

UNESCO's contribution to the mid-term global review of the implementation of the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010

Summary

The present report, prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is a contribution to the mid-term global review of the implementation of the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010, which is being prepared by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries. It reviews the work undertaken by UNESCO and it focuses on the progress made, the challenges encountered, and presents possible new approaches for the next five years of the Decade. Specific LDC-related publications and events have also been highlighted.

UNESCO's Strategy in support of LDCs

The overarching goal of the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010 is to make substantial progress toward halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger by 2015 and to promote the sustainable development of LDCs. UNESCO is assisting LDCs in achieving this goal through its areas of competence: education, culture, the natural sciences, the social and human sciences, and communication and information. Specifically, UNESCO is assisting LDCs by:

- targeting the most disadvantaged groups – women, youth and marginalized persons – and identifying specific actions for them;
- spreading and replicating successful examples of non-formal education and alternatives to traditional formal education;
- encouraging the use of science and technology in order to improve living conditions;
- using culture as a lever for poverty alleviation by promoting artistic creation, developing cultural industries and securing intellectual property rights;
- and fostering the access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy 2002-2007 (31 C/4) commits the Organization to mainstreaming the needs and requirements of LDCs into all of its programme activities. Mainstreaming the development needs of LDCs into UNESCO's programmes means ensuring the full mobilization and coordination of all UNESCO Programmes, with a view to facilitating the coordinated implementation of, and coherence in, the follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action for the LDCs at the country, regional and global levels; providing coordinated support to LDCs to assess progress and conduct a review of the implementation of the Programme of Action; undertaking advocacy work in favour of the LDCs, in partnership with the relevant agencies of the United Nations, as well as with civil society, media, NGOs and foundations; and assisting in mobilizing international support and resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs and other relevant international programmes and initiatives for those countries.

Special emphasis on LDCs in Africa

As thirty-four of the 50 LDCs are African, and all are in sub-Saharan Africa, UNESCO realizes the need to assist the continent in reaching the MDGs. To this end, UNESCO's activities are focused on supporting the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This is reflected in UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy (2002–2007) that was designed to respond explicitly to the needs and priorities identified by NEPAD.

In this framework, UNESCO assisted NEPAD with the development of Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. This Plan of Action focuses on specific projects and concrete actions needed in order to build the continent's capacities to harness, apply and develop science and technology in order to eradicate poverty, fight diseases, stem environmental degradation, and improve economic competitiveness. A high level working group (AU-NEPAD-UNESCO) was established to ensure implementation of this Plan.

During the Sixth Ordinary Session of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (Khartoum, Sudan, 23-24 January 2006) devoted to education and culture, a cooperation agreement between UNESCO and the African Union was signed, which updates the cooperation framework between UNESCO and the African Union, set up in 1968, and outlines areas of joint cooperation.

UNESCO also launched the African World Heritage Fund on 4 May 2006, which aims to raise new and additional resources from Governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, non-governmental organizations and the corporate sector to address some of the challenges faced by African countries in identifying, protecting and managing natural and cultural World Heritage properties. This fund, which has already received a 3.5 million contribution from South Africa, will contribute to increasing and strengthening human resource capacity and awareness, and will ensure that natural and cultural heritage contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Eradication of poverty, in particular extreme poverty

In order to empower LDCs to fight poverty, UNESCO is contributing, across the range of its activities, to the global campaign to halve extreme poverty by the year 2015, with particular emphasis on LDCs. Eradicating poverty, especially extreme poverty, is one of the two cross-cutting themes of the Organization's Medium-Term Strategy for 2002–2007. In sum, UNESCO has undertaken the following projects in LDCs:

- policy formulation and implementation, including assisting in the design of country-owned, integrated pro-poor national policies and frameworks, involving all stakeholders, and building the capacities of governments to put in place participatory and inclusive processes at national and local levels;
- advocacy and information, emphasizing that freedom from poverty is a human right, a global ethical imperative, and a top priority for governments and the international community;
- policy-oriented research contributing to the analysis of extreme poverty – and monitoring progress toward its eradication;
- capacity-building, particularly in countries immersed in or emerging from conflict or natural disasters and at local levels;

- innovative field projects, especially through projects under its cross-cutting themes, to demonstrate feasibility and potential results as a basis for translating them into policies and mainstreaming them nationally or in other countries.

Within the context of the cross cutting theme to eradicate poverty, especially extreme poverty, UNESCO contributed to strengthening human security and to fighting human trafficking in Benin, Nigeria, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa and Togo. Research was undertaken to identify the factors leading to human trafficking (poverty, harmful practices and beliefs, lack of information, HIV/AIDS, etc.) and policy recommendations were issued on fighting human trafficking in the six pilot countries in order to enhance the capacities of local, national and regional leaders in fighting trafficking using poverty eradication and human rights enhancement strategies. Activities to strengthen human security included:

- strengthening the capacities of the most deprived sections of the community – in particular women and/or teenage girls - as agents of social transformation;
- raising awareness among communities on HIV/AIDS, opportunistic illnesses and malaria;
- improving the supply of drinking water in communities;
- and analyzing the project and evaluating its impact from the standpoint of human security and poverty reduction.

Education for all (EFA)

EFA is indispensable for human capacity development and poverty eradication in LDCs. It is needed to promote economic growth, create employment opportunities, foster civic participation, personal development and empower women. The Achievement of Universal Primary Completion by 2015 is a special challenge for LDCs: 18 out of the 59 countries ‘Not on Track’, and 18 out of the 29 countries ‘Seriously Off-Track’ to achieve this MDG are LDCs.

UNESCO recognizes that true, sustainable learning begins to occur only after the completion of at least 5 to 6 years of primary education of reasonable quality. Within the EFA framework, UNESCO is helping these countries provide free and compulsory primary education of quality, with particular focus on girls, and promoting informal and community-based approaches in LDCs, which, by capitalizing on the skills and capacities of the poor and disadvantaged themselves, are aimed at helping them to devise their own strategies for the eradication of poverty and exclusion. Major efforts have been undertaken in the field of teacher training, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a lack of teachers due to the impact of HIV/AIDS (teachers dying, sick, or carrying for others), capacity development for the management and administration of schools systems, book development and reading for all, and guidance and counseling to provide quality education.

In order to accelerate action towards assisting the LDCs to reach the six EFA goals and the MDG goals, UNESCO is focusing its action on three main initiatives: the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment to achieve 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015 by anchoring literacy work in national development policies, life skills programmes and poverty reduction strategies at the national level; the Teacher Training Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa to address the crisis of teacher shortage due to the spreading of HIV/AIDS, armed conflicts and other

causes, in sub-Saharan Africa; and the Global Initiative on HIV/AIDS and Education (GIHAE) in partnership with UNAIDS, co-sponsoring organizations, donors, civil society and the private sector in order to scale up education actions addressing HIV/AIDS through improved coordination, increased capacity and revitalized commitment at all levels.

Achievements include:

- Implementing national programmes for the reconstruction of education systems in Afghanistan, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia;
- Assisting in developing basic and primary education policies in (Haiti, Senegal, Chad, Niger, Burundi, Madagascar, Somalia, Guinea-Bissau and Sudan) with specific focus on alternative learning opportunities for out-of-school populations;
- Promoting gender-responsive education in LDCs in Asia and Africa through dedicated partnership with FAWE (Forum for African Women Educationalists), and by networking with ministries of education in South-East Asia (GENIA) and in West Africa (WENE);
- Reducing gender gaps in science and technology education in secondary education through efforts aimed at increasing the interest and participation of girls in school science, particularly those girls living in difficult circumstances (Malawi and Afghanistan);
- Strengthening capacities of policy-makers, to implement policy reform, curriculum renewal and teacher training for TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training), in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Guinea, Malawi;
- Testing the use of ICTs for distance education for disadvantaged youth at secondary level in selected LDCs in Africa, Asia and Latin America;
- Providing in-country support to LDCs in all regions for capacity development in EFA planning, implementation and monitoring, including Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) and action plans, decentralization of education management, and planning, costing and review of the education sector development plans in the light of EFA Goals and education reform;
- Providing technical assistance, in collaboration with partner agencies, for the integration of EFA into sector-wide planning frameworks in Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Cambodia, Nigeria, Nepal, Cameroon and Chad;
- Strengthening capacities in curriculum analysis and development for poverty alleviation in nine sub-Saharan countries;
- Sustaining political commitment for EFA through the organization of the Working Groups on EFA, the EFA High-Level Group (Brasilia, 2004; Beijing, 2005), the Ministerial Round Table on EFA (2005) and E-9 meetings;

- Providing policy- and decision-makers with information about progress achieved against the six Dakar goals and targets, including the Millennium Development Goals for Education, through the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (2001, 2002, 2003/4, 2005, 2006), which also highlights effective policies and strategies, alerts the global community to emerging challenges and promotes international action and co-operation;
- Training more than 900 teachers through the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa on how use distance education and ICTs, and providing teaching/learning materials on HIV/AIDS for use by teachers in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Swaziland.

Encouraging the use of science and technology to improve living conditions in LDCs

The essential role of science – including mathematics, engineering, and technology – as a foundation for sustainable development and for the fight against poverty (MDG 1) was acknowledged at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg, 2002). As such, UNESCO’s Natural Sciences Sector has been working to build human and institutional capacities in LDCs in the area of science and technology in order to help the poor benefit from improved access to natural resources, particularly to safe drinking water. Emphasis has been placed on capacity-building in areas such as the sustainable use of natural resources, including water; environmental management; the impact of climate change; and renewable energy in order to ensure environmental sustainability (MDG 7). In addition, the Organization has been working with LDCs to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters, and is spearheading worldwide efforts to develop and commission appropriate tsunami early warning systems.

Achievements include:

- Providing training to over 200 water specialists, many from LDCs, in various water resource management disciplines such as groundwater modeling, water harvesting, and wastewater management;
- Providing over 5,000 researchers, university teachers, young scientists and women scientists (many of whom are from LDCs) with training in science and technology and with fellowships or grants for their work through UNESCO’s Centres of Excellence;
- Assisting with the establishment of 482 Biosphere Reserves in 102 countries, many of which have innovative governance mechanisms for reconciling conservation and development, including the establishment of the Socotra Biosphere Reserve in Yemen and the transboundary Biosphere Reserve located in Senegal and Mauritania;
- Providing young researchers in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Benin, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Mali, Myanmar, Niger and Sudan with up to US \$5,000 each to conduct interdisciplinary research on ecosystems, natural resources and biodiversity through the MAB (Man and the Biosphere) Young Scientists Award Scheme;

- Providing 20 qualified doctoral or post-doctoral students from LDCs in sub-Saharan Africa, under the Mori Fellowship programme with research and training opportunities in mathematics and physics (broadly defined to include, for example, the physics of climate and weather, fluid dynamics, oceanography and seismology);
- Establishing the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) Regional Office for Africa in collaboration with the African Academy of Sciences in order to strengthen cooperation and reinforce the impact of ICTP's activities in Africa;
- Coordinating with the European Space Agency (ESA) on a project to produce satellite images for the development of accurate maps for World Heritage sites in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Uganda to enable park rangers to monitor the habitat of the endangered mountain gorilla;
- Leading the building of the "Core system implementation" of an Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWS) and working with LDCs that border the Indian Ocean to encourage them to participate and take ownership of the establishment of the IOTWS and to build their own national tsunami warning centers;
- Launching the LINKS project (Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems), to place marginalized rural communities at the heart of sustainable development and biodiversity conservation initiatives by advocating full recognition of their unique, knowledge, know-how and practices (numerous field activities carried out in Bangladesh, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu).

Promoting gender equality and equal rights for women in LDCs

Promoting gender equality and equal rights for women is key to contributing to the eradication of poverty, eliminating hunger, combating disease and stimulating growth and sustainable development. Gender equality and the equal rights for women were promoted in LDCs through policy-oriented research, networking, advocacy and institution building. It is also being promoted through gender mainstreaming throughout all programmes and all stages of UNESCO's activities in order to close the social, economic and political inequality gap between women and men in LDCs.

Achievements include:

- Organizing a conference in Addis, Ababa from 30 May to 1 June 2005 on "Empowering Women in the Great Lakes Region: Violence, Peace, and Women's Leadership," which brought together policy-makers, NGO activists, and academics from the Great Lakes Region to discuss research, policy and activism toward women's empowerment in the region;
- Implementing a programme of action to empower women in the Great Lakes Region, which includes the establishment of a Women's Research and Documentation Center in

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo and establishing women's studies programmes universities in Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

- Providing technical assistance to the UNESCO Office in Kabul to establish a Gender Training Institute in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Promoting and respecting all internationally recognized human rights, including the right to development in LDCs:

UNESCO has been promoting human rights in LDCs through the advancement of human rights research and the targeted dissemination of knowledge on human rights. Activities to promote human security, peace and conflict prevention, in LDCs have also been pursued.

Achievements include:

- Formulating ethical, standard-setting and educational frameworks for the promotion of human security for the Africa region (in cooperation with the African Union) and for the Eastern Europe subregion;
- Drawing up a draft report on human security, which will be discussed and finalized at an interregional conference on the promotion of human security to be held in Paris in 2007 - and which will also be a contribution to a discussion of the issues dealt with in the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change;
- Analysing the different forms and manifestations of violence, including terrorism;
- Raising general public awareness about violence through the dissemination of the *Notebooks on violence* series, aimed at junior and senior high-school readers;
- Raising awareness about the need for peace through the *UNESCO Prize for Peace Education*, which rewards outstanding commitment to the ideals of peace and tolerance, and continued close cooperation with the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Foundation for Peace;
- Creating opportunities for dialogue among civil society stakeholders in the Middle East and in the Great Lakes region to promote reconciliation;
- Initiating the implementation of the Integrated Strategy on Democracy implemented through activities of the International Centre for Human Sciences (Byblos), in particular by fostering comparative analytical research, organizing International Dialogues on the Future of Democracy and Supporting Democracy in Post-Conflict Societies.

Using culture as a lever for poverty alleviation by promoting artistic creation, developing cultural industries and securing intellectual property rights in LDCs

The importance of culture as a factor of sustainable development and poverty reduction, particularly in LDCs, has been a core theme of UNESCO over the years, resulting in many

activities aimed at the promotion of cultural diversity, in particular through the safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage. The Organization's strategy for the protection and promotion of cultural diversity worldwide has led to three major achievements:

- the anchoring of cultural diversity in heritage preservation and in development policies (notably through living cultures and cultural industries);
- the entry into force of the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- and the adoption by UNESCO Member States of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

Natural and cultural heritage sites can be catalysts for a new process of sustainable development, by making a site more attractive to investment and stimulating the regeneration of economic activities. Best practices in World Heritage sites have shown that integrated conservation and sustainable development of the sites through conservation-related activities such as cultural industries, development of crafts and associated sectors, encourage tourism. This in turn strengthens the sustainability of conservation operations and improves the livelihoods of the community.

Within the context of safeguarding cultural heritage, twelve pilots projects were launched in the following LDCs :

- Preservation of the Endangered Collections in the National Museum in Kabul, Afghanistan;
- Preservation of the Arts of the Dogon, Mali /Niger;
- Preservation of Endangered archaeological sites and artefacts of Jawf, Yemen;
- Preservation of the Prehistoric Artifacts of Gebel Barkal, Sudan;
- Preservation of Endangered Movable Cultural Heritage in Myanmar;
- Preservation of the Endangered Cultural Assets of H'mong, Yao and T'ai people of Northern Laos;
- Preservation of the Gourmantche Collection of the National Museum of Burkina Faso;
- Preservation of endangered museum collections in the Liberia National Museum;
- Preservation and management of Threatened Cultural heritage of Madagascar in collaboration with local communities;
- Preservation of the Collections of Haiti National Museum.

Conservation-related activities such as cultural industries and the development of crafts are considerable income generating opportunities for LDCs and promote the achievement of MDGs 1, 7 and 8, namely "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger", "ensure environmental sustainability" and "develop a global partnership for development" in LDCs. In this context, UNESCO has set up the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity that is designed to forge new synergies amongst public, private and not-for-profit sectors with a view to establishing cultural industries in developing countries and LDCs that are viable and competitive, promoting respect for international copyright regulations and developing effective mechanisms to prevent piracy. So far the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity has promoted the establishment of 55 partnerships

and includes more than 500 members representing multinational companies and medium- and small-sized enterprises.

UNESCO's main objectives of promoting handicrafts as a means of poverty reduction for LDCs, are to train women and youth in design and trading for the creation of handicrafts, to provide decision-makers with a strategy for small crafts enterprises, to foster the establishment of craft micro-enterprises using micro-credit schemes and to enhance access to regional and world markets for artisans. This programme has been implemented in the following LDCs: Haiti, Senegal and Cambodia. Additional training was also provided to craftswomen on the production, marketing and sale of crafts through a series of sub-regional workshops: Senegal, 2000 (for Western Africa) Cameroon, 2003 (for Central Africa) Madagascar, 2005 (for Indian Ocean).

Promoting the access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to reinforce democratic governance and citizen participation in LDCs

UNESCO is working to tackle the digital divide in LDCs through its Community Multimedia Centre (CMC) programme, which provides a gateway to participation in the global knowledge society, especially of women and youth, seeking to ensure that information, communication and knowledge become tools for the poor for improving their lives.

A CMC combines community radio, run by the local people using local languages, with community telecentre facilities such as computers linked to Internet and e-mail, phone, fax; and photocopying services. Radio is low-cost and easy to operate, and not only informs, educates and entertains, but also empowers the community by giving a strong public voice to the voiceless. With training, communities can locally access, manage, produce and communicate information for development.

In addition to developing community radio stations, UNESCO is promoting democratic governance and citizenship participation in LDCs, particularly those in post conflict situations, through the following activities: training journalists and media professionals in non-partisan and independent reporting techniques in conflict areas, particularly women journalists; supporting the establishment of the necessary conditions for independent media by providing expertise to national authorities seeking to adapt their media legislation to internationally recognized standards of freedom of expression, peace and tolerance; supporting the production and co-production of media programmes promoting peace, tolerance and mutual understanding in post-conflict areas; ensuring the security and safety of media professionals through training seminars and by regularly updating the practical guide for journalists working in conflict zones; and assisting media in covering elections as free and fair elections are essential for democracy consolidation and conflict prevention.

Achievements include:

- Providing independent media assistance to Angola, the Great Lakes Region in Africa, the Middle East, East Timor, and Afghanistan, which has contributed to peace building and reconciliation processes (over 50 CMC created or supported);

- Jointly organizing a seminar in 2003 on “Assistance to Media in Tension Areas and Violent Conflict” with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, which generated a number of recommendations that aim at combining conflict management strategies and press freedom principles, particularly in LDCs;
- Signing the Memorandum of Understanding for the Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa -- a network of international and local partners, both non-governmental and intergovernmental, which will facilitate the provision of rapid and collaborative support to the media to pre-empt and mitigate conflicts and their humanitarian consequences as well as ensure the transition of these quick impact projects into sustainable efforts towards democratization and development;
- Providing technical and advisory assistance in organizing the three-day National Conference on Media Law and Policy Reform in Liberia from October 21 to 23, 2004, which brought together key local and international stakeholders to critically review all laws and policies which have implications for media practice in Liberia and agree on a program of comprehensive reform leading to the emergence of a legal and institutional framework for the media, which takes local circumstances in Liberia into account, but nonetheless meets regional and international standards for the protection of media freedom and freedom of expression ;
- Training 1,200 professionals worldwide on using communication and information technology;
- Collaborating with partners on such as (i) Microsoft and Intel for teacher training; and (ii) IT companies, Alcatel, Space and IBM for the provision of scientific information to scientific research institutions in South-East Europe (SEE) supported by the European Space Agency (ESA) to provide ICT-based distance learning in LDCs;
- Supporting the global network of young television producers, (in coordination with UNICEF and UNDP) and conducting training workshops on HIV/AIDS in 23 countries in four regions, for young television producers;
- Developing recommendations on communication policies and public information strategies to reduce risks and damages caused by natural disasters, in cooperation with the International Federation of the Red Cross.

Challenges:

- Ensuring the protection and safety of journalists, especially in conflict and post-conflict areas;
- Enhancing community access to communication and information technologies in order to enable wider participation of different population segments, especially those in poor and marginalized areas, in knowledge societies;

- Providing LDCs with the necessary professional and financial capacity to produce their own quality local media content and to preserve documentary heritage;
- Strengthening the role of the media in enhancing intercultural dialogue;
- Ensuring effective participation in the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) to coordinate the implementation of WSIS;
- Sufficiently recognizing both internationally and nationally that literacy is a priority for achieving EFA goals, that the shortage of qualified teachers is a serious problem for LDCs if they are to reach the EFA goals, and the enormous potential that ICTs have to provide educational learning opportunities and to promote the EFA goals;
- Improving the quality of education while also expanding access to education;
- Clarifying the roles of EFA partners within the context of the Global Action Plan, which is essential to achieving universal primary education for all by 2015 (MDG 2);
- Fully harnessing opportunities for public/private partnerships to provide funding and technical support for EFA;
- Providing the human and financial resources to assist all of the LDCs, particularly in Africa, with science and innovation policy advice.

Proposals for the next five years of the Decade:

- Ensure that EFA is anchored as an integral part of the international development agenda, and in particular as a key building block for reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and sustainable human development, especially at the country level;
- Increase the use of ICTs to enhance learning, teaching and the EFA goals;
- Clarify the role of EFA partners within the context of the EFA Global Action Plan;
- Invest in teachers, provide more teacher training, particularly in post-conflict and emergency situations, and in countries seriously affected by HIV/AIDS;
- Ensure coordinated funding for the development of schools and textbooks;
- Implement HIV/AIDS prevention education at all levels in schools and in the communities, through formal and non-formal approaches;
- Identify public/private partnerships to provide funding and technical support for EFA;
- Increase the assistance provided to LDCs in the area of science and technology in order to contribute more effectively to sustainable development and poverty reduction;

- Ensure that women and youth are mainstreamed into all development programs for LDCs;
- Provide assistance to LDCs to establish policies and legislative provisions conducive to the establishment of local media;
- Enhance community access to communication and information technologies, to enable wider participation of different population segments, especially those in poor and marginalized areas, in knowledge societies;
- Increase and strengthen the assistance to LDCs in the field of monitoring the implementation and/or encouraging the ratification of UNESCO's legal instruments for the protection of cultural heritage, with particular emphasis on capacity-building, training, and awareness-building strategies.