



BEYOND ACCESS
Making Information Work For Everyone



Concept Note

(Draft as of 12 January 2016)

International Workshop on

**How Libraries Support
National Literacy Efforts**

Hamburg, Germany, 5–6 April 2016

1 BACKGROUND

The infrastructure of public and community libraries exists in almost every country: there are around 320,000 public libraries worldwide, of which about 230,000 are in developing countries. Literacy is at the core of most library activities, yet too often, local, regional and national literacy goals and efforts are not systematically connected to libraries. By failing to work closely with libraries, such efforts are failing to harness the potential of working closely with institutions that already provide useful literacy services to all: children, youth and adults. Furthermore, libraries often have the long-standing trust of communities, are perfectly positioned to provide intergenerational and family literacy activities, and traditionally have a special focus on reaching out to marginalized groups.

Both librarians and government officials need to develop knowledge and tools for effectively linking libraries to national education sector plan(s) that focus on literacy enhancement. Practical guidelines and policy recommendations on how to establish this link, make it visible and measure its effectiveness will support national sustainable development efforts and strategies. Making smart use of libraries as part of the literacy environment will help countries achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.6, which centres on literacy: ‘By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy’.

The Framework for Action Education 2030 was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2015. It serves as the overall guiding framework for the implementation of Education 2030 and outlines how to translate the global commitment into practice at the global, regional and national levels. The heart of Education 2030 lies at the national level, as country-led action supported by effective multi-stakeholder partnerships and financing can drive change.

Following on from the emphasis on literacy at all levels in the new SDGs and Education 2030, a direct outcome of this Workshop will be a policy brief on how countries can best use their existing libraries to support national literacy efforts.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This Workshop aims to facilitate the linking of literacy efforts in libraries with national literacy plans, policies and strategies.

The specific objectives of the Workshop are:

- a) to exchange effective and innovative practices in and current research on library efforts to improve community literacy;
- b) to provide a forum for discussion on how to integrate existing library activities into local, regional and national literacy efforts and advocate for the benefits of linking these efforts;
- c) to share practical tools (such as specific indicators, benchmarks and corresponding data needs) for measuring and implementing these efforts;
- d) to learn about the capacity development needs of librarians and government officials for the effective implementation of literacy efforts in libraries to support Education 2030 and SDG 4.6; and
- e) to collect the content, including policy recommendations, for an international policy brief, which will be a direct outcome of the workshop.

3 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- a) Participants will expand their understanding of the link between libraries and national literacy goals and efforts.
- b) The planned policy brief will provide guidance to governments, libraries and literacy field actors on how to best integrate and make use of libraries to support literacy initiatives.
- c) More libraries will link their literacy work to national development plans.

4 PARTICIPANTS

The Workshop will bring together an expert group comprising around 25 participants. These will include:

- a) government representatives responsible for libraries, community-based learning centres and literacy programmes, preferably with a focus on literacy enhancement, from all regions of the world;
- b) librarians and research experts working in the field of libraries and literacy; and
- c) representatives of literacy programme implementers, literacy programme funders and literacy associations.

5 DATE & VENUE

5–6 April 2016

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

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20148 Hamburg

Germany

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<http://uil.unesco.org/>

6 METHODOLOGY

Through presentations, discussions and group work, Workshop participants will identify the most critical issues and agree on policy recommendations.

7 LANGUAGE

English will be the working language of the Workshop.

8 ORGANIZING PARTNERS

Co-organizers:

- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
- IREX/Beyond Access

Partners:

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

For enquires about this Workshop, please contact:

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Brief information about the organizers:

The [UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning \(UIL\)](#) is one of UNESCO's seven specialized educational institutes. It undertakes research, capacity development, networking, documentation and publication at the global level in the area of lifelong learning with a focus on adult and continuing education, literacy and non-formal basic education. UIL provides technical support to UNESCO Member States, including consultancy services, technical advice, programme monitoring and evaluation. The UIL Library works in the area of libraries and literacy in close cooperation with the UIL programme on Literacy and Basic Skills. The Head of the UIL Library currently serves on the Standing Committee of the IFLA Section on Literacy and Reading.

[IREX's Beyond Access initiative](#) is making information work for more people. Through its projects around the world, Beyond Access partners with governments, NGOs, local organizations, and international donors to help communities create their own sustainable information hubs through libraries — hubs that support literacy, information access and the opportunities that come along with them. IREX is a non-profit international development and education organization based in Washington, DC, and working in more than 120 countries. IREX programmes develop leaders, promote quality education and access to information, and strengthen communities and institutions that advance positive change.

9 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

[Creating and Sustaining Literate Environments \(UNESCO Bangkok\)](#)

[Education 2030 Framework for Action \(UNESCO\)](#)

[IFLA Toolkit: Libraries and the post-2015 development agenda](#)

[Libraries, Literacy and Technology Training \(IREX/Beyond Access\)](#)