance of involvement of youth in education governance and how initiatives of young people can make a difference, drawing on the Youth Declaration issued at the Transforming Education Summit in 2022. This Declaration, prepared by young people with the support of UNESCO and the UN Youth Office, is implementable at the country level, including Articles 20 and 22 which call for investment in digital infrastructure to bridge the digital divide and an increase in education budget to reach the 20 per cent of public expenditure benchmark.

Regarding a change required to enhance governance and literacy, Ms Cristancho highlighted the potential of public-private partnerships, involving international cooperation and youth whose future visions do matter. Finally, she stressed the importance of equipping everyone, not just the privileged few, with adequate literacy skills and allocating more funds to adult literacy and education for making literacy and learning as lifelong endeavours.

Panel 2: Effective programmes, contents, and practices for unleashing the transformative power of literacy for sustainable and peaceful societies

Moderator

Mr Anantha Duraiappah, Director, UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development

Panellists

- **Effective lifelong literacy solutions to leave no one behind:** Mr Dan Wagner, UNESCO Chair in Learning and Literacy and Professor of Education, University of Pennsylvania, United States of America
- **Empowerment through literacy and vocational training:** Mr Issa Golo Damgoto, Director of Literacy and Promotion of National Languages, Ministry of National Education and Civic Promotion, Chad
- **Holistic, multisectoral approach to literacy interventions and practice:** Ms Maida Pasic, Regional Education Advisor for UNICEF Europe and Central Asia
- **Leveraging technology in literacy programmes for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons:** Ms Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, Team Leader Learning ecosystems, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
- **Implications of technological development for the promotion of lifelong literacy: Artificial Intelligence Competency Framework for Teachers,** Mr Mutlu Cukurova, Professor of Learning and Artificial Intelligence, University College London, United Kingdom



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Key questions:

1. What are the major challenges and factors that either impede or enable literacy programmes and practices to positively contribute to sustainable development and lasting peace?
2. How can literacy programmes and teaching and learning practice empower and transform people to build better relations between them, with the planet and with technology for the better futures?

Main points of discussion:

Moderated by Mr Anantha Duraiappah, Director, UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, the panellists held conversation around the key questions and more, followed by a brief question and answer session.

Defining literacy and effective approaches to its promotion should start with considering the unique profile, needs and aspirations of people, especially marginalized populations. Research informed by diverse perspectives and epistemologies can help government to make decisions that benefit the marginalized.

Mr Dan Wagner, UNESCO Chair in Learning and Literacy and Professor of Education, University of Pennsylvania, United States, started his intervention with the definition of literacy which has evolved over the past decades. It is critically important to link any definition of literacy with people's self-perceptions, their identities, and power relations in a given context, rather than starting with identifying what people do or should know. Literacy must be connected to specific knowledge sets, skills and tools required by people, especially the marginalized ones. In the use of technology, for instance, we should start with asking marginalized people if they are or would be interested in artificial intelligence (AI), rather than discussing how we adapt AI for marginalized populations.

Similarly, the origin, ownership, and historical evolution of key concepts and approaches to literacy need to be carefully considered. Today, we do not equate the state of lacking basic literacy skills to being uncivilized or ignorant. This was not, however the case about 35 years ago when Mr Wagner edited a book entitled *The Future of Literacy in a Changing World*. Another example is social and emotional learning (SEL). While SEL is important and is gaining currency in education discourses, we need to be aware that SEL derived from the literature on child development in the Western academic world and has been adapted in international conversations through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and industrialized countries. Finally, Mr Wagner stated that given the frequency of change in ministers, our role is to support them in making decisions to the benefit of the most marginalized through conducting and making research available in in both global south and global north.



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Chad's literacy plans and projects have contributed to raising education levels of populations, preparing young people for the world of work, promoting gender equality, and fostering peace. The revised literacy plan aligned with a new vision of literacy and the SDG4.6, address literacy challenges in relation with ethics, pandemics management, prevention of violent extremism, citizenship, and peace.

Mr Issa Golo Damgoto, Ministry of National Education and Civic Promotion, Chad, shared his country's experience. Chad has an education policy aligned with the SDG4, especially SDG Target 4.6. He explained how literacy specific plans, strategies, and initiatives have strengthened its education system, resulting in higher education levels of people and students' enhanced preparedness for the world of work. Chad's literacy plan has contributed to setting up structures and improving access and the quality of literacy provision. Recently, this national plan was updated in alignment with a new vision of literacy and the SDG4.6 with UNESCO's support, integrating new parameters, including ethics, pandemics management, prevention of violent extremism, citizenship, and peace. This plan adopts a two-cycle approach: the first cycle for literacy and the second one for practical application.

With the funding support, a digital technology-supported literacy programme has empowered approximately 96,000 women. This programme is now being rolled out in the entire country, using videos and other media. In conflict-affected situations, another literacy programme (2020–22) adopted specific strategies to bring together two antagonists — nomadic groups and farmers — for peace. In addition, Chad has worked to create synergies between literacy, vocational training, and professional practices. Lastly, Mr Damgoto stressed the importance of lifelong learning and leaving no one behind.

Foundational learning is of critical importance for lifelong learning, social cohesion, productivity and responding to global challenges. Promoting foundational learning requires childhood education, teachers, mother language-based multilingual education, and a holistic approach to learning, encompassing cognitive, social and emotional skills.

Ms Maida Pasic, Regional Education Advisor for UNICEF Europe and Central Asia, stressed the importance of foundational skills, such as literacy and numeracy, and social and emotional skills, for lifelong learning, social cohesion, productivity and effective responses to global challenges, including climate change. UNICEF promotes foundational learning as a top priority, addressing issues in four key areas.

The first area is early childhood education. UNICEF is working with governments to provide at least one year of preschool education. Participation of parents and their empowerment have proven to be effective as exemplified by the Serbia's reform which introduced play-based learning methodology, involving parents and grandparents to support children's literacy skill acquisition.

The second area is teachers. Quite often, teachers are not familiar with effective pedagogies for foundational skills. Ms Pasic highlighted the significance of robust teacher training and continuous professional development with an example from a Papua province in Indonesia, in which half of children were out of school and only 6 per cent of the remaining children were achieving the required level of proficiency in literacy and numeracy. A key to UNICEF's intervention for 'delayed learning' or 'differentiated learning' was teacher training to allow them to assess the individual needs, create the baselines, follow children through the learning process and adjust the teaching and learning, which improved learning outcomes.

Third, learning in mother language at least until Grade 3 of primary education enhances the readiness of young children for pre-primary and primary education and greater learning outcomes. It is also positively associated with cultural understanding and tolerance, building trust for peaceful co-existence. UNICEF supports Ukrainian refugee children in Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, involving adults from Ukrainian communities who act as teaching assistants and cultural mediators to ensure acquisition of both mother and host country languages and cultures. Similarly, UNICEF's programme in Bolivia fosters the acquisition, use and revitalization of indigenous languages by creating conducive environments (which UNICEF calls 'nests') at home, communities, and educational institutions.

Fourth, a holistic approach to learning, encompassing cognitive, social and emotional skills. A child who feels threatened, unsafe, and/or unhealthy cannot learn well. UNICEF support school to be a platform for children's physical and mental health, nutrition, and protection, in addition to a place for teaching and learning. In conclusion, Ms Pasic underscored the urgency of addressing the learning crisis and equipping everyone with foundational skills.

Technology-supported literacy programmes for refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) can make a difference if they consider diverse profile and needs of learners, as well as their experiences of trauma and stress, prepare educators, and adapt technologies to their lifestyles. Family literacy is an effective approach, turning literacy development in both mother and host country languages into an everyday practice.

Ms Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, Team Leader Learning ecosystems, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) talked about literacy and language development for refugees, migrants, and IDPs. Existing official statistics, such as 763 million illiterate adults, only scratch the surface of the significant literacy challenges they face. It is a source of serious concern that in the recent years, the number of these populations is on the rise with the duration of displacement being prolonged. She noted that literacy extends beyond linguistic skills of communicating with spoken and written words, symbols, and signs, enabling people to communicate, understand, identify, interpret, create, and compute in both physical spaces and cyberspace.

he recent research of the UIL looked into how information and communication technology (ICT) can support literacy learning of refugees, migrants and IDPs. The 25 case studies illuminated the importance of paying attention, in the programme design, to the complex characteristics and aspirations of these learners, as well as their experiences of exclusion, trauma and stress that can have negative impact on their cognitive functions. It is also important to build teachers' capacities and adopt technologies that are most appropriate to their lifestyles, which could be low-tech tools such as radios and televisions. SEL is another element which could be considered more systematically. In addition, Mr Zholdoshaliev shared insights from UIL's Family Literacy and Learning Programme, highlighting the potential of intergenerational learning for literacy and language development of refugees, migrants and IDPs. By engaging, parents and siblings as the resources, as well as children in literacy activities in both mother and host country languages, learning becomes an everyday practice in familiar environments. Additionally, the UIL's forthcoming book on this topic calls for a shift from the deficit model which focuses on what learners do not have, to an approach which starts with identification of their prior knowledge and skills, as well as their own learning practices and cultures to build on them. The question of marginalization is connected with 'literacy in what language', 'who defines what literacy is' and 'what it means to whom' and 'why'. Ensuring linguistic, cultural, and epistemic diversity in developing a knowledge base on literacy is important. Lastly, Ms Zholdoshaliev stressed the need for viewing literacy development as a lifelong process that can take place in formal, non-formal and informal settings.



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More to be known about what evolving technologies, such as generative artificial intelligence (AI), means to literacy, but they do have implications for literacy and language development, including pedagogical approaches. The adoption of AI needs to be based on a human-centred mindset (so as not to replace and diminish human roles), a critical review of the traditional progression models for literacy development, and a holistic approach to cover the skills for application and content acquisition, as well as ethics and the social implications of AI.

Mr Mutlu Cukurova, Professor of Learning and Artificial Intelligence, University College London, United Kingdom reflected on literacy in a digital world, drawing on his involvement in the development of AI competency framework for UNESCO. Regarding digital skills and skills to manage emerging technologies, such as AI, very little is known in terms of what it means to literacy, how we define relevant competencies associated with AI literacy, and how teachers and learners can be supported to develop these competencies. The new AI competency framework identifies 16 core competency blocks separated in two dimension that would enable people to understand, use effectively and ethically as well as evaluate and critique AI technologies.

He then highlighted three values that underpin this framework: 1) a human-centred mindset and emphasis on human agency, 2) values associated with critical thinking, and 3) values of a holistic perspective. First, the framework is designed to ensure that the technology serves to augment human skills and enrich our lives rather than replacing and diminishing human roles. Humans should be part of co-design of AI technologies to bring their agents in the initial conceptualization of these technologies. Second, critical thinking is extremely important for sustainable development and lasting peace. To integrate this in the framework, the team is rethinking some of the established literacy progression models as new technologies could change our abilities to manage the skills that are traditionally perceived advanced as the skills which actually might be much easier or a simple preceding levels of understanding. Third, the need to embrace AI competency holistically, covering not only the application and content acquisition skills but also the ethics and the social implications

of AI. These have implications for pedagogical approaches to language and literacy acquisition and literacy.

Mr Cukurova cautioned that emerging technologies such generative AI allow us, including children, to outsource thinking, writing, and synthesizing knowledge but we should be sceptical about its long-term impact on our literacy skills. Finally, he noted that, we need to focus first on human competencies before we expect any kind of effect of human skills augmented by technology.

Questions and answers

The question and answer period included two interventions. The first related to the need to empower children and young people with disabilities through literacy development to be integrated into societies. The second was about interdisciplinary research and the effective use of its results to improve literacy interventions, such as adopting epigenetics to understand the impact of children's experiences on their genes. Mr Duraiappah agreed on the need to enhance transdisciplinary sciences on education, saying that the education sector is currently missing an international science platform such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Recognizing the importance of interdisciplinary research, Mr Cukurova added the need to increase awareness of stakeholders about the value of such evidence.

UNESCO International Literacy Prizes 2023 Award Ceremony



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Master of Ceremony: Ms Louise Cuneo, Chief Editor, Le Point

Speakers:

- Ms Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education
- Ms Rana Dajani, Chair of the Jury of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes
- H.E. Ms Sang Mee Bak, Ambassador, Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Korea to UNESCO
- H.E. Mr Jin Yang, Ambassador, Permanent Delegation of the People's Republic of China to UNESCO

Laureates:**UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize**

- Mr Jesper Ryyänen, Chief Operating Officer, GraphoGame, Finland
- Mr Shahid-ur-Rehman, Executive Director, The Himalayan Literacy Network, Pakistan
- Mr Stephen Bestbier, Government Partnerships Manager, Snapplify, South Africa

UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy

- Mr Mahbubur Rahman Turza, Assistant Director Partnership Development, Friendship, Bangladesh
- Ms Catherine DeLaura, Executive Director, Dominican Republic Education and Mentoring Project, Dominican Republic
- H.E. Ms Doreen Ruth Amule, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Uganda to UNESCO



Following introductory remarks made by the Master of Ceremony, **Ms Louise Cueno, Chief Editor at Le Point, Ms Stefania Giannini, UNESCO ADG for Education** opened the 2023 Award Ceremony of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes by thanking the Government of the Republic of Korea for its support since 1989 for the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize, and the Government of the People's Republic of China for its support since 2005 for the UNESCO Confucius Literacy Prize. Ms Giannini then presented the six laureates from Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, Finland, Pakistan, South Africa, and Uganda, congratulating them on their significant achievements. Ms Giannini also thanked the International Jury, which was represented by Ms Rana Dajani, Chair of the Jury and the Founder of the 2017 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prizewinning programme, 'We Love Reading', for its commitment and hard work. Finally, she stated that 'Learning poverty starts with illiteracy' and stressed the importance of a lifelong learning approach to literacy to address learning poverty.



Following the words of appreciation and congratulations, **Ms Rana Dajani, Chair of the Jury of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes**, stated the first word in the Qur'an, Read (iquraa), means reading to reflect, reading to learn, and reading to change, which is the kind of reading we need for better future of the humanity. Our world faces multiple challenges and opportunities. First one is the SDGs for which education is a key. The four pillars of education — learning to know, learning to be, learning to do, and learning to live together — adopted in the UN Secretary-General's Vision Statement that was issued at the 2022 Transforming Education Summit, provides a good framework. Second, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and other crisis are calling for a paradigm shift in our thinking and action. Third, the advancement of AI is urging us to rethink education and the use of AI in it. Moving forward, we need to foster local solutions and grassroots action as showcased by Catalyst 23, recognize the individual uniqueness, value human interactions which are fundamental for human survival even in the age of AI, and change our mindset through reading. She advised the laureates to connect and network, as well as to learn and benefit from research and evidence to improve their work. She concluded by sharing that, "Each of you can become the change



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they want to see in the world, each one of you can become the butterfly, the guardian, and together we will make the world a better place for generations to come.”

2023 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize Laureates

H.E. Ms Sang Mee Bak, Ambassador, Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Korea to UNESCO congratulated the Laureates, recognizing their contribution to the promotion of literacy and mother languages. To increase access to education, it is important to consider the demands of learners and educators, and effective adoption of technology in education. She commended educators’ commitment even amidst complex and difficult times. Recognizing the scale of persistent literacy challenges, she called for resolute commitment of the international community to the literacy agenda. The notion of literacy has been expanded in its meaning and scope as our society changes, and we need to “continuously align literacy education and programmes with the contemporary relevance”. UNESCO has a pivotal role in this field with its multisectoral and comprehensive approach. Literacy is intricately interconnected with social justice, social cohesion, equal employment opportunities, and the right to connectivity. She reminded the King Sejong’s vision, which is to ensure, as a matter of human rights, that individuals from every social strata can read and write to benefit from education and access to knowledge.



Video presentation of prizewinning programmes

Mr Jesper Rynnänen, Chief Operating Officer of the GraphoGame organization, Finland, reiterated their commitment to transforming people’s lives towards more literate, inclusive, sustainable societies through literacy, adopting digital technology and working with partners. The **GraphoGame programme** aims to improve literacy skills of children and adults through literacy games available in 14 different languages. The programme has already reached over 5 million users.

Mr Shahid-ur-Rehman, Executive Director of the Himalayan Literacy Network NGO, Pakistan, acknowledged the award's significance for Pakistan and thanked supporters. Its **Mobile Schools Programme** aims to provide mother language-based, multilingual preschool and primary education to pastoralist children in remote Bakarwal communities in the southern Himalayas, spurring a literacy movement among these nomadic communities.

Mr Stephen Bestbier, Government Partnerships Manager, Snapplify, a leading EdTech company, **South Africa**, stated that literacy is not merely a privilege but a birth right, and is essential for building just, equitable and peaceful world. The **Africa e-Library project** was created in 2011 to provide children with access to thousands of free e-Books and curriculum-aligned educational contents in multiple local languages, based on the concept ‘Buntu’ which is interpreted as ‘what is good for one part of community if good for the whole community’.

2023 UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy Laureates



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H.E. Mr Jin Yang, Ambassador, Permanent Delegation of the People's Republic of China to UNESCO started his intervention by congratulating the Laureates: “Your commitments not only showcase the transformative potential of literacy but also serve as inspiring models for enhancing education and livelihoods for learners in your local communities.” We need to increase our efforts in advancing literacy and to be on track to achieve SDG4 by 2030. Confucius, a Chinese educationist and philosopher advocated education for all. Since the creation of the Confucius Prize for Literacy in 2005 to align with this philosophy, 48 programmes spanning 34 Member States were recognized. A Chinese proverb says that it takes 10 years to grow a tree but a hundred years to bring up a generation of good women and men. Mr Yang ended his remarks by emphasizing China’s commitment to supporting UNESCO’s efforts for the achievement of the SDG4 and a more prosperous future for humankind.

Video presentation of prizewinning programmes

Mr Mahbubur Rahman Turza, Assistant Director Partnership Development, Friendship, Bangladesh emphasizing the award's importance for Friendship and Bangladesh, highlighting their climate change efforts. The Empowering remote and climate vulnerable communities with digital literacy programme uses digital tools to provide primary education in a hybrid mode to children and young people in remote, climate vulnerable islands in Bangladesh.

Ms Catherine DeLaura, Executive Director of Dominican Republic NGO Education and Mentoring Project, said: “This prize motivates us to keep striving for promoting reading cultures, critical thinking in our core communities and be a model around the country.” The My Very Own Library: Cultivating a culture of reading in the homes of children in the Dominican Republic Programme aims to cultivate a culture of reading by making reading fun, accessible, and engaging for marginalized children and young people.

H.E. Ms Doreen Ruth Amule, Ambassador of the Permanent Delegation of Uganda for UNESCO, conveyed the gratitude of Ms. Dorothy Nakato of the Uganda National Self-Advocacy Initiative, a peer-led organization in Uganda, to UNESCO for awarding this prize, which has renewed their commitment to promoting literacy and inclusive education. The Peaceful Communities Programme aims to equip persons with psychosocial disabilities in the rural Kayunga District with essential literacy skills, fostering inclusive dialogues for peaceful communities.

Panel 3: Laureates of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes

Moderator: Mr Hervé Huot-Marchand, Chief of Section, Youth, Literacy and Skills Development, UNESCO

Panellists — Laureates

UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize

- Mr Jesper Rynänen, Chief Operating Officer, GraphoGame, Finland
- Mr Shahid-ur-Rehman, Executive Director, The Himalayan Literacy Network, Pakistan
- Mr Stephen Bestbier, Government Partnerships Manager, Snaplify, South Africa

UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy

- Mr Mahbubur Rahman Turza, Assistant Director Partnership Development, Friendship, Bangladesh
- Ms Catherine DeLaura, Executive Director, Dominican Republic Education and Mentoring Project, Dominican Republic
- Ms Dorothy Nakato Mubezi, Executive Director, Uganda National Self-Advocacy Initiative, Uganda (online)



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Key questions

1. What lessons have been learned, and what impact has each of your programmes had?
2. What are the one or two points you have either considered or already implemented to ensure the sustainability of your programme?

Main points of discussion

In 2023, UNESCO awarded the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize to programmes in Finland, Pakistan, and South Africa, emphasizing mother language-based literacy development, with the generous support from the Government of the Republic of Korea.

GraphoGame, Finland

Mr Jesper Rynnänen stated that GraphoGame's success lies in its research-based approach to technology-supported, game-based literacy learning. This application for the basic literacy acquisition was designed by the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, which brought together neurologists, neuropsychologists, and other relevant experts, and was gamified by his company. By providing low-cost, offline solutions that require no teacher or parental guidance, this game intends to break a vicious cycle of children from parents with no or low literacy skills tending to struggle with literacy learning. Regarding the sustainability of the programme, Mr Rynnänen emphasized the strength of a social enterprise model that the programme adopted to solve a literacy issue through a profitable game. By providing a financial incentive, this model has the potential to resolve the literacy challenge within just a few generations.

The Himalayan Literacy Network Programme, Pakistan

A key lesson shared by **Mr Shahid-ur-Rehman** was the importance of tailoring interventions to the specific characters and needs of people in the community, which in the case of this programme included people's low self-esteem and shyness and the tribal culture which did not allow girls to receive an education. By engaging community members, the programme helped people to be more confident, addressed gender disparities, promoted health awareness, and fostered peaceful and friendly attitude towards others. On the question of sustainability, the sense of ownership is important. Initially facing some difficulties at its start in 2005, the project ensured that the Bakarwal community took gradually ownership of the project, providing lodging, food, and financial support to teachers. Additionally, graduates of the programme who choose to stay in their own communities are assets, contributing to their communities. For financial sustainability, the community is exploring unique income sources, such as selling embroidered dresses.

Africa e-Library project: Promoting mother tongue literacy, South Africa

Mr Stephen Bestbier offered insights on the digital library project, outlining three key lessons. The first is provision of curriculum-aligned content in local languages linked with learners' cultures. Another aspect is related to scalability as this programme aims to expand from a small to a continental scale. For scaling up, remote support for those who lack sufficient digital skills is necessary. Third, partnerships among diverse stakeholders, including government, NGOs, publishers, and businesses, are essential for success, emphasizing the need for collaborative approaches to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. Regarding sustainability, this programme provides free access to government entities, which contributed to scaling up, resulting in over 1.5 million children benefiting from the e-library. As this number of children is growing, the programme in turn attracts more private sector partners. Furthermore, involving families in the learning process helped strengthen community ties and long-term viability as it empowers parents to engage with their children in reading and writing local languages.

Empowering remote and climate vulnerable Communities with Digital Literacy programme, Bangladesh

Mr Mahbubur Rahman Turza shared three challenges the programme has faced. The first challenge faced in 2007 was a teacher shortage for primary education, which was countered by training competent 7th or 8th grade students in the community. Second, when secondary education was introduced in 2015, those community educators was not adequate. The programme developed a video-based secondary education model which can be delivered in areas with limited Internet access. The third challenge was the persistent gap between educational attainment and securing decent job, for which career guidance was provided. He stressed that in addressing these challenges, technology is important but what is more important is considering the community needs and the ground reality. With regards to partnerships, the speaker emphasized the importance of building sustainable partnerships with long-term funding, as well as close collaboration with the government. On sustainability, Mr Turza mentioned that beyond financial or organizational aspects, what matters is a long-lasting impact on communities. Even if the programme were to end in the future, the positive effects, such as students pursuing higher education and becoming climate change advocates, would continue, inspiring future generations.

My Very Own Library programme, Dominican Republic Education and Mentoring Project, Dominican Republic

Ms Catherine DeLaura shared two lessons learned. The primary lesson revolves around making reading and education fun, for instance by adopting Montessori methodology and incorporating sports and vocational training into the curriculum. If it is fun, children and young people would like it, do more of it and become a lifelong reader and learner. Second, it is crucial to continuously measure, monitor and evaluate the programme impact for its constant improvement and for sharing the results with donors and stakeholders. For instance, '85% of the students and parents state that they read more at home due to having the books at home' makes the impact visible. She mentioned that the programme's sustainability is ensured through diverse funding sources, including private and public partnerships. The organization also ensures that no programme is initiated until a programme can be financially sustained for at least two years after donor funding ends.

Peaceful communities programme, Uganda National Self-Advocacy Initiative, Uganda

Ms Dorothy Nakato Mubezi, from the Uganda National Self-Advocacy Initiative, stressed the importance of targeting the most marginalized such as women, girls, and youth with disabilities in rural areas who are not enrolled in educational institutions. Some success factors of the Peaceful Communities programme, led by persons with disabilities, include its acceptability due to the use of their mother languages, accessibility due to its concern about the issues faced by people with disabilities (e.g., attitudes, institutional barriers, stigma and stereotypes), and affordability due to the optimal use of pre-existing resources such as teachers in the communities. Despite limited funding, the programme has achieved a remarkable success, including learners' empowerment (e.g. decent work and employment, including a lucrative coffee-selling venture start-up, improved self-esteem, and reduced stigma against persons with disabilities, and better support for children in school) and its contributions to the community through people's stronger engagement with communities (e.g., drafting minutes of community meetings, engagement with policymakers in local authorities). A potential expansion to other districts is foreseen.



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Questions & Answers

Two interventions occurred as part of the question and answer session. The questions were about digital technology, especially AI, language, and prize application management. Mr Bestbier explained that the Africa e-Book project works with a number of other African governments beyond South Africa. There is no limitation to the number of local languages used in its platform new languages

can be added in response to governments' commitments. Regarding the prize application preparation, Mr Mahbubur Rahman Turza and Ms Dorothy Nakato Mubezi said their applications reflected what they do on the ground. In a similar vein, for Mr Rehman and his team, what they focused on was ensuring the application included historical context and evidence. Mr Jesper Rynnänen explained their advocacy efforts to socialize their game, reaching out to the Finnish Foreign Ministry and the Permanent Delegation. Ms DeLaura advised anyone interested in the Prizes to keep applying, as her programme had done.

Closing session

Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, Education Sector, UNESCO distils the essence of the global conference discussions into three key-takeaways. Firstly, literacy is not confined to mere reading and writing. It is also connected with community engagement and sustainable development. Secondly, he reminded participants that a lifelong learning perspective is inherent in promoting literacy with learning being a continuous journey, occurring in various spaces and contexts, including libraries, communities, schools, networks, and spaces in the nature. Third, multi-stakeholder collaborations are important to leverage the potential of diverse actors, such as governments, NGOs, communities, educators, programme managers, and other stakeholders. Mr Chakroun extended a heartfelt appreciation to the participants, moderators, speakers, and the jury members. He congratulated the laureates, noting their exceptional work for inspiring and driving the collective commitment towards fostering literacy and learning worldwide.



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Annex

Agenda of the Global Conference on ‘Promoting literacy in a world in transition: Building sustainable and peaceful societies’ (Paris, 8 September 2023)

Friday, 8 September 2023	
8:30 - 9:30	Registration (125 Avenue de Suffren, Paris 75007 – UNESCO’s back entrance)
9:30 - 9:34	Video Projection
9:34 - 10:30	<p>Opening Session</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, Education Sector (ED/PLS), UNESCO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO • H.E. Mr Kouaro Yves Chabi, Minister of Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education, Benin and the co-Chair of the Steering Group of the Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning • H.E. Ms Dipu Moni, Minister of Education, Bangladesh • H.E. Ms Maria Brown Perez, Minister of Education, Ecuador (video message) • H.E. Mr Cheikh Oumar Anne, Minister of National Education, Senegal • Mr Laeek Siddiqui, SDG4Youth Network representative
10:30 – 11:00	<p>Keynote speech: Lifelong literacy and numeracy - The imperative for building sustainable and peaceful societies.</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director of ED/PLS, UNESCO</p> <p>Keynote speaker: Mr Timothy Denis Ireland, Professor, Federal University of Paraiba, Brazil and Chairholder of UNESCO Chair in Youth and Adult Education</p> <p>Question and Answer</p>
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee break

11:15 – 12:45	<p>Panel 1: Enhancing governance and Financing of literacy for Peace and Sustainable Development</p> <p>This session will reflect on the major trends and issues in governance and financing of literacy, focusing on youth and adult literacy, and will explore ways to enhance them through a lifelong literacy lens. It will also reflect on the key role of each actor in promoting literacy through a democratic, whole-of-society approach towards more sustainable and peaceful societies.</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Abdel Rahamane BABA-MOUSSA, Secretary-General of the Conference of Ministers of Education of the States and Governments of the Francophonie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harnessing the potential of learning cities for sustainable development and peace: Dr Abdulrahman M. Alasmi, Director-General, Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States • Multilateral efforts for promoting literacy for peace and sustainable development: Ms Rebecca Telford, Chief, Education Section at United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees • Partnership for system enhancement and resource mobilization for literacy: Ms Raphaëlle Martinez, Education Policy and Learning Team Lead, Global Partnership for Education • Building a holistic and inclusive systems to promote literacy for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons: Ms Hoda Jaberian, Programme Coordinator, Section of Migration, Displacement, Emergencies and Education, Division for Education 2030, UNESCO • Literacy for the futures we want: Youth voices and actions: Ms Diana Cristancho Diaz, SDG4Youth Network representative
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch
13:45 – 15:15	<p>Panel 2: Effective programmes, contents and practices for unleashing the transformative power of literacy for sustainable and peaceful societies</p> <p>This session will look into effective lifelong literacy solutions in programmes, contents and practices, while exploring ways to enrich a culture of lifelong learning.</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Anantha Duraiappah, Director, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, UNESCO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective lifelong literacy solutions to leave no one behind: Mr Dan Wagner, UNESCO Chair in Learning and Literacy and Professor of Education, University of Pennsylvania, United States of America

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment through literacy and vocational training: Mr Issa Golo Damgoto, Director of Literacy and Promotion of National Languages, Ministry of National Education and Civic Promotion, Chad • Holistic, multisectoral approach to literacy interventions and practice: Ms Maida Pasic, Regional Education Advisor for UNICEF Europe and Central Asia • Leveraging technology in literacy programmes for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons: Ms Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, Team Leader, Learning ecosystems, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning • Implications of technological development for the promotion of lifelong literacy: Artificial Intelligence Competency Framework for Teachers, Mr Mutlu Cukurova, Professor of Learning and Artificial Intelligence, University College London, United Kingdom
<p>15:15 – 15:30</p>	<p>Coffee break</p>
<p>15:30 – 16:30</p>	<p>Award ceremony of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes 2023</p> <p>Master of Ceremony: Ms Louise Cuneo, Chief Editor, Le Point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO • Ms Rana Dajani, Chair of UNESCO International Literacy Prizes Jury • H.E. Ms Sang Mee Bak, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Korea to UNESCO • Laureates of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Jesper Rynänen, Chief Operating Officer, GraphoGame, Finland • Mr Shahid-ur-Rehman, Executive Director, The Himalayan Literacy Network, Pakistan • Mr Stephen Bestbier, Government Partnerships Manager, Snapplify, South Africa • H.E. Mr Jin YANG, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the People’s Republic of China to UNESCO • Laureates of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Mahbubur Rahman Turza, Assistant Director Partnership Development, Friendship, Bangladesh

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Catherine DeLaura, Executive Director, Dominican Republic Education and Mentoring Project, Dominican Republic • H.E. Ms Doreen Ruth Amule, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Uganda to UNESCO
<p>16:30 – 17:45</p>	<p>Panel 3: Laureates of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes</p> <p>Building on the previous session, this session will reflect on how the prizewinning programmes manage their programmes, teaching and learning approaches, educators and other staff, and the contents and materials, underpinned by a lifelong literacy perspective.</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Herve Huot-Marchand, Chief of Section, Youth, Literacy and Skills Development, UNESCO</p> <p>Laureates of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Jesper Rynnänen, Chief Operating Officer, GraphoGame, Finland • Mr Shahid-ur-Rehman, Executive Director, The Himalayan Literacy Network, Pakistan • Mr Stephen Bestbier, Government Partnerships Manager, Snapplify, South Africa <p>Laureates of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Mahbubur Rahman Turza, Assistant Director Partnership Development, Friendship, Bangladesh • Ms Catherine DeLaura, Executive Director, Dominican Republic Education and Mentoring Project, Dominican Republic • Ms Dorothy Nakato Mubezi, Executive Director, Uganda National Self Advocacy Initiative, Uganda
<p>17:45 – 18:00</p>	<p>Closing session</p> <p>Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, ED/PLS, UNESCO</p>
<p>18:10 – 20:00</p>	<p>Reception (Japanese garden)</p>



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and Cultural Organization

Report of the Global Conference on

Promoting literacy for a world in transition:

Building the foundation for sustainable and peaceful societies

International Literacy Day

The report presents an overview of the global celebration of International Literacy Day (ILD) 2023 held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France on 8 September 2023. Under the ILD2023 theme of 'Promoting literacy for a world in transition: Building the foundation for sustainable and peaceful societies', the Global Conference explored how literacy and numeracy can be better promoted as part of lifelong learning to achieve more peaceful and sustainable societies as envisioned by the international community through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The global celebration also included the award ceremony of the 2023 edition of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes with six outstanding laureates from Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, Finland, Pakistan, South Africa and Uganda.

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