

# 4<sup>th</sup> GLOBAL REPORT ON ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION



LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND:  
PARTICIPATION, EQUITY AND INCLUSION



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PARTICIPATION, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

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# FOREWORD

Education is a fundamental human right, a precious public good and an indispensable tool in building peaceful, sustainable and fairer societies.

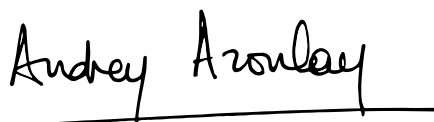
However, the educational challenges we face are complex. They include the rise of inequalities, demographic change and climate change. More seriously, the world is also changing drastically and quickly. If we do not adapt and enhance adults' skills, they will be left behind. This challenge is at the heart of UNESCO's global mandate, as reflected in the Education 2030 Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4. Adult learning and education (ALE), as UNESCO's *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)* very clearly shows, has a crucial role to play in achieving this goal.

While participation in ALE has increased overall since 2015, rates vary considerably and progress has been uneven. I am pleased to note the increased participation of women who, in some countries, now represent the majority of adult learners. However, in many parts of the world, women still have limited access to education and employment opportunities. In poor and rural areas especially, low literacy levels mean that women struggle to engage in learning and participate fully in society. Improving access to education for women and girls has been one of my priorities since taking up my role as Director-General of UNESCO. This is why we launched the *Her education, our future* initiative in July 2019 as part of the G7 Education Ministers Meeting.

Troublingly, in many countries, disadvantaged groups – adults with disabilities, older adults, refugees and migrants, and minority groups – participate less in ALE. In some countries, provision for these groups is regressing. We know less about the participation of these groups than for other sections of society. Yet this information is essential if we are to develop inclusive policies for all.

Looking ahead, the report stresses the need to increase national investment in ALE, reduce participation costs, raise awareness of benefits and improve data collection and monitoring, particularly for disadvantaged groups. In addition, by ensuring that donor countries respect their aid obligations to developing countries, we can make ALE a key lever in empowering and enabling adults, as learners, workers, parents, and active citizens.

Policy-makers, education experts and the wider public will be able to draw useful insights from this comprehensive picture of adult learning and education, viewed through the lens of inclusion and equity. We urge all governments and the international community to join our efforts and take action to ensure that no one – no matter who they are, where they live or what challenges they face – is left behind.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Audrey Azoulay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Audrey Azoulay  
UNESCO Director-General

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## **The UIL GRALE team**

David Atchoarena  
*Director*

Jan Kairies  
*Librarian*

Werner Mauch  
*Head of Monitoring and Assessment  
of Lifelong Learning*

Christiana Nikolitsa-Winter  
*Programme Specialist*

Samah Shalaby  
*Assistant Programme Specialist*

Paul Stanistreet  
*Head of Knowledge Management  
and Communications*

The aim of the *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)* is to deepen our knowledge of adult learning and education (ALE) as a key component of lifelong learning across the globe, in order to improve education policies, concepts and practice within the framework of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Three *GRALE* reports have been published to date – in 2009, 2013 and 2016 – all of them with reference to the Belém Framework for Action (BFA), adopted by Member States at the sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in Belém, Brazil, in 2009. One important purpose of the report is to monitor progress against the BFA, through the *GRALE* survey. Following the adoption by UNESCO Member States of the 2015 Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE), *GRALE 4* additionally provides monitoring information on the implementation of RALE, also based on the *GRALE* monitoring survey. It is pleasing to note that the response rate for the *GRALE 4* survey increased to 80% from 71% for *GRALE 3*.

The production of a report on this scale is a substantial undertaking and would not be possible without the support of a wide range of partners and colleagues. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize their contributions.

My deepest gratitude goes to the governments of the 159 countries and the focal points nominated by UNESCO National Commissions that submitted national reports.

My thanks also go to UNESCO colleagues in regional and field offices, specialized institutes and National Commissions, as well as the Permanent Delegations to UNESCO, who offered invaluable support in facilitating the consultation process during the survey.

*GRALE 4* was written and edited by recognized researchers, international experts and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) staff. Special thanks go to the editors of the report, Ellen Boeren (University of Glasgow) and John Field (University of Stirling), as well as to the authors of its two main sections: Ricardo Sabates and Ashley Stepanek (University of Cambridge), who wrote the segment on monitoring, and Kjell Rubenson (University of British Columbia), who prepared Part 2 on participation.

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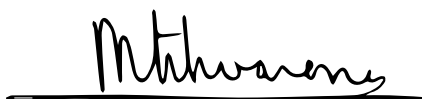
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This is an important report, which I hope will have a strong positive impact, both among Member States and within the international community. It demonstrates the important role participation in adult learning and education can play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, highlights the distance we have to travel, and offers clear guidance on how to move forward. As the report clearly also shows, it is only by prioritizing ALE, and rebalancing resources accordingly, that can we ensure that the commitment of the 2030 Agenda to 'leave no one behind' in the pursuit of equitable, inclusive and sustainable development is fully and fairly realized.



David Atchoarena  
UIL Director



# CONTENTS

|                                                      |    |
|------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Introduction to the report</b>                    | 12 |
| <b>Key messages</b>                                  | 18 |
|                                                      | 25 |
| <br><b>PART 1</b>                                    |    |
| <b>MONITORING THE BELÉM FRAMEWORK<br/>FOR ACTION</b> |    |
| <br><b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b>                    | 27 |
| The <i>GRALE 4</i> survey                            | 28 |
| A global snapshot                                    | 28 |
| <br><b>Chapter 2 Policy</b>                          | 33 |
| Where do we stand?                                   | 33 |
| How are we doing?                                    | 34 |
| Breaking it down                                     | 35 |
| Progress by learning field                           | 38 |
| What we found out: Key findings on policy            | 39 |
| <br><b>Chapter 3 Governance</b>                      | 41 |
| Where do we stand?                                   | 41 |
| How are we doing?                                    | 42 |
| Breaking it down                                     | 42 |
| What we found out: Key findings on governance        | 48 |
| <br><b>Chapter 4 Financing</b>                       | 51 |
| Where do we stand?                                   | 52 |
| How are we doing?                                    | 52 |
| Breaking it down                                     | 57 |
| What we found out: Key findings on financing         | 58 |
| <br><b>Chapter 5 Quality</b>                         | 61 |
| How did we get here?                                 | 61 |
| Where do we stand?                                   | 63 |
| How are we doing?                                    | 63 |
| Progress by learning field                           | 70 |
| What we found out: Key findings on quality           | 71 |

|                       |                                                                                              |         |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Chapter 6</b>      | <b>Participation, inclusion and equity</b>                                                   | 73      |
|                       | How did we get here?                                                                         | 74      |
|                       | Where do we stand?                                                                           | 75      |
|                       | How are we doing?                                                                            | 75      |
|                       | Breaking it down                                                                             | 78      |
|                       | What we found out: Key findings on participation                                             | 80      |
| <b>Chapter 7</b>      | <b>Conclusion</b>                                                                            | 83      |
| <br><b>PART 2</b>     |                                                                                              | <br>87  |
|                       | <b>FOCUS ON PARTICIPATION</b>                                                                |         |
| <br><b>Chapter 8</b>  | <br><b>Introduction</b>                                                                      | <br>89  |
|                       | Participation matters                                                                        | 89      |
|                       | How to read Part 2 of the report                                                             | 90      |
| <br><b>Chapter 9</b>  | <br><b>Understandings of ALE, issues around measurement and an overview of participation</b> | <br>93  |
|                       | A new vision of adult learning and education                                                 | 93      |
|                       | Overview of participation                                                                    | 109     |
| <br><b>Chapter 10</b> | <br><b>Patterns of inequality and exclusion</b>                                              | <br>123 |
|                       | Reaching the target groups                                                                   | 123     |
| <br><b>Chapter 11</b> | <br><b>What are the barriers preventing participation in ALE?</b>                            | <br>153 |
|                       | Situational barriers                                                                         | 153     |
|                       | Institutional barriers                                                                       | 155     |
|                       | Dispositional barriers                                                                       | 156     |
|                       | Conclusion                                                                                   | 157     |
| <br><b>Chapter 12</b> | <br><b>Addressing barriers to participation</b>                                              | <br>159 |
|                       | Creating awareness of ALE                                                                    | 159     |
|                       | Public support for vulnerable groups                                                         | 160     |
|                       | Addressing the impact of work on exclusion from ALE                                          | 162     |
|                       | Inadequate provision of ALE                                                                  | 163     |
|                       | Conclusion                                                                                   | 166     |
| <br><b>Chapter 13</b> | <br><b>Lessons learned</b>                                                                   | <br>169 |
|                       | Member States' actions need to be driven by a new understanding of ALE                       | 169     |
|                       | There is a lack of global and country-level data on participation in ALE                     | 169     |
|                       | Participation is increasing but there are substantial regional and national variations       | 169     |
|                       | Employer-supported ALE is redefining the ALE landscape                                       | 169     |
|                       | Reaching key target groups remains a fundamental issue                                       | 170     |
|                       | Structural factors and socio-economic inequalities are major barriers                        | 170     |
|                       | We must raise awareness of ALE and increase resources, ensuring no one is excluded           | 170     |
|                       | Enhancing ALE for democracy and active citizenship is essential                              | 171     |
|                       | A final word                                                                                 | 171     |

|                                                                                                                                              |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>CONCLUSION</b>                                                                                                                            | 173 |
| <b>ACHIEVING THE POTENTIAL OF ALE FOR ALL</b>                                                                                                |     |
| ALE and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development                                                                                          | 174 |
| Strengthening the knowledge base                                                                                                             | 176 |
| Towards CONFINTEA VII                                                                                                                        | 177 |
| <b>References</b>                                                                                                                            | 178 |
| <b>Annex</b>                                                                                                                                 | 192 |
| List of countries                                                                                                                            |     |
| <br><b>List of figures</b>                                                                                                                   |     |
| 1.1 Overall progress on ALE policy since 2015                                                                                                | 34  |
| 1.2 Public education spending on ALE                                                                                                         | 53  |
| 1.3 Global rates of priority in ALE spending on key groups                                                                                   | 57  |
| 1.4 Overall participation rates in ALE globally based on actual figures                                                                      | 77  |
| 1.5 Reported changes in ALE participation for different groups since 2015                                                                    | 78  |
| 1.6 Reported changes in ALE provision for different groups since 2015                                                                        | 79  |
| 2.1 Percentage of countries per region with a specific taskforce, working group, office or other mechanism for implementing RALE             | 98  |
| 2.2 Percentage of countries in which there has been an increased emphasis on the areas of action set out in RALE since its inception in 2015 | 99  |
| 2.3 Percentage of countries per region in which there has been an increased emphasis on the respective areas of action set out in RALE       | 99  |
| 2.4 Increases in participation rates in relation to improvements in areas of action                                                          | 110 |
| 2.5 Participation in employer-sponsored adult education and training lasting five days or longer                                             | 112 |
| 2.6 Participation in employer-sponsored adult education and training by GDP (nominal)                                                        | 112 |
| 2.7 A Access to primary adult education programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean                                                        | 113 |
| 2.7 B Access to secondary adult education programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean                                                      | 114 |
| 2.8 Long-term changes in participation in Sweden                                                                                             | 115 |
| 2.9 Annualized growth rate of employer-supported and overall adult education between PIAAC (2012–2015) and IALS (1990s)                      | 116 |
| 2.10 Participation in purposeful learning over a 12-month period by setting, EU-28 averages                                                  | 118 |
| 2.11 Qualifications attained via formal adult education, OECD averages                                                                       | 119 |
| 2.12 Participation in adult education programmes compared to total enrolment in Latin American and Caribbean countries, 2010                 | 120 |
| 2.13 Participants in literacy programmes as a percentage of the illiterate population, by country                                            | 121 |
| 2.14 How do literacy rates for men and women compare across regions? Adult literacy rates, by region and sex, 2016                           | 124 |
| 2.15 Female percentage of participants in literacy programmes, Latin American and Caribbean countries, 2010                                  | 126 |
| 2.16 Participation in literacy and non-formal programmes in selected Southeast Asian countries, by sex                                       | 127 |
| 2.17 Likelihood (odds ratio) of women vs men (men's odds ratio = 1.0) participating in employer-supported ALE in selective countries         | 127 |
| 2.18 Literacy in urban and rural Kenya                                                                                                       | 130 |

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 2.19 | Literacy rate for age groups by gender and location in Bangladesh (2015), Bhutan (2012), Nepal (2016) and Pakistan (2014)                                                                                                     | 131 |
| 2.20 | Participation rate in ALE during a 12-month period, by degree of urbanization, EU-28                                                                                                                                          | 134 |
| 2.21 | Distribution of SkillsFuture credit utilization, by age group, 2016                                                                                                                                                           | 140 |
| 2.22 | Increase in participation 2007–2016 in non-formal job-related and employer-supported ALE in the EU                                                                                                                            | 141 |
| 2.23 | Likelihood of participating in employer-supported ALE for five days or longer by literacy level. Adjusted odds quote for selected countries. The adjusted odds quote for those with the lowest literacy level (1) is set to 1 | 148 |

## List of boxes

|      |                                                                                                                              |     |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1.1  | Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education                                                                               | 27  |
| 1.2  | Policy in the BFA                                                                                                            | 33  |
| 1.3  | The case of Poland: Increasing stakeholder involvement                                                                       | 36  |
| 1.4  | Policy implementation in Italy                                                                                               | 37  |
| 1.5  | Education for All strengthens non-formal education in Guatemala                                                              | 37  |
| 1.6  | Governance in the BFA                                                                                                        | 41  |
| 1.7  | Increased stakeholder participation in ALE governance in Hungary: Sectoral skills councils                                   | 44  |
| 1.8  | Monitoring interventions in Uganda                                                                                           | 44  |
| 1.9  | Skills forecasting in Estonia                                                                                                | 45  |
| 1.10 | Decentralization at the local/city level in China                                                                            | 47  |
| 1.11 | Decentralizing management through inter-sectoral coordination in Oman                                                        | 48  |
| 1.12 | Financing in the BFA                                                                                                         | 51  |
| 1.13 | Fund reprogramming in Brazil                                                                                                 | 55  |
| 1.14 | Using the unemployment insurance system to promote ALE in Germany                                                            | 56  |
| 1.15 | Improvement in ALE financing in the Republic of Korea: Lifelong learning initiatives                                         | 59  |
| 1.16 | Quality in the BFA                                                                                                           | 61  |
| 1.17 | Assessing learning outcomes from ALE provision in New Zealand—the ACE Learner Outcomes Tool                                  | 65  |
| 1.18 | Developing quality criteria for teaching methodologies in ALE provision in Germany: The GRETA standards                      | 67  |
| 1.19 | Fair access in the BFA                                                                                                       | 73  |
| 1.20 | Tracking participation and sharing good practice                                                                             | 74  |
| 2.1  | Measuring and monitoring the progress on SDG indicator 4.6.1 within the framework of the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning | 107 |
| 2.2  | Literacy Project for Girls and Women using ICTs (Senegal)                                                                    | 128 |
| 2.3  | Pink Phone (Cambodia)                                                                                                        | 129 |
| 2.4  | Civic Education Information Service for Female Iraqi Leaders (Iraq)                                                          | 129 |
| 2.5  | Lifelong learning for farmers (L3F) initiative                                                                               | 132 |
| 2.6  | Learning and Earning in Cairo’s Garbage City (Egypt)                                                                         | 133 |
| 2.7  | ALE for women in Yemen                                                                                                       | 137 |
| 2.8  | Kirikhan Community Centre                                                                                                    | 137 |
| 2.9  | Education for the elderly in China                                                                                           | 139 |
| 2.10 | Singapore: Addressing the exclusion of older workers                                                                         | 139 |
| 2.11 | WHO on older adults’ abilities to learn, grow and make decisions                                                             | 141 |
| 2.12 | Senior Active Learning Centres in Thailand                                                                                   | 142 |
| 2.13 | AdulTiCoProgram (Colombia)                                                                                                   | 143 |
| 2.14 | Clare Family Learning (Ireland)                                                                                              | 149 |
| 2.15 | Investing in people’s capabilities                                                                                           | 163 |
| 2.16 | The Danish flexicurity scheme                                                                                                | 163 |

**List of tables**

|      |                                                                                                                                                                           |     |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1.1  | Participation of countries in <i>GRALE 4</i> , globally, by region and by income group                                                                                    | 29  |
| 1.2  | Responding ministries for the <i>GRALE 4</i> survey                                                                                                                       | 30  |
| 1.3  | Stakeholders' involvement in national progress report for <i>GRALE 4</i>                                                                                                  | 31  |
| 1.4  | Progress in the field of ALE with respect to different policy processes                                                                                                   | 35  |
| 1.5  | Policy processes with respect to ALE                                                                                                                                      | 38  |
| 1.6  | Overall improvement in the governance of ALE in countries since 2015                                                                                                      | 42  |
| 1.7  | Global disaggregated reporting on ALE governance by countries                                                                                                             | 43  |
| 1.8  | Changes in public spending on ALE as a proportion of public education spending                                                                                            | 52  |
| 1.9  | Proportion of countries that have introduced new mechanisms or sources of funding for ALE since 2015                                                                      | 54  |
| 1.10 | Proportion of countries reporting improvement in the quality of ALE since 2015                                                                                            | 63  |
| 1.11 | Progress in developing quality criteria for curricula and assessment in ALE since 2015                                                                                    | 64  |
| 1.12 | Progress in developing learning materials and teaching methodologies since 2015                                                                                           | 66  |
| 1.13 | Progress in pre-service training and employment conditions since 2015                                                                                                     | 68  |
| 1.14 | Progress in the quality of ALE with respect to RALE fields since 2015                                                                                                     | 70  |
| 1.15 | Changes in overall participation rates in ALE since 2015                                                                                                                  | 75  |
| 1.16 | Monitoring of participation rates based on actual figures                                                                                                                 | 76  |
| 1.17 | Participation rates by region, based on actual figures                                                                                                                    | 77  |
| 1.18 | Changes in participation according to fields of learning since 2015                                                                                                       | 79  |
| 2.1  | The RALE typology, by levels, types and areas                                                                                                                             | 96  |
| 2.2  | Countries by region that reported the essential points of RALE (e.g. definition including the typology, scope, aims and objectives) to be reflected in legislation        | 97  |
| 2.3  | Countries by region that reported the essential points of RALE (e.g. definition including the typology, scope, aims and objectives) to be reflected in education policies | 97  |
| 2.4  | Overview of the strengths and weaknesses of various data initiatives                                                                                                      | 104 |
| 2.5  | SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Tier classification as of May 2019                           | 105 |
| 2.6  | Literacy rates of populations in different categories in Nepal (Annual Household Survey, 2014/2015)                                                                       | 125 |
| 2.7  | 2018 participation in the Republic of Korea in non-formal learning, by sub-learning areas and age                                                                         | 143 |
| 2.8  | Participation in ALE during a 12-month period, by educational attainment, adjusted percentages                                                                            | 147 |
| 2.9  | Barriers to participating in and completing literacy programmes in Kenya                                                                                                  | 154 |
| 2.10 | Participation in ALE among the unemployed and those with low educational attainment, and distribution of funding between stakeholders                                     | 161 |

# INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

Leave no one behind. That was the resounding message of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It enjoined Member States to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' through SDG 4, and stressed the interconnected nature of the goals. The SDGs must, in other words, be addressed in a sensitively holistic way if they are to fulfil their potential to transform the lives of the most vulnerable and excluded people on the planet. Adult learning and education (ALE) has a crucial role to play in this, supporting the achievement of not only SDG 4 but also a range of other goals, including those on climate change, poverty, health and well-being, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, and sustainable cities and communities. The message of this report is that, while this potential is widely recognized, adult learning and education remains low on the agenda of most Member States—participation is patchy, progress inadequate and investment insufficient. Unless we change direction, we will, quite simply, not meet the stretching targets of SDG 4. And if we do not achieve the goal on education, the other SDGs will be placed in jeopardy.

Achieving SDG 4, and realizing its cross-cutting contribution to the other 16 goals, demands a much more integrated and comprehensive approach to education, with adult learning and education at its heart. The third *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 3)* showed that adult learning and education produces significant benefits across a range of policy areas. Countries reported a positive impact on health and well-being, employment and the labour market, and social, civic and community life. Adult learning and education led to improved health behaviours and attitudes, higher life expectancy and

a reduction in lifestyle diseases, with a commensurate reduction in health care costs, the report found. It also highlighted the significant benefits of investment in adult education for individuals in the labour market, for employers and for the economy more generally. Last, but not least, it showed how adult learning and education increases social cohesion, integration and inclusion, boosts social capital and improves participation in social, civic and community activities. These benefits are significant but, as this report shows, they are unevenly distributed.

## **Giving everyone a fair chance**

The focus of this report—the fourth *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*—therefore, is equity. It is obvious that not everyone has the same opportunity to access and benefit from adult learning and education. Not everyone has the same chance to get a decent job, develop their competences and capabilities, improve their lives or contribute to the communities in which they live and work. If things continue as they are—and without a significant sea change in political outlook there is every chance they will—the benefits of adult learning will continue to coalesce around the better off and most advantaged in society, reinforcing and even intensifying existing inequalities, rather than helping the least advantaged individuals and communities.

Who takes part, and who does not, has consequences. The ability to learn new skills, refresh our knowledge, and sustain the 'grey capital' of our brains has growing resonance in the twenty-first century. As the International Labour Organization (ILO) made clear in its recent report on the future of work, the way in which we make our livings is changing dramatically, to the extent that in many countries people now speak of a 'fourth industrial revolution', characterized

by automation, digitization, the growth of platform employment and the application of artificial intelligence (ILO, 2019). These developments render old skills obsolete while creating demand for new and different skills, and ALE can play a central role—as the ILO report acknowledges—in ensuring that all are able to seize the opportunities that arise.

In some countries, demographic change is another key imperative, obliging adults already in the workforce to fill a larger proportion of the jobs of the future, and requiring them to learn new skills and update existing ones. Increased mobility, population displacement and changing patterns of consumption and production are also factors. It is more and more accepted that such shifts, and the growing complexity and uncertainty of modern life and work, demand a population that is adaptable, resilient and, perhaps above all, sensitized to learning, and a system of lifelong learning that both fosters and embodies these qualities by providing opportunities for adults to learn throughout life.

### **Participation matters**

Participation, therefore, matters. As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized:

All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society (UN, 2015, para 25).

Targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.6 and 4.7, part of SDG 4 on education, focus specifically on the SDG commitment to participation in adult learning

and education. Target 4.3 aims to ‘ensure equal access for all men and women to affordable, quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university’. The main indicator (4.3.1) sets out to measure the ‘participation rate of youth, and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex’. Target 4.4 focuses on youth and adult skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship, with global indicator 4.4.1 focusing on the measurement and monitoring of digital skills. Target 4.6 concerns improvements in literacy and numeracy, so that ‘all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy’, with the corresponding indicator being the ‘percentage of the population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex’. Importantly, Target 4.7 aims to ‘ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to support sustainable development’.

Equity is a major focus for the SDGs: one target (4.5) is devoted to gender equality in education, while SDG 10 commits Member States to reducing inequalities in general. Equity needs to be understood across a variety of dimensions, including gender, socio-economic status, dis/ability and location. Furthermore, in a period marked by intense demographic change in many regions, age is also an important dimension of equity. UNESCO’s most recent Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, a flagship monitoring publication to assess progress towards inclusive educational goals, emphasized the role of adult education and learning in supporting refugees, displaced people and migrants, but also noted that these vulnerable groups may face additional barriers to participation in opportunities for development (UNESCO, 2018a, pp. 143–157).

As noted above, participation in adult learning also has a direct impact on other Sustainable Development Goals. It contributes to SDG 8, on decent work and economic growth, for example. The ILO's Global Commission on the Future of Work called for the formal recognition of a universal entitlement to lifelong learning and the effective establishment of a lifelong learning system so that people can benefit from new technologies and new roles (ILO, 2019). Research shows that ALE generally promotes employability and can be targeted successfully at those most in need (Midsundstat, 2019).

As *GRALE 3* demonstrated, participation in ALE also has clear and measurable benefits for health and well-being (SDG 3) and on participants' attitudes towards their community, as well as their willingness to take civic action, which in turn can help contribute to meeting such challenges as climate change (SDG 13) and responsible consumption (SDG 12).

In order to deliver these effects in a sustainable way, participation in adult education needs to be both higher and more equitable. Increasing insights and common understanding on access and participation in ALE are therefore fundamental in enabling us to know how to act to promote the SDGs. *GRALE 4* provides us with an up-to-date summary of the latest data, demonstrating where the gaps are, analysing policy and practice, and highlighting what we do not know about participation and why this matters.

### **What we found out**

This report explores participation in adult learning and education from the perspective of equity and inclusion. The first part tracks progress in adult learning and education against the Belém Framework for Action, adopted in 2009, on the basis of the *GRALE* survey; the second offers a detailed thematic analysis of participation, drawing on the survey findings, but also a wide range of other relevant sources.

The first, monitoring, part finds that two-thirds of countries reported global progress in ALE policy since 2015, while 30% reported no change, with progress seeming particularly weak in Asia and the Pacific.

Five countries (3%) reported regression, including four so-called 'fragile' states. Three-quarters of countries reported improvements in governance, with 50% also reporting progress in stakeholder participation. However, only 28% of countries reported that ALE spending as a proportion of public education had increased since 2015, with 17% reporting a decrease and 41% reporting no progress. Low-income states were the most likely to report a decline in public spending on ALE (35%). More positively, 75% of countries reported major improvements in ALE quality since 2015, with the highest rates of progress reported in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.

Progress in participation in ALE was uneven, the survey indicated. More than half of countries (57%) reported an increase in ALE participation rates, with 28% reporting no change and 9% reporting a decrease. However, only 103 of 152 countries (67%) responded that ALE participation rates were based on actual figures. More than a third (37%) reported not knowing the ALE participation rates of minority groups, migrants and refugees. Among those countries that reported ALE participation rates based on actual figures, 25% reported participation at between 5% and 10%; 20% at 20–50%; and 15% had participation rates higher than 50%. Around 29% reported participation rates below 5%. In a range of countries, ALE provision had decreased for vulnerable groups such as adults with disabilities and residents in remote or rural areas.

Part 2, on participation, bears out and amplifies two of the main messages of the report: first, that disadvantaged, vulnerable and excluded populations tend to do by far the worst when it comes to participation in ALE; and, second, that we simply do not know enough about participation, particularly in low-income countries and for marginalized and excluded groups. Data on ALE participation in most UNESCO Member States outside the EU and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) sphere are typically limited and sketchy at best, though there are notable exceptions. This impedes efforts to improve participation rates, and to understand who is not participating and why—both essential undertakings in achieving SDG 4 and advancing towards the 2030 Agenda.

for Sustainable Development. Turning this around will be difficult and will require the concerted effort and political will of Member States and of the international education policy community. There is a general lack of understanding and urgency when it comes to collecting more comprehensive data on ALE. Too often, support for ALE is merely a rhetorical afterthought, effectively sidelined by a disproportionate focus on schools and universities.

This needs to change if we are to address the central challenge posed by this report: that opportunities to engage in ALE are shockingly unequal. Some groups in society have access to a multitude of learning opportunities throughout life, while others have very little prospect of engaging in ALE. And while a full understanding of the complexity of the learning situation of vulnerable and excluded groups is made more difficult by the paucity of reliable data, it is nonetheless evident that these groups are disproportionately excluded from benefitting from ALE. Addressing these inequities requires better data, increased investment and a better understanding of what works, supported by international, regional and national efforts to raise awareness, with a focus on excluded groups and those that are least likely to engage in learning, and on national and regional variations. It is important that the actions of Member States and international organizations on adult education and learning are equal to the commitments they have made.

### How to read this report

*GRALE 4* is not a stand-alone report. It builds on the previous *GRALE* reports to provide evidence of change over time. We emphasize the significance of the focus on participation, inclusion and equity, and underline the importance of these issues for policy-makers in Member States and international organizations.

Evidence presented in this report is structured according to the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE) categorization of ALE in terms of: (i) literacy and basic skills; (ii) continuing education and professional development (vocational skills); and (iii) liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills). RALE was adopted in 2015, replacing the 1976

Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education. At the same time, this report considers the SDGs, and specifically SDG 4 (including the key targets 4.6, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.7), in relation to ALE. The emphasis throughout the report is on participation *for* something—and in particular on ALE as a means of achieving the relevant SDGs.

*GRALE 4* is divided into two parts.

Part 1 monitors progress against the recommendations of the Belém Framework for Action (BFA). Adopted at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), the BFA outlined a strategic programme for the global development and strengthening of adult literacy and adult education within the perspective of lifelong learning, in which ALE plays the principal role. It set out recommendations for countries to regularly collect and analyse data on the participation of adults in learning activities, including progression; and it asked the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), in cooperation with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), to coordinate the global monitoring process (UIL, 2010).

*GRALE 4* is the latest result of UIL's global monitoring process. It draws heavily on countries' responses to the *GRALE 4* survey (UIL, 2018a) in order to take stock of current developments, and analyses evidence of progress since *GRALE 3*, in the following five areas, drawn from the BFA and RALE:

- policy,
- governance,
- financing,
- quality,
- participation, inclusion and equity.

These areas are addressed separately, but also discussed in an integrative way in the conclusion of the report. This part of the report also provides an account of the methods used, particularly the survey, and identifies the limitations as well as the strengths of the approach to data collection and analysis that we used to monitor progress against the BFA.

Part 2 considers what we know about participation, what we do not know, and why this matters. It opens with a discussion of ALE as defined in the BFA and RALE, with attention to the extent to which non-formal education is on the radar. Chapter 9 explores

stakeholder understandings of participation in ALE, as judged against the three categories identified in RALE, and assesses the dominant ways in which participation is measured, both by Member States and other important national stakeholders, and by international organizations (including, but not limited to, the OECD, ILO and the World Bank). It explains why measuring participation matters, and identifies approaches to understanding and measuring participation that are particularly promising. It considers the challenges of measuring participation in non-formal education and the need for reliable information and data in this area. It also integrates a focus on the SDGs into discussion of measurement and progress in participation across the globe.

The BFA speaks of participation in the same breath as inclusion and equity, in line with the targets in SDG 4. Chapter 10 considers what we know about patterns of inequality in participation across the globe, with specific reference to women, ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, older adults, the low-skilled, people with disabilities, and people living in remote and rural areas. It explores what has helped to promote a wider culture of learning and stimulate motivation to participate, as well as what specific patterns of ALE provision have a proven track record in promoting greater equality and inclusion in ALE participation. It considers how ALE can help promote the inclusion of migrants and refugees and sets out why these attempts of further inclusion are essential in the light of the sustainability agenda.

In Chapter 11, we will identify the major barriers hindering adults' participation in ALE. As with the reporting of barriers in previous *GRALE* reports, a distinction will be made between situational, institutional and dispositional barriers. While Chapter 11 provides an overview of the most significant barriers, Chapter 12 presents potential ways of addressing these barriers, focusing on increasing awareness of ALE, unequal participation as a result of adults' working situation, the need for more ALE financing and the role of information and communication technology (ICT) and liberal education as a way to extend the strongly economic focus of current ALE initiatives. Considering, in particular, the latter point, the report returns to a discussion of the role of RALE in addressing participation in ALE.

The report concludes by identifying the main lessons learned from the *GRALE 4* process, with a particular focus on policy implications (Chapter 13). It summarizes progress in respect of the BFA, discusses the extent to which it is possible to draw conclusions in respect of RALE, and critically assesses the existing goals and frameworks on which the report draws. We consider the extent to which current understandings of participation are helpful across the three RALE categories and argue that suitable approaches to data collection and sensitive methods of participation measurement can support ALE in contributing effectively to the SDG targets. As the 2019 GEM report noted, 'lifelong learning opportunities represent half of the SDG 4 formulation but receive only a fraction of global attention' (UNESCO, 2018a, p. 266). *GRALE 4* offers an opportunity to redress this imbalance: looking forward to CONFITEA VII in 2022, the conclusion takes stock of developments since the BFA, and restates the potential of ALE to address global challenges, including its importance in helping achieve the 2030 Agenda.

### **The road to CONFITEA VII**

UNESCO has supported global dialogue and action in the field of ALE since its foundation in 1945. It organized the first CONFITEA in 1949; five CONFITEA conferences have taken place since, enabling Member States to consider, share, compare and develop their approaches to ALE.

The *GRALE* series provides a means of monitoring ALE at the global level. Each report provides an overview of the latest data and evidence on ALE, highlights good practice, and focuses attention on Member States' commitments to improve ALE. By gathering and analysing national reports on ALE based on a structured questionnaire, *GRALE* encourages Member States to assess their own national systems and consider progress in each of the areas identified in the Belém Framework for Action. Publication of the report is followed up with a range of events at which the findings are discussed with a variety of partners. *GRALE* therefore fosters self-reflection, dialogue and mutual learning on how to measure ALE and improve policies and practices.

Issued in 2009, *GRALE 1* aimed to gather data through 154 narrative national reports in order to inform meaningful discussions during CONFINTEA VI. Its recommendations were used to formulate the Belém Framework for Action. The conclusions of *GRALE 1* focused strongly on how funding was insufficient to implement ALE policies or realize their full potential contribution.

*GRALE 2*, published in 2013, drew on data from 141 countries and had a thematic focus on literacy. In comparison to *GRALE 1*, a more structured approach was taken to the collection of data, resulting from the commitment to engage in regular monitoring as part of the Belém Framework of Action. The report concluded that more sophisticated measurements for literacy needed to be developed and that special attention was needed for the most disadvantaged groups in society at global level.

*GRALE 3* was published in 2016, shortly after the UNESCO General Conference adopted the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (UNESCO, 2016b). It monitored the BFA areas based on a survey in which 139 countries participated. The report had a thematic focus on the impact of adult learning and education on health and well-being; employment and the labour market; and social, civic and community life. It recommended increased levels of cross-sectoral cooperation and the involvement of stakeholders, as well as the need to gather high-quality data about ALE. Funding and information barriers were also highlighted.

*GRALE 4* is the latest in the series and—as outlined above—takes stock of achievements in the five key areas of policy, governance, funding, participation and quality, as outlined in the BFA. At the same time, it aims to inform Member States on the remaining challenges and to look ahead to the core discussions that will take place at CONFINTEA VII in 2022. Some 157 Member States and two Associate Member States responded to *GRALE 4*, compared to 137 Member States and two Associate Member States for *GRALE 3*.

The ultimate aim of the *GRALE* series is to increase awareness of ALE across the globe and to advocate for higher levels of interest from policy-makers. At the same time, the reports encourage dialogue and peer learning among a wide range of stakeholders in Member States. *GRALE 4* considers who takes part in adult learning and education and makes the case both for increasing participation and for widening it. It is hoped that these insights will galvanise the efforts of Member States, and the international policy community, in realizing the potential contribution of ALE to SDG 4, and to the wider sustainability agenda.

### **A call to action**

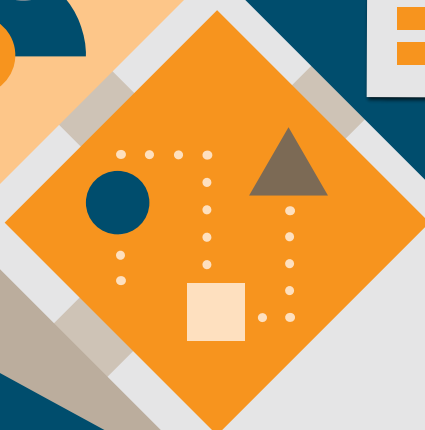
We hope this report will be a wake-up call. It shows that in many places around the world participation in adult learning is not where it needs to be. It paints a picture of uneven participation rates and inadequate progress and shows that in very many cases we simply do not know enough about who is participating. In too many cases, adult learning and education is inadequately funded. And where interventions do make a positive impact on participation, too often they are simply not widely shared or properly understood. All this needs to change. We are at a tipping point in terms of our achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We are not on track but we are still within time. If we change direction now, with political will, smart policies and investment to match, we can realize the potential of adult learning and education, both for SDG 4 and for the other 16 SDGs. But if we fail to make the required step change now, the chances of our achieving SDG 4 and the other Sustainable Development Goals will diminish. This, in short, is our challenge to Member States, to the international policy-making community and to stakeholders across sectors: Put adult learning and education at the centre of your efforts to achieve sustainable economies and societies and recognize its key role in developing integrated, holistic solutions to the problems we face. At this moment in time, nothing less will do.

# KEY MESSAGES



3

GOVERNANCE



INEQUALITY

6



**The findings of GRALE 4 are based on survey responses supplied by 159 countries: 157 UNESCO Member States and two Associate Member States.**

# 1 2

**Progress in participation in adult learning and education is insufficient. Member States and the international community must do more to enhance participation, investing more resources and developing effective policies that draw on best practice around the world, particularly in reaching the least advantaged.**

- Participation in adult learning and education is uneven. Of the 96 countries that reported participation rates based on actual figures, 25% reported participation at between 5% and 10%; 20% at between 20% and 50%; and 15% had participation rates higher than 50%. Almost a third (29%) reported participation rates below 5%.
- Progress in participation is similarly mixed. More than half the countries surveyed reported an increase in ALE participation, while 28% reported no change and 9% reported a decrease.
- In too many cases, marginalized groups do not participate in adult learning and education. The lowest increases in participation reported were for adults with disabilities, older adults and minority groups. In a range of countries, ALE provision has decreased for vulnerable groups such as adults with disabilities and residents living in remote or rural areas.
- While women's participation in ALE is growing, they tend to engage less in programmes for professional development. This constitutes a concern for their participation in the labour market.
- People who find themselves living in poverty or under other restraints such as monotonous, menial or otherwise unengaging work may not be able even to contemplate participating in ALE, and believe they have nothing to gain from studying.
- Sizeable groups in some countries face institutional barriers such as a lack of access to courses and programmes and/or high costs. The extent to which cost is seen as barrier is directly linked to the fees paid for participating in ALE.

**Poor data constitute a major barrier to tackling inequalities in participation in ALE and addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. We need to know more about who is participating and who is not. More investment is needed in the collection and monitoring of data to support evidence-based policies that promote inclusive participation for all.**

- Only 103 of the 152 countries that answered the question (67%) responded that ALE participation rates were based on actual figures.
- Knowledge about participation in ALE, particularly in low-income countries and among disadvantaged and low-participation groups, remains insufficient. More than a third of countries (37%) reported not knowing the ALE participation rates of minority groups, refugees and migrants.
- While the situation is improving, with the data gathered by countries with strong systems for collecting and analysing participation data augmented by the comparative data published by international agencies, coverage is far from complete. In many cases, information on policy, governance, finance, quality and participation is absent or limited.
- While the number of countries taking part in the *GRALE 4* survey increased, survey data for 46 countries remain unavailable.

## 3

**Progress in ALE policy and governance is encouraging but it is by no means enough, with some countries continuing to lag behind.**

- Two-thirds of countries report progress in adult learning and education policy since 2015.
- However, nearly 30% of countries reported no change in ALE policy since 2015 (44 countries), including nearly half of responses from Asia and the Pacific (47% or 17 countries in this region). Progress in relation to implementing new legislation appears weak among these countries, putting them at risk of failing to profit from the multiple benefits of ALE as outlined in *GRALE 3*.
- 3% of countries reported regression in ALE policy since 2015, numbering five in total.
- The lowest level of progress in ALE policy was reported in recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning, with 66% of countries reporting progress.
- Three-quarters of countries reported improvements in governance. Governance structures that help to implement these policies increasingly include effective coordination mechanisms and build on strong and fair partnerships between an increasing number of actors. Progress in governance was also most notable in low-income countries.
- Member States must do more to target the groups facing the greatest barriers to participation, including through targeted language provision and recognition, validation and accreditation of previous learning, formal and non-formal. Forty-eight countries reported that they did not know the participation rates of groups such as migrants and refugees, while over a quarter reported that they may be poorly prepared to cope with significant demographic change.

## 4

**Funding for adult learning and education is inadequate. More investment is required, as well as more targeting of those hardest to reach.**

- Less than a third of countries (28%) reported that ALE spending had increased as a proportion of the education budget since 2015, with 17% reporting a decrease and 41% reporting no progress (this despite 57% of countries in *GRALE 3* mentioning a planned increase in funding).
- Low-income countries were more likely to report a decrease than an increase. Focusing investment on the least-advantaged adults in society has yet to become widespread as a strategy for widening participation in ALE.
- 19% of countries reported spending less than 0.5% of the education budget on ALE and a further 14% reported spending less than 1%. This confirms that ALE remains underfunded.

# 5

## **5. Quality is improving but this is not evenly spread across the all fields of learning. ALE for active citizenship, in particular, requires more attention and increased investment.**

- Three-quarters of countries reported progress in ALE quality since 2015. This included developments in curricula, assessment, teaching methods and improved employment conditions. However, improvements have not been evenly spread. While countries reported significant progress in the quality of literacy and basic skills and continuing training and professional development, progress in citizenship education was negligible. Only 2% of 111 countries reported progress in developing quality criteria for curricula in citizenship education, for example.
- The survey found very low participation in ALE for citizenship education, despite its important role in promoting and protecting freedom, equality, democracy, human rights, tolerance and solidarity.

# 6

## **6. Deep and persistent inequalities still exist in ALE participation and key target groups are not being reached. Member States should focus their resources on addressing these inequalities.**

- Globally, between and within countries, there remain deep and persistent inequalities in ALE participation, with many vulnerable groups excluded and seemingly off the radar of policy-makers. Migrants and refugees, older adults, adults with disabilities, those living in rural areas, and adults with low prior educational attainment are among the groups facing the greatest barriers to participation in ALE.
- In some countries, socio-economic inequalities in ALE participation are much lower than in the past. Participation by women has risen in many countries, to the extent that, in some, women are now a majority of adult learners.
- Despite these improvements, however, in some parts of the world women have no access to education. Low levels of literacy, particularly among women living in rural areas, mean that they have little chance of gaining employment or becoming full participants in their societies.
- One major barrier to participation in ALE is the lack of literacy and language courses for migrants and refugees, who also face challenges in having their skills and competencies recognized and validated. More attention should be given to the development of appropriate language courses and mechanisms for the recognition of skills and qualifications.
- Where there has been recent growth, much of it is fuelled by a significant increase in employer-supported ALE. This expansion is in response to changes in the nature of work and the perceived competences required by the workforce. Thus, what happens in the world of work is of crucial importance in determining who has access to adult learning and education.

# THE WAY FORWARD

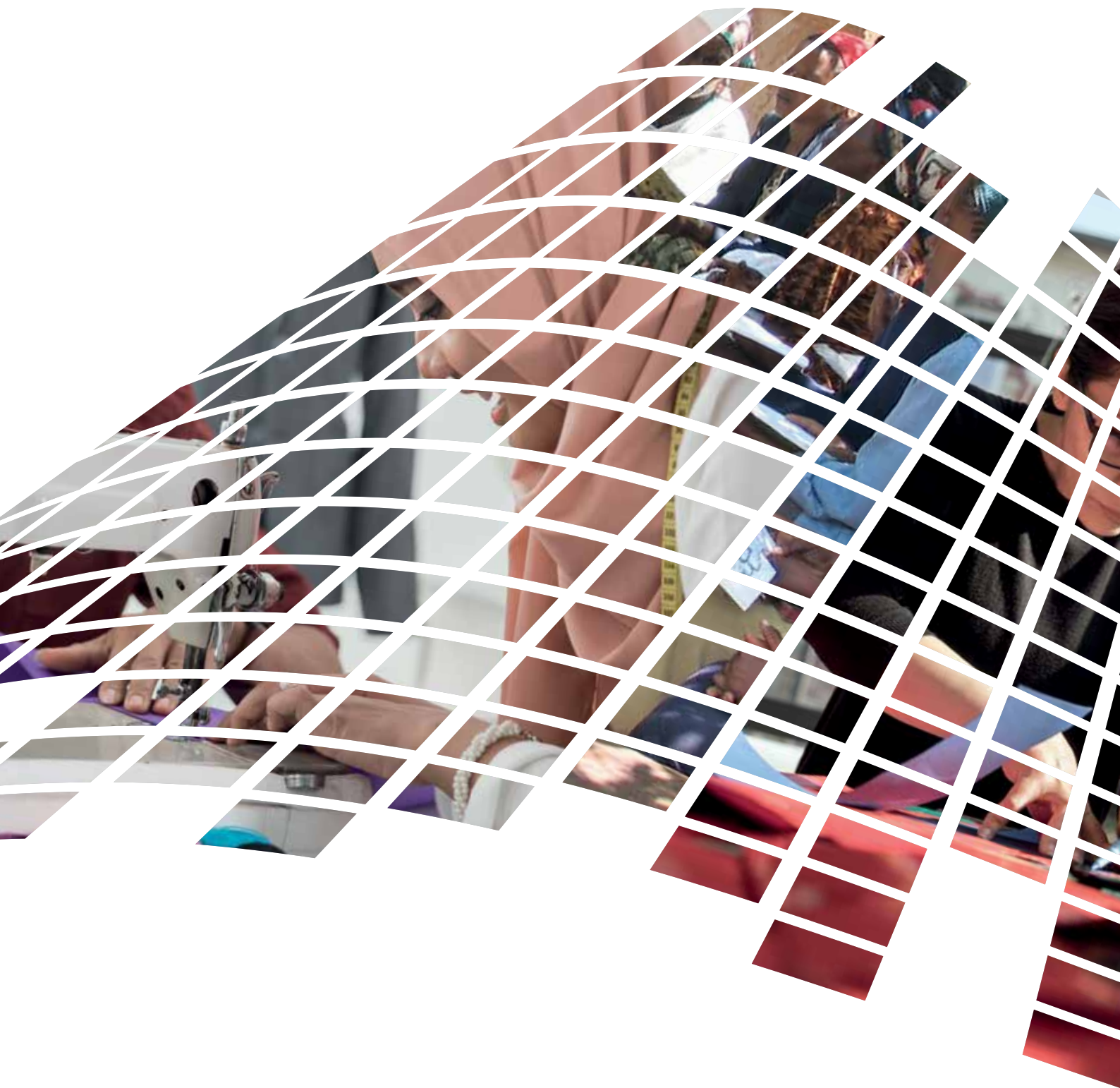
Governments can access a range of tools to increase and widen participation. These include:

- interventions in provision to make ALE more accessible and widely available;
- focused investment, particularly on the least advantaged;
- interventions to raise demand, for example, stimulating interest through celebrating success stories in festivals and media;
- reducing the costs of participation, particularly for poorer members of society;
- financial incentives to reduce cost barriers;
- non-financial incentives, such as voucher schemes, paid leave and opportunities for career development;
- ensuring effective information, advice and guidance for all learners, throughout their lives;
- countrywide strategies to ensure learners have access to ICTs and the skills to fully exploit them.
- increased investment in ALE, from governments, employers and individuals, and the targeting of those whose needs are greatest;
- donor countries to live up to their aid obligations to developing countries and rebalance their funding of education to support the education of adults as well as children;
- a better understanding of what works, particularly when it comes to vulnerable and excluded groups;
- recognition that investment in adult learning and education has social and civic benefits, as well as economic ones, and greater acknowledgement of the role of citizenship education in tackling the broader social issues that shape participation in ALE;
- an integrated, inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial approach to governance to enable Member States to realize the wider benefits of adult education to the greatest extent possible, with resources allocated accordingly.

Addressing inequalities in participation is critical to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the sustainability agenda more generally. It will require a major sea change in approach from Member States, and the concerted support of the international community, to make this happen. Above all, we need:

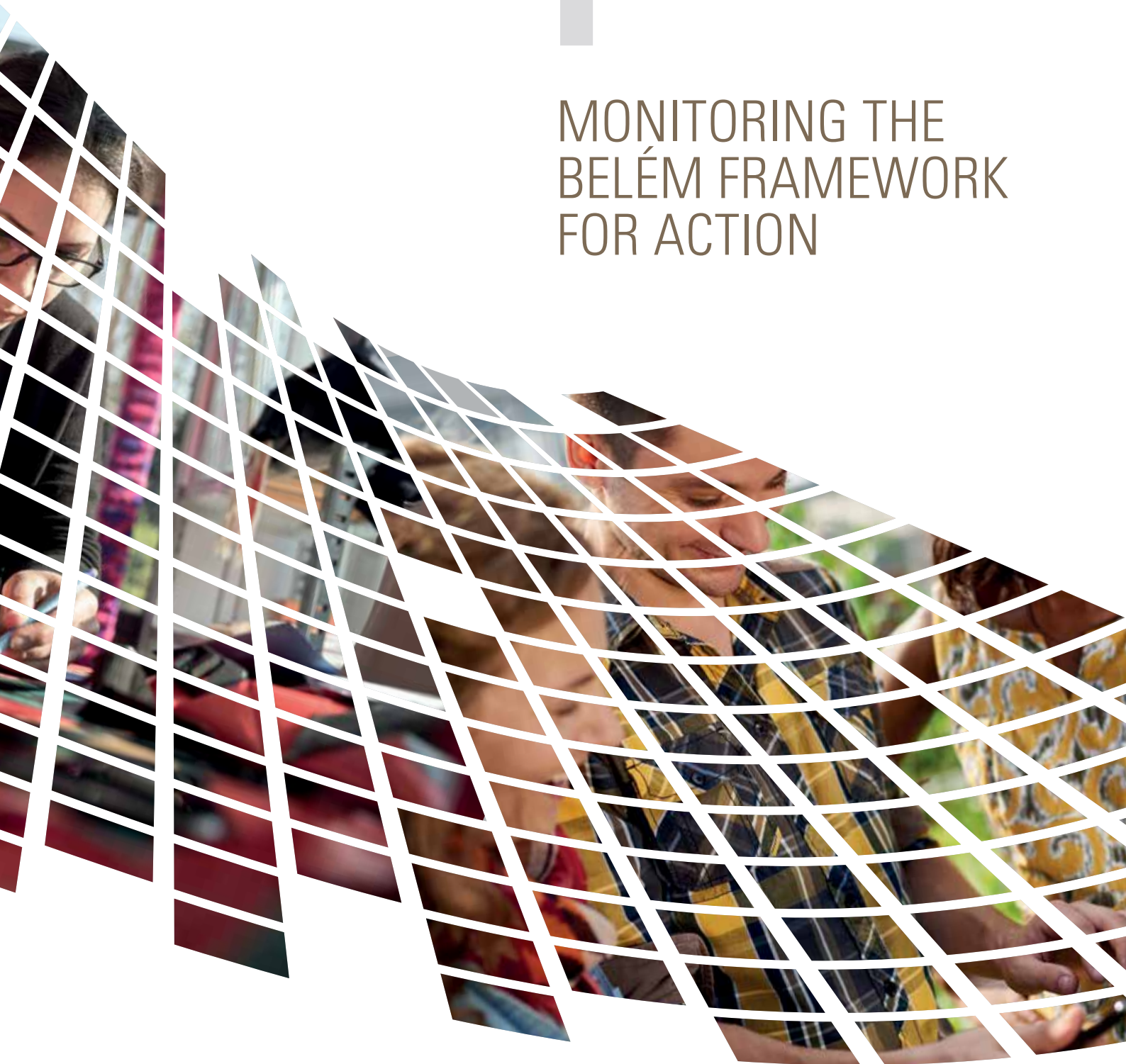
- better data, particularly for low-income countries and marginalized or vulnerable groups, such as migrants and refugees;

It is beholden on UNESCO and other international organizations to do all they can to raise awareness of the benefits of increasing participation in adult learning and education, and to contribute to the major shift in political will we so desperately need if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal vision. As this report shows, there is much we can do to help ensure the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development truly delivers on its promise to 'leave no one behind'.



# PART 1

## MONITORING THE BELÉM FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION





## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)* is a monitoring tool built to track the Belém Framework for Action (BFA), adopted by 144 UNESCO Member States at the sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2009. The tool, a set of questions in a survey, has developed through four cycles administered by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in consultation with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), with inputs from experts and external partners in the field.

*GRALE 4* has been designed to monitor the ALE activities of Member States since 2015, in line with the commitments made in the BFA, in terms of policies, governance, participation, finance and quality of provision. The monitoring tool for *GRALE 4*, a survey for self-reporting, was adapted from *GRALE 3*, published in 2016, to collect information from Member States on the five areas of commitment for ALE. In addition, this survey follows up Member States' implementation of the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE).

Adopted in 2015, RALE sets out principles and goals for ALE, and identifies specific ways in which countries can make progress. RALE identifies three key domains of learning and skills that are of importance for ALE:

- literacy and basic skills;
- continuing education and professional development (vocational skills);
- liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills).

These domains will be referred to where relevant. RALE also highlights the great potential of information and communication technologies to promote inclusion and

equity by providing adults with access to learning opportunities, including people with disabilities and marginalized or disadvantaged groups (see **Box 1.1**).

#### BOX 1.1 Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education

'Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are seen as holding great potential for improving access by adults to a variety of learning opportunities and promoting equity and inclusion. They offer various innovative possibilities for realizing lifelong learning, reducing the dependence on traditional formal structures of education and permitting individualized learning...

[They] have also considerable capacity for facilitating access to education for people with disabilities, permitting their fuller integration into society, as well as for other marginalized or disadvantaged groups.

'The aim of adult learning and education is to equip people with the necessary capabilities to exercise and realize their rights and take control of their destinies. It promotes personal and professional development, thereby supporting more active engagement by adults with their societies, communities and environments. It fosters sustainable and inclusive economic growth and decent work prospects for individuals. It is therefore a crucial tool in alleviating poverty, improving health and well-being and contributing to sustainable learning societies'.

Source: UNESCO, 2016b, paragraph 7, 8

## 1.1 THE GRALE 4 SURVEY

The specific monitoring tool for *GRALE 4* consists mostly of closed-ended questions which indicate changes in the five different areas of commitment on ALE: policy, governance, finance, quality and participation. This is done to allow for global coverage, relevance and comparability, and is achieved via the introduction of standardized measures for the responses. Responses to closed-ended questions have been calculated to percentages for quantitative reporting of the main findings and trends, which appear as tables, figures and charts in the following chapters.

To add depth to the closed-ended responses from Member States and to capture some country context, the survey also asked open-ended questions in order to collect specific examples or illustrations of progress or regression in a particular BFA area. Selected responses to these questions are used in the following sections and chapters, in some cases to aid comprehension or understanding, in others to provide regional balance, underscore progress or highlight exemplary cases from which Member States might learn.

Reporting on open-ended responses supports deeper consideration of recent ALE activities within a country. While reporting on these is limited based on the quality and amount of open-ended data provided, as well as the time and scope required to process it, examples reported in the following chapters of Part 1 are intended to highlight approaches that could provide a way forward for Member States in reaching their own ambitions as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

## 1.2 A GLOBAL SNAPSHOT

The response rate and quality of responses from countries to current and past *GRALE* surveys helps to animate a global ‘picture’ of adult education and learning across regions and over time. A total of 159 countries (157 Member States and two Associate Member States) responded to *GRALE 4*, up from 139 for *GRALE 3* (see **Table 1.1**). The response rate increased from 71% in 2015 for *GRALE 3* to 80% for *GRALE 4*. Regionally, 33 countries returned the monitoring template in sub-Saharan Africa (72% participation rate); 18 in the Arab States (90% participation rate); 6 in Central Asia (67% participation rate); 25 in East Asia and the Pacific (78% participation rate); 8 in South and West Asia (89% participation rate); 20 in Central and Eastern Europe (95% participation rate); 22 in North America and Western Europe (81% participation rate); and 27 in Latin America and the Caribbean (79% participation rate). Particularly important is the increase in participation rates from countries in the Arab States, which increased from 65% participation in *GRALE 3* to 90% participation in *GRALE 4*, as well as East Asia and the Pacific which increased from 45% participation in *GRALE 3* to 78% participation in *GRALE 4*.

For reporting purposes, Central Asia and South and West Asia will be combined with East Asia and the Pacific due to the small number of countries they represent. This reporting approach was undertaken in *GRALE 3* and, for comparison of trends over time, it is important to maintain the same level of aggregation.

**TABLE 1.1**  
**Participation of countries in *GRALE 4*, globally, by region and by income group**

|                                  | Countries | Respondents | Response rate |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 198 *     | 159         | 80%           |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |           |             |               |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 46        | 33          | 72%           |
| Arab States                      | 20        | 18          | 90%           |
| Central Asia                     | 9         | 6           | 67%           |
| East Asia and the Pacific        | 32        | 25          | 78%           |
| South and West Asia              | 9         | 8           | 89%           |
| North America and Western Europe | 27        | 22          | 81%           |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 21        | 20          | 95%           |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 34        | 27          | 79%           |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |           |             |               |
| Low income                       | 34        | 24          | 71%           |
| Lower middle income              | 47        | 38          | 81%           |
| Upper middle income              | 57        | 46          | 81%           |
| High income                      | 60        | 51          | 85%           |

Source: UIL, 2018a

\* The 198 countries consist of 193 Member States, two former Member States (Israel and the United States), three Associate Member States (Faroe Islands, New Caledonia, Tokelau).

**Table 1.1** also shows participation of countries in *GRALE 4* by income group. Of 34 countries classified as low income, 24 provided information for monitoring ALE; 38 out of 47 classified as lower middle income provided information; 46 out of 57 classified as upper middle income provided information; and 51 out of 60 classified as high income participated in *GRALE 4*. Participation in *GRALE 4* increased relative to *GRALE 3* for all income groups.

Although the overall participation rate in *GRALE 4* is significantly higher than in *GRALE 3*, potentially indicating the usefulness of the survey and willingness of Member States to monitor ALE, 20% of Member States (39 countries) did not

participate in *GRALE 4*. Furthermore, the overall participation rate is affected by a lack of responses to certain questions in the monitoring tool. As with *GRALE 3*, *GRALE 4* does not attempt to achieve representativeness by weighting responses, but instead presents the number of responses and the percentage it represents of participating countries. Member States in conflict or fragile political situations are, unsurprisingly, less likely to participate<sup>1</sup>—the ALE situation in these countries is likely to be quite different from the rest of participating countries. The global and regional ‘pictures’ of ALE offered in this report are based on information provided by participating countries.

1 Although Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Somalia and Syria participated in *GRALE 4*.

**TABLE 1.2**  
**Responding ministries for the *GRALE 4* survey**

|                                  | <b>Total responses<br/><i>GRALE 4</i></b> | <b>Education</b> | <b>Social<br/>affairs</b> | <b>Health</b> | <b>Labour</b> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 159                                       | 85%              | 18%                       | 7%            | 14%           |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |                                           |                  |                           |               |               |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 33                                        | 85%              | 30%                       | 12%           | 12%           |
| Arab States                      | 18                                        | 78%              | 22%                       | 0%            | 11%           |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 39                                        | 95%              | 5%                        | 3%            | 8%            |
| North America and Western Europe | 22                                        | 91%              | 14%                       | 5%            | 32%           |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 20                                        | 65%              | 15%                       | 5%            | 15%           |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 27                                        | 85%              | 22%                       | 15%           | 11%           |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |                                           |                  |                           |               |               |
| Low income                       | 24                                        | 75%              | 25%                       | 8%            | 8%            |
| Lower middle income              | 38                                        | 92%              | 16%                       | 8%            | 13%           |
| Upper middle income              | 46                                        | 83%              | 17%                       | 7%            | 7%            |
| High income                      | 51                                        | 86%              | 16%                       | 6%            | 24%           |

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

The *GRALE 4* survey asked Member States to report which government ministries provided input in response to the survey (**Table 1.2**).

Globally, 85% of countries reported that the ministry of education was involved in providing input to responses, followed by 18% of countries reporting that the ministry of social affairs, and 14% the ministry of labour, contributed. This trend is similar across regions and also income groups, showing, globally, that the government ministry mostly responsible for providing input on monitoring ALE is education.

**TABLE 1.3**  
**Stakeholders' involvement in national progress report for *GRALE 4***

|                                  | Total responses<br><i>GRALE 4</i> | ALE<br>agencies | ALE<br>providers | Research | Universities | NGOs | INGOs | Private<br>Sector |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------|--------------|------|-------|-------------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 159                               | 28%             | 26%              | 14%      | 21%          | 24%  | 16%   | 9%                |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |                                   |                 |                  |          |              |      |       |                   |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 33                                | 33%             | 64%              | 27%      | 36%          | 52%  | 39%   | 21%               |
| Arab States                      | 18                                | 28%             | 17%              | 11%      | 11%          | 22%  | 28%   | 0%                |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 39                                | 26%             | 13%              | 5%       | 15%          | 13%  | 10%   | 3%                |
| North America and Western Europe | 22                                | 18%             | 9%               | 18%      | 18%          | 9%   | 5%    | 0%                |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 20                                | 25%             | 15%              | 10%      | 20%          | 10%  | 0%    | 5%                |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 27                                | 33%             | 30%              | 11%      | 22%          | 30%  | 11%   | 19%               |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |                                   |                 |                  |          |              |      |       |                   |
| Low income                       | 24                                | 25%             | 42%              | 25%      | 29%          | 38%  | 33%   | 13%               |
| Lower middle income              | 38                                | 29%             | 26%              | 16%      | 29%          | 29%  | 29%   | 5%                |
| Upper middle income              | 46                                | 33%             | 30%              | 9%       | 17%          | 26%  | 9%    | 17%               |
| High income                      | 51                                | 24%             | 16%              | 12%      | 16%          | 12%  | 6%    | 2%                |

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

It is important to have the engagement of civil society and non-governmental organizations in tracking progress with respect to ALE (Table 1.3). This is due to the importance of inter-sectoral inclusion and cooperation in increasing and maintaining the potential of ALE for all. Of all participating countries, only 28% indicated that ALE agencies contributed to the survey response, and 26% indicated that ALE providers contributed. While 21% of countries indicated that universities and 14% reported that research institutes gave input, only 24% of the countries involved local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and even

fewer involved international NGOs, in giving input on the monitoring tool. Regionally, there is some variation in terms of stakeholders' participation in responding to the survey. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, 64% of participating countries responded that ALE providers were consulted to report on national progress, and 52% of countries consulted with local NGOs. In North America and Western Europe, there was less consultation with stakeholders in responding on progress on ALE since 2015: notably, 0% from the private sector and less than 10% from NGOs and INGOs.



## CHAPTER 2

## POLICY

Policies reported through the *GRALE 4* survey indicate how serious Member States are about ALE, and the kind of progress they can make in relation to the BFA. Similar information was also available in previous *GRALE* reports.

Policies are defined as high-level statements of intent, ideally underwritten by evidence-based research, which guide actions to plan, engage and accredit learning within a specific context, and according to national priorities. The BFA recommendation on policies is a point of departure for tracking status based on Member States' responses to the monitoring survey (see **Box 1.2**).

### BOX 1.2 Policy in the BFA

According to the BFA, 'policies and legislative measures for adult education need to be comprehensive, inclusive, integrated within a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective, based on sector-wide and inter-sectoral approaches, covering and linking all components of learning and education'.

Source: UIL, 2010, p. 7

Five main principles on designing policy for ALE echo through the *GRALE 2* and *GRALE 3* reports in relation to the BFA recommendation. These are drawn up for emphasis again here. Simply put, ALE is:

1. Part of the *human right* to education;
2. A potential means for marginalized groups to *achieve equity*;
3. An opportunity for *learning throughout life regardless of learning objectives*;
4. *Comprehensive provision* utilising various kinds of learning activities;
5. *A long-term approach* to achieve intended outcomes.

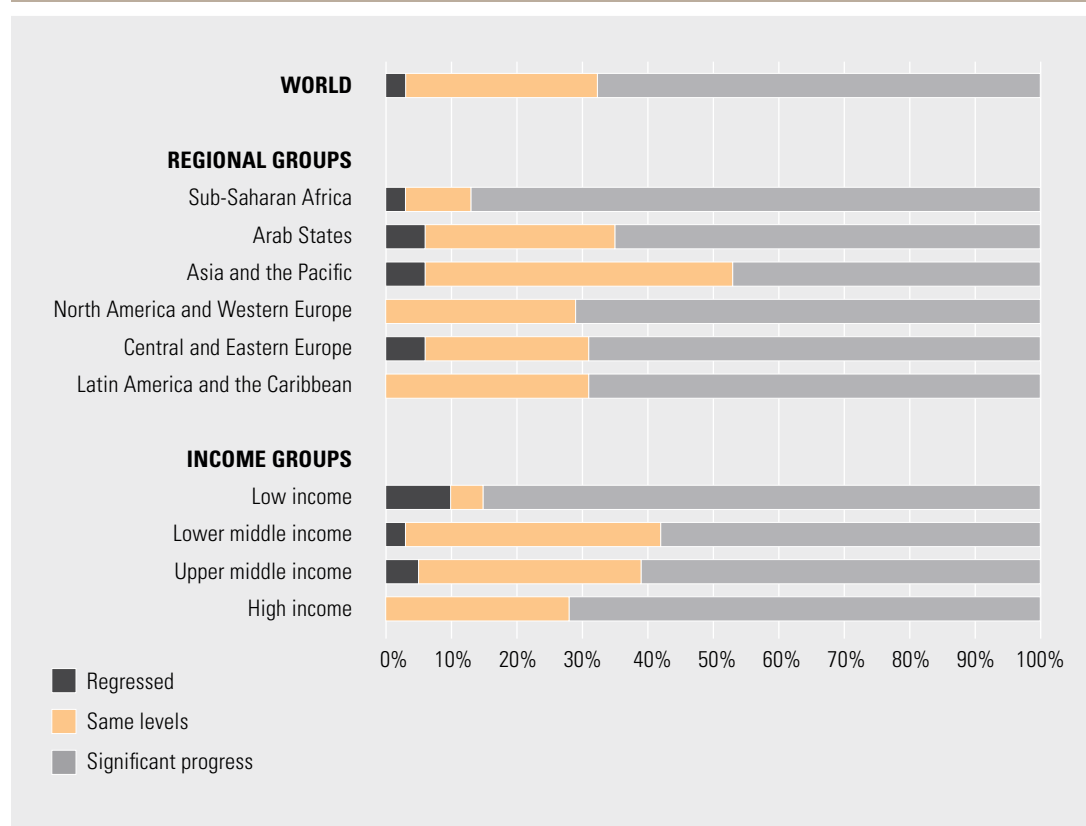
Since *GRALE 3*, RALE has helped to bring special focus to three learning fields: literacy and basic skills; continuous education and professional development (vocational skills); and liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills). All five main principles from *GRALE 2* and *GRALE 3* are embedded in the BFA, and suggest rippling effects for a learner, their family and their community, if intended outcomes are achieved through a long-term, sustainable approach.

Pertinent to the first principle, ALE is a right, ideally offered regardless of a learner's circumstance in promotion of their personal and social development. This means ALE should not be conditioned by income level, location, gender, ethnicity or ability. This has implications for the larger report discussion on access and participation, and therefore social inclusion in ALE, which is at the heart of the *GRALE 4* agenda.

## 2.1 WHERE DO WE STAND?

The BFA indicates the commitment of Member States to develop and implement policies, well-targeted plans and legislation for addressing ALE. A commitment was also made to designing specific action plans for ALE that integrate the main international development priorities, including the SDGs. Member States also committed to establishing coordinating mechanisms involving all stakeholders in the area of ALE, and improving the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of all forms of learning (including non-formal and informal learning). These important commitments form the basis for the monitoring of ALE policy in *GRALE 4*.

**FIGURE 1.1**  
**Overall progress on ALE policy since 2015**



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

## 2.2 HOW ARE WE DOING?

In *GRALE 3*, 96 countries (out of 128 that responded to the question) reported significant improvements in ALE policies between 2009 and 2015. In *GRALE 4*, 147 countries reported on whether ALE policies have continued to progress, remained the same or actually regressed since 2015. Rates of progress, regression, or no change (same levels) are shown in **Figure 1.1**. These rates are categorized globally, by region and by income group.<sup>2</sup> Results show significant progress was made by the majority of countries (66%) that responded to the question. Significant progress was reported especially in sub-Saharan Africa (87% of 30 countries) and the Arab States (65% of 17 countries), and in low-income countries (86% of 21 countries).

Nearly 30% of countries that responded to the survey reported no changes in ALE policies since 2015 (44 countries). Nearly half of countries in Asia and the Pacific reported no change (47% or 17 countries in this region), and only 10% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa (three) reported no progress in ALE policies since 2015. Globally, 3% of countries reported regression in ALE policies since 2015, which amounts to five countries, four of which—Islamic Republic of Iran, Lao PDR, Somalia and Syrian Arab Republic—are ranked high on the Fund for Peace’s Fragile State Index (Fund for Peace, 2018; see also OECD, 2018a, p. 85), including two – Somalia and Syria – ranked second and fourth, respectively, on the index (Iran is ranked 52<sup>nd</sup> and Lao 68<sup>th</sup>); the fifth country to report regression is in Eastern Europe (Romania). Somalia reported regression due to limitations on resources and policy-making.

<sup>2</sup> The report uses the World Bank country classifications by income level

## 2.3 BREAKING IT DOWN

Countries were asked about progress in disaggregated categories of policy, which followed the commitment of the BFA. These were listed in the *GRALE 4* survey as:

- Implementing legislation,
- Developing and implementing policies,
- Developing concrete and specific plans,
- Involving stakeholders,
- Improving recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning.

This is a new line of enquiry for monitoring in *GRALE 4*, whereby Member States provided more detail on whether progress was made in specific areas of ALE policy since 2015. Countries provided examples of progress or regression in ALE policies, which were used both as evidence and, importantly, to show and share good practice when progress was made.

As shown in **Table 1.4**, 147 countries responded on disaggregated categories of ALE policy. The greatest global progress was

involving stakeholders (86% of countries reported progress in this field). Belarus, Brazil and DR Congo described activities with different stakeholders to increase social awareness. In Belarus, large-scale events featuring ALE, including forums, conferences and trade fairs, have taken place with support from the national Association for Advanced Adult Education and DVV International (Germany).

Of the countries that responded, those in sub-Saharan Africa have the highest global rate of involving stakeholders. Eritrea is working with partners such as the African Development Bank, UNICEF, the Global Partnership for Education and others for financial support to implement basic education and skills training for adults through mother tongue literacy initiatives. The DR Congo reported launching a literacy awareness programme with the Alpha Ujuvo, a non-profit organization based in Goma. Kenya reported involving stakeholders through the establishment of adult and continuing education centres, which offer community education programmes in public health and nutrition, cooperative education, financial literacy and digital literacy.

**TABLE 1.4**  
**Progress in the field of ALE with respect to different policy processes**

|                                  | Total<br>responses<br><i>GRALE 4</i> | Implementing<br>legislation | Implementing<br>policies | Developing<br>plans | Involving<br>stake-<br>holders | Validation<br>non-formal &<br>informal |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 147                                  | 68%                         | 73%                      | 82%                 | 86%                            | 66%                                    |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |                                      |                             |                          |                     |                                |                                        |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 33                                   | 73%                         | 70%                      | 81%                 | 94%                            | 68%                                    |
| Arab States                      | 17                                   | 71%                         | 72%                      | 72%                 | 89%                            | 65%                                    |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 33                                   | 52%                         | 68%                      | 73%                 | 79%                            | 67%                                    |
| North America and Western Europe | 21                                   | 76%                         | 86%                      | 90%                 | 81%                            | 76%                                    |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 18                                   | 83%                         | 89%                      | 83%                 | 78%                            | 50%                                    |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 25                                   | 64%                         | 62%                      | 92%                 | 92%                            | 69%                                    |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |                                      |                             |                          |                     |                                |                                        |
| Low income                       | 23                                   | 74%                         | 74%                      | 91%                 | 100%                           | 76%                                    |
| Lower middle income              | 34                                   | 59%                         | 75%                      | 74%                 | 83%                            | 63%                                    |
| Upper middle income              | 43                                   | 67%                         | 64%                      | 75%                 | 82%                            | 66%                                    |
| High income                      | 47                                   | 72%                         | 79%                      | 89%                 | 85%                            | 65%                                    |

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

### BOX 1.3 The case of Poland: Increasing stakeholder involvement

Poland reported working with sectoral skills councils in the fields of health, construction, finance, tourism, fashion, internet technology and the automotive industry, including electro-mobility. The aim of these councils is to enhance cooperation between educational institutions and the labour market, so that competencies possessed by adults (employees) meet employers' needs.

Poland also reported that Local Centres of Knowledge and Education, being established in underdeveloped areas of the country, connect ALE provision with the needs of the local community. As part of the civic education path of the National Programme for Supporting the Development of Civil Society, support for folk universities is another strategic approach of Poland to increase stakeholder involvement. The National Network of Folk Universities, which consists of non-profit organizations that offer ALE in rural areas based on the principles of Nicolaus Grundtvig, aims to develop folk universities as centres for ALE.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

Developing concrete and specific plans in ALE was the second key area where global progress was made, with 82% of countries reporting progress since 2015 (**Table 1.4**). These plans were developed from a range of principles, including rights-based approaches to education, economic transformation, social inclusion and community engagement, as well as from a desire to promote lifelong learning and learning societies. In Uganda, for example, the National Development Plan II 2015/16–2019/20 identifies the development of *human capital* as one of the fundamental enablers for socio-economic transformation of the country, which is in line with aspirations of the Uganda Vision 2040 statement. In Malaysia, the Eleventh Plan 2016–2020 (RMKe-11) highlights an agenda of *inclusivity*, which focuses on access to higher education, skills and

training and lifelong learning. The education strategy 2011–2020 for Viet Nam highlights the need to develop a *learning society* by creating social equity in access, and equal opportunities for everybody to engage in lifelong learning.

Latin America and the Caribbean reported the highest level for stakeholder involvement and for developing plans, with rates of 92% in both categories. Despite the significant progress in these areas, the region has the lowest rate of progress in implementing policies and legislation, with just 62% and 64% respectively (**Table 1.4**). This can be interpreted as showing that stakeholders' involvement in the policy process has significantly enhanced the development of ALE plans but has had a lesser impact on implementing policies and legislation.

Colombia reported on its new *General Guidelines and Orientations for the Formal Education of Young People and Adults* (Documento de Lineamientos generales y orientaciones para la educación formal de personas jóvenes y adultas), which is inspired by a *rights-based approach*, intended to guarantee education as a fundamental right. According to the report from Colombia, this plan promotes affordability, accessibility and acceptability of ALE for young people, adults and, in some cases, older people to have a quality education to improve their lives and those of their families.

**Table 1.4** also shows that 73% of countries reported global progress in developing and implementing policies on ALE, while 68% reported progress on implementing legislation. Some 86% of responding countries in North America and Western Europe reported progress in implementing policies, the second highest rate globally. In Central and Eastern Europe, 89% of countries reported progress in implementing policies, the highest rate globally (**Table 1.4**). Costa Rica, Denmark, Mexico, Namibia, New Zealand, Oman, Palau, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe all gave examples, ranging from policies on free basic education, targeting youth, learner-centred approaches, enrolment and assessment, to tertiary education, use of ICT, skills training for entrepreneurship and new technology, and community-based education support. To address the complex, multidimensional problems of youth and adult education, Costa Rica reported on policy

resolution 02-69-2017, where the Higher Education Council approved the *Education Policy Reference Framework to Guide the Improvement and Transformation of Youth and Adult Education, Medium and Long-term Strategies*.

#### BOX 1.4 Policy implementation in Italy

In 2015, the Ministry of Education, in coordination with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, issued guidelines to implement the restructuring of the adult education system (Ministerial Decree, 12 March 2015). Accordingly, Provincial Centres for Adult Instruction (Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti or CPIAs) were given organizational and didactic autonomy, and have since performed the functions previously undertaken by the Permanent Territorial Centres (CTP), and by other educational institutions where evening courses were held. The following groups are eligible for enrolment to the CPIAs:

- a) Adults, including foreigners, who have not completed compulsory schooling and want to obtain the primary and lower secondary school-leaving qualifications;
- b) Adults, including foreigners, who hold the primary and lower secondary school leaving qualifications, and want to obtain an upper secondary school-leaving qualification;
- c) Foreign adults who wish to enrol in Italian as a second language courses;
- d) Young people aged 16+ who hold the primary and lower secondary school leaving qualifications, but cannot attend daytime courses.

Provision by the CPIAs (including that taking place at prevention institutions and prisons) is structured in terms of: 1) primary or entry level education courses; 2) Italian as a second language courses; 3) secondary level education courses, technical, vocational and arts-based only.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

The lowest level progress in disaggregated categories of ALE was in recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning, with 66% of countries reporting progress. It is, however, worth mentioning that two-thirds of countries reported progress in developing RVA frameworks, as recommended by the BFA. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) reported challenges in ministerial decisions that regulate the transition from adult education to integrated continuing education, in addition to setting out study plans for each track. This included the certificates awarded in each track, and links to the possibility of continuing to higher education, in accordance with academic or technical specializations. In Italy, the CPIAs (see **Box 1.4**) are the only accredited institutions to certify that foreign nationals over the age of 16 have achieved at least 30 'credits', as sanctioned by Presidential Decree no. 179 of 14 September 2011 in the integration agreement between the foreigner and the state.

#### BOX 1.5 Education for All strengthens non-formal education in Guatemala

The current Guatemalan Government Plan 2016–2020, 'Education for All', includes strengthening non-formal education, especially education for work, as a strategic objective. In pursuit of this aim:

- The plan supports the provision of different modalities of formal and non-formal education for children, young people and adults excluded from the national education system.
- The National Alternative Education Programme (PRONEA), set up by Ministerial Agreement in December 2017, provides access to the education system for all people over 13 years of age in order to complete primary or secondary education. It also allows for the accreditation and certification of skills acquired through formal means or experience, in coordination with the National System of Labour Training.
- Norms governing the admission of students to the non-formal education system facilitate entry by stipulating fewer entry requirements and proficiency testing for those who do not have documentation of prior studies.
- Finally, various actions have been taken, including international cooperation, to raise awareness among different actors of the importance of non-formal education for out-of-school young people and adults.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

Finally, low-income countries had the highest global rates of involving stakeholders, developing plans, implementing legislation and recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning (see **Table 1.4**). The learning outcomes that young people and adults acquire in the course of their lives in non-formal and informal settings need to be made visible, assessed and accredited, as has been recognized in a number of important policy reports, frameworks and guidelines. Enhancing RVA to all forms of learning has the potential to motivate young people and adults to continue learning and to ensure equity and inclusiveness in access to learning opportunities. It can also promote more effective utilization of human talent and resources (UIL, 2018b).

The lower middle income group reported 75% progress in implementing policies, the second highest global rate. The upper middle income group appears to be weaker across all categories. The 47 high-income countries reported the most progress in developing plans (89%), followed by involving stakeholders (85%), and implementing policies (78%). These are the top three disaggregated categories reported globally, though not in this order.

## 2.4 PROGRESS BY LEARNING FIELD

Countries were asked about progress in RALE fields of learning according to disaggregated categories of policy. The fields of learning were listed in RALE (UNESCO, 2016b) as:

- literacy and basic skills,
- continuing education and professional development (vocational skills),
- liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills).

As shown in **Table 1.5**, responses indicate global progress in RALE fields of learning across the disaggregated categories of ALE. Higher rates of global progress were reported for two RALE fields of learning: (1) literacy and basic skills, and (2) continuing education and professional development. The third RALE field of learning, citizenship education, had a global rate of 5% or under across disaggregated categories of ALE. Increasing literacy levels and promoting employability are the main policy goals of countries in relation to ALE. Citizenship education receives rather marginal attention in ALE policy development. In contrast, literacy and basic skills have been top priorities for the ALE programmes and policies of the majority

**TABLE 1.5**  
**Policy processes with respect to ALE**

|                                                                                       | <b>Total responses<br/>GRALE 4</b> | <b>Literacy<br/>and<br/>basic skills</b> | <b>Continuing<br/>education and<br/>professional<br/>development<br/>(vocational<br/>skills)</b> | <b>Liberal,<br/>popular and<br/>community<br/>education<br/>(active<br/>citizenship<br/>skills)</b> | <b>Do not<br/>know</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                                                                          |                                    |                                          |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                     |                        |
| Implementing legislation                                                              | 95                                 | 56%                                      | 35%                                                                                              | 5%                                                                                                  | 4%                     |
| Developing and implementing policies                                                  | 103                                | 51%                                      | 44%                                                                                              | 3%                                                                                                  | 2%                     |
| Developing concrete and specific plans                                                | 114                                | 54%                                      | 39%                                                                                              | 4%                                                                                                  | 4%                     |
| Involving stakeholders                                                                | 124                                | 47%                                      | 48%                                                                                              | 3%                                                                                                  | 2%                     |
| Improving accreditation, validation and recognition of non-formal & informal learning | 92                                 | 37%                                      | 58%                                                                                              | 1%                                                                                                  | 4%                     |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

of Member States since the publication of *GRALE 3* in 2009. Countries gave a high level of attention to ALE programmes and policies that link literacy and basic skills with health, employability and social cohesion. Most adults will not be encouraged to participate in ALE programmes just to acquire new skills, it should be noted; they will need to be able to translate those new skills into social and economic outcomes (UIL, 2016, p. 99).

## 2.5

### WHAT WE FOUND OUT: KEY FINDINGS ON POLICY

The main findings from countries' responses on ALE policy in the *GRALE 4* survey are:

- Two-thirds of countries (66%) reported global progress in ALE policy since 2015, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (87% of 30 countries) and the Arab States (65% of 17 countries), and in those countries classified as low-income (86% of 21 countries). In *GRALE 3*, 75% of countries reported progress since 2009.
- Nearly 30% of countries reported no change in ALE policy since 2015 (44 countries), including nearly half of respondents from Asia and the Pacific (47% or 17 countries in this region). Progress in relation to implementing new legislation appears weak among countries in this world region, placing them at risk of failing to profit from the multiple benefits of ALE as outlined in *GRALE 3*.
- 3% of countries reported regression in ALE policy since 2015, numbering five in total: the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lao PDR, Romania, Somalia and Syria.
- In terms of disaggregated categories of ALE policy, the most progress reported was in involving stakeholders (86% of countries), followed by developing concrete and specific plans (82%). These plans were developed from a range of principles, including rights-based approaches to education, economic transformation, social inclusion and community engagement, as well as to promote lifelong learning and learning societies. Nevertheless, citizenship education received only marginal attention from survey respondents overall.
- The lowest level progress in disaggregated categories of ALE was in recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning, with 66% of countries reporting progress.
- Low-income countries reported the highest global rate of involving stakeholders, developing plans and recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning. Reported progress in validating and accrediting non-formal and informal learning was notably lower in Central and Eastern European countries.
- The domains of literacy and basic skills and vocational skill and professional development are the two areas of ALE in which countries generally reported progress in terms of policy. Citizenship education is, by comparison, somewhat neglected.



## CHAPTER 3

## GOVERNANCE

Governance is the application of policy, or 'a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services' (Fukuyama, 2013, p. 350). High-level statements of intent that guide planning, engagement and accreditation—policies—are ideally formulated through cooperation between government agencies and key stakeholders, such as ALE providers and educators. Without such cooperation, provision would not be organized and systematic, reducing the possibility of overall social benefits from ALE, a core theme highlighted in *GRALE 3*. Effective governance is recognized as essential to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, not only in the field of education but also in related areas such as health and wellbeing.

The BFA highlights that good governance is both a means and an end for ALE to benefit the learner and society (see **Box 1.6**). How? Through an inclusive and equitable process involving all stakeholders in developing and offering ALE provision that is relevant to all learners, though, importantly, focused on the most disadvantaged. By involving all stakeholders, the process of provision is considered to be more transparent and, therefore, more accountable. Most of all, good governance is believed to be more effective in responding to the needs of all learners and so paving the way to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

**BOX 1.6****Governance in the BFA**

'Good governance facilitates the implementation of adult learning and education policy in ways which are effective, transparent, accountable and equitable. Representation by and participation of all stakeholders are indispensable in order to guarantee responsiveness to the needs of all learners, in particular the most disadvantaged.'

Source: UIL, 2010, p. 7

## 3.1

**WHERE DO WE STAND?**

Recent *GRALE* reports have explored ways towards an inclusive and equitable process of governance that leads to transparent, accountable and effective provision. The BFA recommendation offers hints on how to achieve this. Three aspects of governance from the BFA recommendations, which Member States committed to support, are embedded in the *GRALE 4* survey (UIL, 2018a). These are:

- *Mechanisms* for stakeholder engagement and coordination,
  - *Capacity building* for better stakeholder engagement and coordination,
  - *Better cooperation* between sectors and government ministries.
- (UIL, 2010, p. 7)

A key governance strategy highlighted in *GRALE 2* was decentralization. Decentralized power enables more engagement with stakeholders to develop and thus offer ALE provision that is relevant and accountable to a local community. Also, decentralized provision is likely to relate more to learners' realities and needs, which are essential aspects of inclusive and equitable provision. According to *GRALE 2*, effective decentralized governance relies on strong coordination, funding and capacity building of national, regional and local ALE systems in Member States. A key finding from *GRALE 3* was that the governance of ALE had become more decentralized between 2009 and 2015, implying that more decisions were being made at the local level. Effective decentralization should contribute to inclusion for the most disadvantaged groups by enhancing their access to ALE provision. This could lead to wider participation, which is the thematic focus of this report and will be expanded on in the next chapter.

### 3.2 HOW ARE WE DOING?

**Table 1.6** shows responses to the question on whether there has been notable improvement in the governance of ALE since 2015,

globally, by region and by income group. Out of 137 countries that responded, 103 reported improvement since 2015. Globally, this represents 75% of total respondents.

Regionally, the Arab States reported the highest rate of improvement in ALE governance, at 89% (16 of 18 countries). Sub-Saharan Africa reported 86% (24 of 28 countries), followed by 85% in North America and Europe (17 of 20 countries). The lowest rate of improvement was in Central and Eastern Europe at 59% (10 of 17 countries), though this is still well over half of respondents.

As shown in **Table 1.6**, low-income countries reported the most improvement in ALE governance at 89% (17 of 19 countries). The rate of progress drops slightly from there, levelling at 72–73% in the other income groups.

### 3.3 BREAKING IT DOWN

Countries were asked about progress since 2015 in disaggregated categories related to the three aspects of governance set out in the BFA recommendations. These categories were listed in the *GRALE 4* survey as:

**TABLE 1.6**  
**Overall improvement in the governance of ALE in countries since 2015**

|                                  | Total responses<br><i>GRALE 4</i> | Improvement | Proportion |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 137                               | 103         | 75%        |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |                                   |             |            |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 28                                | 24          | 86%        |
| Arab States                      | 18                                | 16          | 89%        |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 32                                | 22          | 69%        |
| North America and Western Europe | 20                                | 17          | 85%        |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 17                                | 10          | 59%        |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 22                                | 14          | 64%        |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |                                   |             |            |
| Low income                       | 19                                | 17          | 89%        |
| Lower middle income              | 36                                | 26          | 72%        |
| Upper middle income              | 37                                | 27          | 73%        |
| High income                      | 45                                | 33          | 73%        |

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

- increased stakeholder participation,
- developed more effective monitoring and evaluation systems,
- strengthened cooperation with civil society,
- improved inter-sectoral coordination,
- improved inter-ministerial cooperation,
- improved transnational cooperation,
- strengthened capacity-building initiatives,
- became more decentralized.

The amount of country responses to the question varied—from 148 to 152—depending on disaggregated category; this is shown in **Table 1.7** under ‘Total responses’.<sup>3</sup>

Progress in each of these important aspects of the governance of ALE, and the commitment made by countries, is described below.

### 3.3.1

#### INCREASED STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Results show that 50% of 151 respondent countries reported much progress in stakeholder participation (**Table 1.7**).

Stakeholder participation was achieved through organized programmes, the creation of councils or adult learning centres, as well as through collaboration between the government and other key providers, educators and adult learners. Key examples of increased stakeholder participation were highlighted by countries as follows:

- Participation with government agencies or private organizations in Brunei Darussalam has enabled short courses or programmes to be better tailored to stakeholders’ needs and expectations.
- In Pakistan, participation of all relevant stakeholders is essential for developing national and provincial programmes of literacy and non-formal education.
- El Salvador’s National Education Council comprises scholars, civil society, government institutions, cooperative organizations, private enterprises, politicians and the diplomatic corps, among others. Their remit is to prepare the El Salvador Education Plan.

**TABLE 1.7**  
Global disaggregated reporting on ALE governance by countries

|                                                            | Total responses<br>GRALE 4 | Not much | Somewhat | Much | Do not know |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------|----------|------|-------------|
| Increased stakeholder participation                        | 151                        | 20%      | 29%      | 50%  | 1%          |
| Developed more effective monitoring and evaluation systems | 152                        | 34%      | 35%      | 30%  | 1%          |
| Strengthened cooperation with civil society                | 149                        | 26%      | 32%      | 40%  | 3%          |
| Improved intersectoral coordination                        | 150                        | 25%      | 29%      | 43%  | 3%          |
| Improved interministerial cooperation                      | 148                        | 24%      | 34%      | 41%  | 1%          |
| Improved transnational cooperation                         | 149                        | 42%      | 30%      | 25%  | 3%          |
| Strengthened capacity-building initiatives                 | 149                        | 26%      | 39%      | 31%  | 5%          |
| Become more decentralised                                  | 150                        | 45%      | 20%      | 33%  | 3%          |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

<sup>3</sup> Response options to disaggregated categories were drawn from a Likert-type scale, ranging from ‘not much’ to ‘somewhat’ to ‘much’, with the option of ‘do not know’. Some response options were merged together to make a three-point scale, as there were very few countries with extreme categories ‘not much’ versus ‘a little’ and ‘much’ versus ‘a great deal’.

- In Honduras, the participation of parents in the education system has been strengthened through the implementation of the Community Participation Act.
- A 2017 regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture in Indonesia addresses the involvement of families in the provision of education.
- In Poland, new skills councils were established to help coordinate the learning system: the Stakeholder Council of Integrated Qualification System, the Programme Council on Competences, and sectoral councils.
- Sectoral skills councils have been set up in Hungary (see **Box 1.7**).

**BOX 1.7**  
**Increased stakeholder participation**  
**in ALE governance in Hungary:**  
**Sectoral skills councils**

The provision of Act CLXXXVII on vocational training, which came into force on 1 July 2018, introduced the formation of sectoral skills councils. Members of the councils consist of representatives of different sectors of the economy, employers and employees, as well as education and training experts. The Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry coordinates these councils. Through the councils, businesses can directly influence the formation of the National Qualifications Register, the examination requirements of state-recognized vocational qualifications and the operation of school-based VET programmes. Therefore, the councils will have a direct impact on developments in the provision of adult education and training, linking sectoral skills needs to ALE provision.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

### 3.3.2

#### **MORE EFFECTIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS**

**Table 1.7** shows that 46 out of 152 countries (30%) have made ‘much progress’ in developing effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems since 2015. The greatest progress by region was achieved in the Arab States, where 56% (10 out of 18 countries) reported making much progress. About half of countries in North America and Western Europe, on the other hand, reported not making much progress on M&E systems since 2015.

Developing M&E systems is important for planning ALE. In Slovenia, for example, the Minister for Education, Science and Sport has appointed a special coordination body for adult education (2015). This consists of 24 members, representatives of all ministries, providers, professionals, civil society and social partners, to better plan and monitor ALE in the country. M&E systems are also important for quality assurance (**Box 1.8**). Finally, M&E systems, according to countries, have also been developed for forecasting purposes (**Box 1.9**).

**BOX 1.8**  
**Monitoring interventions in Uganda**

In Uganda, the Ministry of Education, as lead agent for promoting adult literacy, collaborates with other partners in organizing activities aimed at strengthening coordination, collaboration and quality assurance. The social development Sector Working Group (SWG) regularly plans, reviews and monitors relevant interventions in Uganda as part of the national strategy for poverty reduction. The SWG also promotes staff capacity building in M&E and is responsible for a management information system for the sector. This structure is replicated at a lower level through thematic working groups, particularly the Community Mobilization and Empowerment Committee, which meets every two months to review and plan ALE activities.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

### BOX 1.9 Skills forecasting in Estonia

Under Estonia's Ministry of Education and Research, the labour and skills demand forecasting system, OSKA, was introduced in 2015 to cover all sectors of the economy, with reporting by 2020. OSKA recommendations are taken into account in planning student places for vocational education, drafting performance-based contracts for institutions of higher education, and planning adult continuing education. The Unemployment Insurance Fund in Estonia considers OSKA outputs in training the unemployed. Without monitoring and evaluation, it becomes more difficult to understand which areas of the governance process need to be approved. The ultimate aim is to meet learners' needs so they can fully benefit from learning.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

- In Portugal, there are incentives to networking between *Qualifica* centres and education and training providers.
- Through its national agency for science and technology policy, Rannís (Rannsóknamiðstöð Íslands), Iceland, in 2017, created a network with representatives from 18 stakeholders, including civil society organizations.
- By engaging local community members, civil society, local authorities and course participants, Timor Leste established 17 new community learning centres (CLCs) throughout the country. Stakeholders participated in developing the structure of the CLCs, and setting up programmes, including the equivalency programme to Year 9 of basic education.
- In 2015, South Africa established nine community colleges, one in each province. Community colleges are responsible for the delivery of formal, non-formal and informal adult learning and education, which in South Africa is called community education and training. Each college is governed by a 16-member college council, formed to strengthen cooperation with diverse stakeholders. The college council has an oversight role in the delivery of ALE in South Africa.

### 3.3.3

#### STRENGTHENED COOPERATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND CAPACITY-BUILDING INITIATIVES

Progress in support for the constructive and informed involvement of civil society in ALE since 2015 was reported by 40% of countries (60 out of 149 countries listed in **Table 1.7** as responding to this question). About half of countries in sub-Saharan Africa (18 out of 32), Arab States (9 out of 18) and Latin America and the Caribbean (12 out of 25) reported 'much progress' on strengthening cooperation with civil society. Key examples outlined by countries are described below:

- The Islamic Republic of Iran indicated that it outsources more than 90% of literacy services to NGOs to develop ALE programming for different needs and sectors. For example, programmes are developed for vocational and technical schools for the private sector, non-governmental elderly homes, and non-governmental foreign language and science schools.

Capacity building is key for informed decision-making of stakeholders. Almost a third (31%) of countries that responded to this question (46 out of 149) reported that capacity-building initiatives were much strengthened since 2015, and a further 39% (58 out of 149 countries) reported that capacity building had somewhat strengthened (see **Table 1.7**). Governance of adult and community education (ACE) in New Zealand has improved through the efforts of government-funded organizations, such as the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, Ako Aotearoa, and the lead body for the ACE sector, ACE Aotearoa. Both organizations support building capability across the tertiary sector (covering all post-school education) to help learners re-engage and succeed in education. ACE Aotearoa also has a strong governance role across ACE providers.

## 3.3.4

**BETTER INTER-SECTORAL, INTER-MINISTERIAL COORDINATION AND TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION**

Promoting and supporting inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation facilitates the implementation of ALE policy. In addition, transnational cooperation is important to raise the profile of ALE within countries, help them learn from best practice and receive support for the implementation of innovative practice.

**Table 1.7** shows that 43% (65 out of 150 countries) reported much progress in inter-sectoral coordination, 41% (61 out of 148 countries) reported much progress in inter-ministerial coordination, but only 25% (37 out of 149 countries) reported much progress in transnational cooperation.

In Ecuador, there is inter-sectoral coordination to enhance lifelong education for young people and adults. Kenya reported a multi-sectoral approach to review policies and regulations to coordinate ALE provision. In Pakistan, various public sector organizations support the initiative of literacy and non-formal education. This takes place through institutions of skill development, for example, which support functional and income-generation components of literacy programmes.

There is cooperation between ministries, sectors and civil society organizations in Egypt and Malaysia with the aim of promoting lifelong learning. In Saudi Arabia, there is a partnership between the ministries of Education, Health, Environment, Water and Agriculture, Information, and Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance. In Armenia, professional training programmes organized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and financed by the state budget for the unemployed and people at risk of dismissal, must be examined by the Ministry of Education and Science. In Iraq, ministries have provided the National Literacy Agency with the names of illiterate employees to enable them to enrol in approved ALE programmes; approximately 75,000 government employees have been entered

into the literacy information bank, and are encouraged to participate in literacy and numeracy skills training. Those who possess these skills but have not received an official certificate are awarded a literacy certificate.

Other examples of inter-ministerial cooperation are:

- In Norway, the national competence policy strategy involves many actors, including five ministries with social partners.
- The new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requirements in the USA have strengthened inter-ministerial cooperation and partnerships across various federal agencies.
- The Adult Education Master Plan 2013–2020 (adopted in 2013) and annual action plans in Slovenia encompass collaboration of nine ministries with their programmes related to lifelong learning.
- In South Sudan, the Pastoralist Livelihood Curriculum was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture to enhance food security as well as livestock resources.

In relation to transnational cooperation, in addition to supporting two major international seminars on lifelong education and the fruitful relationship with international cooperation agencies in the period, the Ministry of Education of Brazil conducted preparatory meeting activities with peers from the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) in 2017. This peaked in the first Workshop on Good Practices in Literacy and Education for Youth and Adults of the CPLP in March 2018 in Brasilia. This event, initiated by the Brazilian Presidency pro tempore of the CPLP (2016–2018), was conceived in the scope of the Action Plan for Multilateral Cooperation in the Field of Education of the CPLP (2016–2020), and highlighted the importance of identifying cooperative actions to support the promotion of lifelong learning.

### BOX 1.10 Decentralization at the local/city level in China

In 2014, the Ministry of Education, along with six other governmental institutions, issued a notice on advancing learning cities, which clearly defined the primary objectives of developing learning cities in China. They included:

- To vigorously cultivate and put into practice the core values of socialism and build consensus among the whole of society with respect to values.
- To build a lifelong education system so as to promote integration and openness of various types of education.
- To strengthen in-service training of employees of enterprises and institutions with a view to enhancing their competencies.
- To offer extensive urban and rural community education in order to promote social governance innovation.
- To advance the development of different types of learning organizations so as to increase the dynamism of social organizations.
- To develop, in a coordinated manner, the learning resources of society so as to promote open access and sharing of learning resources.
- To effectively leverage ICT so as to expand learning horizons.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

### 3.3.5 DECENTRALIZING ALE

The involvement of public authorities at all levels of government, and increased decision-making for ALE policy planning and implementation at lower levels of government, are also important to facilitate the implementation of ALE policies. Ultimately, this approach helps to better serve the needs of adults, businesses and stakeholders in the local community.

**Table 1.7** shows that one-third of countries have become more decentralized with respect to ALE since 2015 (50 out of 150 countries). In *GRALE 3*, almost the same number of countries reported that ALE had become more decentralized.

At the same time, 45% of countries (68 out of 150 countries) indicated that they had not decentralized much since 2015. In sub-Saharan Africa, 61% of countries have made much progress on decentralization since 2015 (20 out of 33 countries in this region), but of the 18 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, only Lithuania reported much progress, describing the development of non-formal adult education and lifelong learning at national and municipal levels.

China, Cyprus, El Salvador, Eritrea, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania and Togo associated increased ALE governance with collaboration at local level. Eritrea has collaborated with many partners at national level to develop policy and curriculum guidelines and secure finance at the local level for ALE operations. In Iceland, a working group of various stakeholders has prepared new legislation on adult education to replace the 2010 law. Togo reported that local communities are increasingly involved in the implementation of programmes.

Ireland's new model of planning ALE combines top-down and bottom-up approaches. SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority established in 2013, provides detailed funding parameters to Education and Training Boards with deliverables and priorities based on departmental and government strategies, programmes and action plans. Importantly, the process in Ireland is informed by high-quality labour market data and analysis of regional and local skill needs, helping to ensure that the skills needs of learners and enterprises are addressed and provided for at national and regional levels.

#### BOX 1.11

#### Decentralizing management through inter-sectoral coordination in Oman

Oman involves educational governorates by decentralizing management through:

- promoting media awareness of adult education programmes;
- registering students for adult education;
- reviewing and developing curricula;
- developing regulations governing employment in adult education;
- planning projects in partnership with various sectors (governmental, private and civil).

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

Italy described a forum as an example of improved inter-sectoral coordination. A National (inter-institutional) Forum for Lifelong Learning was established in 2014 through agreement between the government, regions and local authorities. The forum includes representatives of the Ministry of Education, social partners and their confederations, civil society, the Italian Network for the Instruction of Adults and Lifelong Learning and the Network of Italian Universities for Lifelong Learning. The forum agreement takes a multi-level governance perspective, with monitoring, guidance and evaluation functions, and the identification of strategic priorities and specific policies remaining a national responsibility. Regions and the autonomous provinces plan the development of territorial networks of public and private providers. Networks define the evaluation of territorial development programmes in Italy, the identification of training and professional needs, and the integrated use of available resources. At local level, the stakeholders that make up the network define the organizational and operational procedures to ensure that citizens have access to the service network for lifelong learning.

### 3.4

#### WHAT WE FOUND OUT: KEY FINDINGS ON GOVERNANCE

The main findings from countries' responses on ALE governance are:

- Of 137 countries that responded, 103 reported improvement in ALE governance since 2015. Globally, this represents 75% of total respondents.
- Regionally, the Arab States reported most improvement in ALE governance at 89% (16 of 18 countries), followed by sub-Saharan Africa at 86% (24 of 28 countries). Low-income countries reported the most improvement at 89% (17 of 19 countries).

- Half of the 151 countries that responded globally reported progress in ALE stakeholder participation. Those in Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa had the highest rates of increase. Examples of stakeholder participation are through organizing programmes, councils or adult learning centres, and collaboration between government and other key providers, educators and adult learners. Cooperation with stakeholders and civil society was reported in 68% of countries that took part in the *GRALE 3* survey and is generally perceived as important to serve learners' needs and to guarantee the benefits of ALE.
- 40% of countries (60 out of 149 respondents) reported progress in strengthening cooperation with civil society for ALE, including about half in sub-Saharan Africa (18 of 32 countries), the Arab States (9 out of 18 countries) and Latin America and the Caribbean (12 out of 25 countries).
- ALE has become more decentralized in one-third of countries (50 out of 150).



## CHAPTER 4

## FINANCING

The wider social and economic benefits of adult learning and education, highlighted in *GRALE 3*, form the basis for investment choices made by governments to enhance quality provision (see BFA agreement on financing in **Box 1.12**). According to the BFA, a ‘significant financial investment’ is imperative to any viable ALE system. Consistent financing over time can determine whether adequate attention goes into creating ALE policies and in developing and maintaining governance systems. Quality provision, as defined in the BFA, is often the focus of the discussion on financing ALE, and must be situated within a robust ALE system that maintains, accredits and improves it. Additionally, adequate financing of ALE is likely to boost chances of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in an effective and efficient way. Unfortunately, our findings confirm that ambitions for ALE are not yet matched by investment.

The benefits of ALE for learners also generate wider returns for society. Social investments in ALE are required beyond individual investments in order to break down barriers to learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups. This means investing in teachers’ training and remuneration, and in curricula and assessment, materials and learning environments, providers and research. It also means coming up with ways to improve accessibility for adult learners from disadvantaged groups. This can be done through reducing the costs of participating in ALE or increasing (financial) incentives to participate.

In the BFA, Member States committed to five points of action for financing:

1. *Seek investment of at least 6% of Gross National Product (GNP) in education, increasing the allocation to ALE.*

**BOX 1.12****Financing in the BFA**

Adult learning and education represent a valuable investment which brings *social benefits* by creating more democratic, peaceful, inclusive, productive, healthy and sustainable societies. Significant financial investment is essential to ensure quality provision of adult learning opportunities’.

Member States committed to ‘supporting financially a systematic focus on disadvantaged groups (for example indigenous people, migrants, people with special needs and those living in rural areas) in all educational policies and approaches, which may include programmes that are provided free of charge or subsidised by our governments, with incentives for learning such as bursaries, fee remission and paid study leave’.

Source: UIL, 2010, p. 7, p. 8

2. *Expand resourcing across government departments to integrate an ALE strategy.*
3. *Establish transnational funding for adult literacy and education programmes.*
4. *Draw new funding sources, e.g. from the private sector, NGOs, communities and individuals.*
5. *Prioritize investment in lifelong learning for women, rural people and those with disabilities.*

These points of action informed *GRALE* survey data collection with Member States. This is true of *GRALE 4*, particularly in relation to Point 1, on allocation of ALE from overall investment in education, Point 4 on new

funding sources, and Point 5 on financing ALE for prioritized groups. There is less emphasis on Points 2 and 3, but they are partly captured through the open-ended examples of good practice in the financing of ALE by countries.

#### 4.1

### WHERE DO WE STAND?

The *GRALE 4* survey asked for information on overall public spending on ALE, as well as future expenditure plans. It also collected disaggregated information on ALE financing for different groups, highlighted in Article 15 of the BFA under 'participation, inclusion and equity'. Countries shared examples of new mechanisms and major improvements in financing ALE since 2015, which helps to characterize the progress made.

#### 4.2

### HOW ARE WE DOING?

Overall, 149 countries reported on public ALE spending as a proportion of public education spending since 2015. Globally, 41% (61 countries) reported no progress on ALE spending as a proportion of public education spending since 2015 (**Table 1.8**),

despite 57% of countries in *GRALE 3* mentioning a planned increase in funding. This was followed by 28% (42 countries) where ALE spending as a proportion of public education spending increased and 17% (25 countries) where spending had decreased since 2015. Importantly, 14% of countries (21) indicated not knowing whether there has been a change in ALE spending over the past three years.

Results show some progress in Latin America and the Caribbean, where 12 out of 25 countries (48% —the highest rate globally) reported spending on ALE had increased as a proportion of public education spending since 2015. In Asia and the Pacific, 29% of countries (10 out of 34) reported increases since 2015; in the Arab States, 28% of countries (5 out of 18) reported increases. About half of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and those in North America and Western Europe reported no change to ALE spending. In sub-Saharan Africa, 36% of countries reported reductions and 45% reported no change in ALE spending as a proportion of education spending since 2015.

**Table 1.8** shows that the greatest variation in ALE spending since 2015 is found with respect to reductions in spending across income groups. The worst-affected income

**TABLE 1.8**  
Changes in public spending on ALE as a proportion of public education spending

|                                  | Frequency | Decreased | Stayed the same | Increase | Do not know |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|----------|-------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 149       | 17%       | 41%             | 28%      | 14%         |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |           |           |                 |          |             |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 33        | 36%       | 45%             | 18%      | 0%          |
| Arab States                      | 18        | 22%       | 39%             | 28%      | 11%         |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 34        | 12%       | 38%             | 29%      | 21%         |
| North America and Western Europe | 21        | 5%        | 52%             | 24%      | 19%         |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 18        | 0%        | 50%             | 17%      | 33%         |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 25        | 20%       | 24%             | 48%      | 8%          |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |           |           |                 |          |             |
| Low income                       | 23        | 35%       | 39%             | 26%      | 0%          |
| Lower middle income              | 37        | 24%       | 32%             | 30%      | 14%         |
| Upper middle income              | 43        | 12%       | 42%             | 33%      | 14%         |
| High income                      | 46        | 9%        | 48%             | 22%      | 22%         |

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

group is low-income countries: 35% reported a reduction in ALE spending as a proportion of education spending since 2015, despite 91% of these countries having mentioned planned increased spending on ALE as part of the *GRALE 3* survey. Over the last 10 years, ALE spending has continued to decrease, not only in the low-income countries but also in lower middle- and high-income countries, suggesting that attention being paid by countries and governments to their adult learners is decreasing over time. Globally, in 2015, there were estimated to be 781 million adults unable to read or write a simple sentence (UNESCO, 2015, p. 137). In Europe, for example, close to 70 million youths and adults lack basic reading and writing skills, and even more have poor numeracy and digital skills (European Commission, 2016, p. 2). Without these skills, they are at high risk of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion (ibid.).

#### 4.2.1

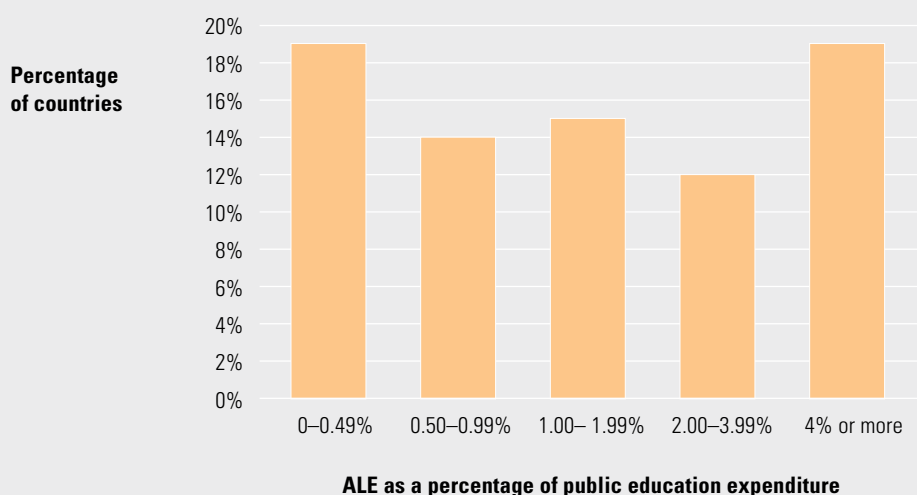
#### ALE AS A PROPORTION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION SPENDING

*GRALE 4* collected data on countries' ALE spending as a proportion of public spending on education. **Figure 1.2** shows a global 'picture' of ALE spending as a percentage of

public education spending. Only 107 out of 149 countries provided information on the proportion of public spending on education currently allocated to ALE. It is important to note that 38 countries globally do not have the data to provide this information. Nineteen per cent of countries reported spending less than 0.5% of their education budget on ALE and a further 14% reported spending less than 1%. Nineteen per cent of 107 countries reported spending more than 4% of the education budget on ALE. These countries were: Belize, Bhutan, Botswana, China, Comoros, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Lao PDR, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Sudan, Suriname, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Zimbabwe.

In total, 135 countries reported on the introduction of new mechanisms for financing ALE (see **Table 1.9**). Of these, 47% (63 countries) have introduced new financing mechanisms since 2015. These range from cross-collaborations such as inter-ministerial, public-private, council, agency, programme and campaign initiatives, to special types of funds, unemployment insurance, scholarships, bilateral, multilateral, national and local mechanisms, and international and regional funding.

**FIGURE 1.2**  
Public education spending on ALE



Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*. Note: Forty-two countries (21%) did not provide this information.

Belize, Brunei Darussalam, Paraguay and Sudan gave examples of ALE funding collaboration. Belize reported a multi-ministerial approach where the ministries of Education, Health, Human Development and Social Transformation, and Labour played a significant role in funding ALE for the population. Brunei Darussalam uses public and private funding to operate short courses and programmes within the new Continuing Education and Training framework. Paraguay has developed inter-institutional cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science and private companies and other state institutions. A literacy campaign in Sudan is supported by numerous sectors in most states.

Similarly, Egypt, Congo and Bosnia Herzegovina described cross-collaboration for ALE financing. Several non-governmental and civil society organizations, along with telecommunications companies, finance ALE in Egypt. In Congo, funding comes through a combination of technical, financial, community, religious and non-profit partners. In Bosnia Herzegovina, funding is offered through employment offices and non-governmental organizations' projects.

Equatorial Guinea, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Thailand and Croatia have introduced funding initiatives since 2015. Equatorial Guinea reported the funding of the PRODEGE Educational Development Programme at US \$100 million from 2006 to 2017, with the objective of improving the quality and management of the ALE education system

Regional councils in Morocco fund territorial literacy programmes in their development plans. In a declaration to parliament, the government pledged to give the necessary support to the National Agency to Combat Illiteracy to improve the rate of literacy in the country. Support for ALE in Thailand comes through local administration organizations. Projects in the Croatian employment service have enabled unemployed adults to participate in education for free.

Low-income and lower middle income countries reported the highest rates of introducing new mechanisms for ALE funding, which might indicate that these countries are recognizing the potential of ALE and the positive return on ALE investment not only for individuals, but also for society and the economy. Funding ALE should not be perceived as a cost but rather as a medium- or long-term investment (FinALE, 2018).

**TABLE 1.9**  
**Proportion of countries that have introduced new mechanisms or sources of funding for ALE since 2015**

|                                  | <b>Total responses<br/>GRALE 4</b> | <b>Yes</b> | <b>Proportion</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 135                                | 63         | 47%               |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |                                    |            |                   |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 25                                 | 14         | 56%               |
| Arab States                      | 18                                 | 7          | 39%               |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 30                                 | 13         | 43%               |
| North America and Western Europe | 20                                 | 10         | 50%               |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 18                                 | 9          | 50%               |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 24                                 | 10         | 42%               |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |                                    |            |                   |
| Low income                       | 17                                 | 9          | 53%               |
| Lower middle income              | 32                                 | 17         | 53%               |
| Upper middle income              | 41                                 | 14         | 34%               |
| High income                      | 45                                 | 23         | 51%               |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

**BOX 1.13**  
**Fund reprogramming in Brazil**

In Brazil, a survey undertaken in 2016 by the Ministry of Education found that 380 million Brazilian reais (around US \$97 million at the 2018 average exchange rate) remained in state and municipal accounts as a result of under-spend on the Literate Brazil Programme, the national youth inclusion programme, ProJovem, and support for youth and adult education classes. There were resources in the accounts, not used, that would be returned to the national treasury.

Since the passing of new resolutions (including Resolution CD/FNDE/MEC No. 5 of 31 March 2017 establishing procedures for the transfer of resources to states, federal districts and municipalities to support the Literate Brazil Programme, and Resolution CD/FNDE/MEC No. 5 of 31 March 2017 establishing procedures for the transfer of resources for the maintenance of new classes of youth and adult education), Brazil's Ministry of Education has made it possible for the remaining funds to continue to be used for funding ALE. Through application of these funds, 258,000 young people and adults have enrolled in education.

In addition to the use of outstanding funds from previous programme offers, as a measure of management efficiency in a scenario of budgetary constraint, there was also a great institutional effort from the Ministry of Education to provide technical assistance to states and municipalities for the reprogramming of these resources. These measures strengthen the role of federated entities in the implementation of youth and adult education policies, thereby enhancing cooperation between the union, states and municipalities.

*Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

Special types of funds for ALE were reported by Indonesia, Montenegro, Paraguay, Senegal and South Africa. Indonesia made a change from central government-administered assistance of ALE to funding through special allocation funds (DAK or Dana Alokasi Khusus). Paraguay started the Utilization of the National Fund for Educational and Research Excellence (FONACIDE), which supports ALE. Senegal established a fund to finance literacy interventions. ALE in South Africa is funded through the National Skills Fund and other public entities, such as the Sector Education and Training Authorities.

The Fund for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities is an integral part of the Employment Agency of Montenegro. Funds are paid through special contributions from employers, the national budget and local government in areas in which participants with disabilities reside. Donations and support from domestic and foreign organizations and individuals go into the fund, along with other sources, according to the law. The aim of the fund, and the

programmes it supports, is to help adults with disabilities become employed, so that they can live independent and dignified lives.

Germany (**Box 1.14**) and Estonia, like many other European countries, created mechanisms to allow ALE financing within the unemployment insurance system.

Scholarships for ALE financing have been set up in Malaysia and in St Kitts and Nevis. The national Education Foundation in St Kitts and Nevis issues scholarships to adult learners. Malaysia's Ministry of Higher Education has scholarship programmes, and funding for up-skilling and reskilling through the Ministry of Human Resource.

A combination of bilateral, multilateral, national and local ALE financing can be seen in Cameroon, Eritrea, Jordan, Mozambique, Palestine and El Salvador. Cameroon has bilateral and multilateral cooperation, as well as decentralized local authorities. Adult learning and education is financed by the

**BOX 1.14****Using the unemployment insurance system to promote ALE in Germany**

In 2016, Germany passed a law on unemployment insurance protection and strengthening continuing education (*Arbeitslosenversicherungsschutz- und Weiterbildungsstärkungsgesetz*). It has led to the following funding and training benefits:

- Employees with no vocational qualifications can receive funding for the acquisition of basic skills (reading, mathematics, IT skills) in preparation for training that will lead to formal qualifications.
- To motivate low-skilled employees to take part in training and to encourage them to stay the course, they are paid a bonus when they pass their interim and final examinations (until the end of 2020).
- Support is provided to help people through company-based retraining, as follows:
  - Training support for employees in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has been made more flexible. The requirement that employers co-finance continuing vocational training costs for their employees has been abolished for companies with fewer than 10 employees.
  - Employees in companies the ownership of which is transferred and who are affected by restructuring measures are offered faster access to training. Older employees (age 45+) and employees with low-level qualifications can be funded and supported to obtain the qualifications they need while they are still in the transfer company.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

state in Cameroon, along with development partners and communities through the municipalities. In Mozambique, compensating adult educators is the responsibility of national and international organizations. Multinational companies also provide professional training courses, for example, SOGA and VALE Moçambique.

In Palestine, new agreements have been signed with donors and national and international institutions to fund and develop the adult education sector. El Salvador manages ALE financing in co-operation with the Inter-American Development Bank and embassies, among other organizations. It also comes through specific measures for the prevention of violence within the framework of the Safe El Salvador Plan, along with educational actions for young people and adults outside of the system.

Countries in Europe reported ALE financing mechanisms, with a number of funding streams installed by the European

Commission. In Croatia, the European Social Fund has contributed to several projects, enabling many adults to participate in education opportunities for free. The focus has been on improving skills and competencies of students for employability. Portugal reported a reprogramming of European Social Fund resources. In Lithuania, European grant projects are co-financed by the Ministry of Education and Science. ALE projects in Poland are financed by the European Union and the state budget, and monitored by designated institutions. Local authorities receive the money to support adult learning, especially for those employed. In Romania, a partnership agreement was set up with the European Commission to access the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014–2020. The funds are structured across seven operational programmes, one of which is Operational Programme Human Capital with the objective to increase education, skills and employability.

### 4.3 BREAKING IT DOWN

Countries were asked if they had prioritized ALE financing for the following key groups:<sup>4</sup>

- women,
- migrants and refugees,
- adults with disabilities,
- adults disadvantaged due to lack of education and skills,
- residents of remote or rural areas,
- residents in urban areas,
- minority groups (ethnic, linguistic or religious),
- unemployed adults,
- older adults.

Between 142 and 148 countries reported on whether their country had prioritized financing of ALE for different groups since 2015.

Possible responses were captured using a six-point Likert scale ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘a great deal’. For analytical purposes, and due to the small proportion of responses to some of these categories, *GRALE 4* reports on whether governments prioritize financing

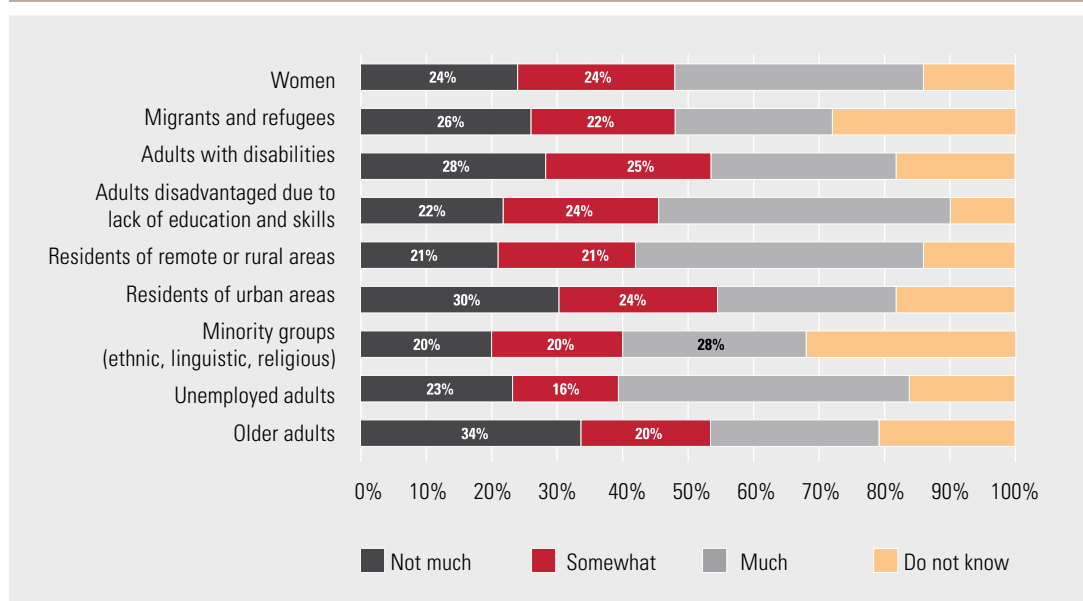
for these groups in four categories: ‘not so much’, ‘somewhat’, ‘much’ and ‘do not know’ (see **Figure 1.3**).

**Figure 1.3** shows globally the extent to which each key group is prioritized for ALE financing. This is important as these groups tend to be under-represented in ALE, meaning they do not profit from it as much as they might. Many of these groups have also been targeted in relation to the SDGs.

The highest priority was for adults disadvantaged due to lack of education and skills (45% of countries reported a priority), followed closely by unemployed adults (44% of countries reported a priority), residents of remote or rural areas (44% of countries reported a priority) and women (38% of countries reported a priority).

There are differences between how much groups are prioritized, but no group is drastically under-prioritized. The most neglected group was older adults—34% of countries reported ‘not much’ priority for this group.

**FIGURE 1.3**  
Global rates of priority in ALE spending on key groups



Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

<sup>4</sup> This list covers the prioritized groups highlighted under Financing in the BFA: women, rural populations, and people with disabilities. While not directly covering early adulthood, indigenous peoples and adults in prison—

other groups highlighted in the BFA under participation (Article 15f, c, f and g)—this list encompasses most of them.

Adult learning and education policies have an influence on the direction of ALE spending. Over recent years, a number of European policy interventions have shaped the direction of European funding (Fitzsimons and Magrath, 2017). In *GRALE 3*, in which countries were asked to identify the most important target groups in ALE policies, 81% of countries identified adults with low-level literacy or basic skills as a high priority for ALE policies. In *GRALE 4*, the same target group was reported to be the top priority in ALE spending. The findings from *GRALE 3* and *GRALE 4* can be interpreted as follows: the greater the extent to which ALE policies address the learning needs of certain target groups, the more funding is allocated to meet these needs, and thus inequalities in access to ALE tend to be reduced, leading countries to gain the fruits of ALE investment.

Improvements in the financing of ALE were reported by countries as being applied to raising standards for ALE educators, providing them with training and learning materials and funding quality assurance mechanisms for the provision of ALE. Syria, Cambodia and Botswana raised teachers' salaries, and Seychelles increased its budget to pay part-time instructors. Congo covers staff remuneration through subsidies from non-profit organizations and religious groups. Ecuador is investing in teachers. Sudan has trained team leaders in basic, trainer and supervisor courses, as well as teachers who are graduates in civil service qualifications. Portugal has training programmes for professionals at centres, as part of the Qualifica programme launched in 2016–2017. Cambodia offers capacity building, as does Botswana, in addition to accreditation of adult educators.

Regarding learning materials, Qatar distributes textbooks for free, Sudan provides literacy textbooks and teachers' manuals, and Botswana supplies learning materials. Cambodia, Syria and Ecuador increased investment in developing materials for ALE. For quality assurance, Costa Rica recruited a team of experts to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of the current adult and youth education offer. Georgia revised authorization standards of higher education institutions in 2017, to support quality education.

Finally, 'minority groups' was the category for which the largest percentage of countries (32%) reported not knowing if it constituted a priority for ALE financing. This was followed by 28% of countries that reported not knowing whether migrants and refugees were a priority for government financing of ALE. These key groups must be given more attention in financing strategies, as agreed to by Member States in the BFA.

#### 4.4

### WHAT WE FOUND OUT: KEY FINDINGS ON FINANCING

The main points from countries' responses on ALE financing are:

- Globally, 41% (61 countries) reported no progress since 2015 on ALE spending as a proportion of public spending on education. This was followed by 28% (42 countries) where ALE spending as a proportion of the public education budget had increased, and 17% (25 countries) where spending had decreased since 2015. This information demonstrates countries have generally failed to implement the intended increase in ALE financing highlighted in *GRALE 3*.
- Low-income group countries were the most likely to have experienced a decline in public spending on ALE (35%), while upper-middle income states were the most likely to report increases in ALE spending as a proportion of the public education budget.
- Only 107 out of 149 countries provided information on the proportion of public spending on education currently allocated to ALE. Thirty-eight countries globally do not have relevant data to report on. This issue of a lack of data needs to be addressed by countries.
- Nineteen per cent of countries reported spending less than 0.5% of the education budget on ALE and a further 14% reported spending less than 1%. This resonates with the findings of *GRALE 3* and confirms that ALE remains underfunded.

**BOX 1.15****Improvement in ALE financing in the Republic of Korea:  
Lifelong learning initiatives**

The Republic of Korea's Ministry of Education has allocated an increasing portion of its budget to lifelong/vocational training since 2014. In 2014, the budget was KRW 538.4 billion, which was raised to KRW 570.4 billion in 2015, KRW 589.4 billion in 2016, and KRW 619.5 billion in 2017. New national agendas were adopted in lifelong education, including the lifelong education voucher (KRW 2.39 billion). A further KRW 1.31 billion was invested in support of the National Centre for Lifelong Education Promotion for the Disabled and KRW 800 million was earmarked to establish and run the Lifelong Education/Educational Qualification Support Centre. In addition, projects with an indirect relationship to lifelong education were supported, for example, policies for the promotion of human resource development (KRW 871 million), and the analysis of social policies and collaborative agendas (KRW 200 million).

- Support for the lifelong education voucher programme: The lifelong education voucher programme aims to broaden education welfare services, which had been focused only on primary, secondary and higher education, to include lifelong education, ensuring equal opportunities for those who find it difficult to access education. It has developed a lifelong education welfare platform through which socially marginalized people can be part of lifelong learning and self-development. In 2018, KRW 2.39 billion was available to support 5,000 candidates, the equivalent of KRW 350,000 per person a year.
- Short-term Industry-focused Vocational Certification Course (Match Up): The Match Up programme allows students to take online courses provided by K-MOOC, educational institutions or corporations and to use the certificates to find a job. As of 2018, its funding was worth KRW 1.55 billion. A permanent advisory group, comprising industry consultation bodies, corporate personnel and experts, selects promising areas and companies that represent different fields. The selected companies then identify key jobs and evaluation methods and propose on-the-job competence and detailed requirements. The permanent consultative body selects educational institutions which develop and offer short-term (up to six months) educational programmes for the currently employed and jobseekers.
- Support for the National Centre for Lifelong Education Promotion for the Disabled: The National Centre for Lifelong Education Promotion conducts surveys on lifelong education for people with disabilities, developing lifelong education programmes by disability type and characteristics, and developing textbook and learning materials.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

- Low-income countries reported the highest rate in introducing new mechanisms of funding ALE since 2015.
- Countries reported that highest priority in ALE funding goes to adults disadvantaged due to lack of education and skills (45% of responding countries), followed closely by unemployed adults (44%), residents of remote or rural areas (44%) and women (38%).
- Countries reported the highest rate of not knowing in the case of whether minority groups were prioritized for ALE financing (32%); the next poorest-known group was migrants and refugees: 28% of countries reported not knowing if migrants and refugees were a priority for government financing of ALE.



## CHAPTER 5

## QUALITY

Themes covered in other areas of the BFA—policies, governance, finance and participation—may improve over time, but if these do not result in high-quality provision, then ALE will not make a difference for the learner or for society. Provision is where ‘the rubber meets the road’, where policy, governance, participation and finance help define a quality offer. ALE only takes on meaning for the learner through high-quality education provision, and therefore it is at this stage that participation has a positive impact, both for the learner and for society as a whole.

**BOX 1.16**  
**Quality in the BFA**

As stated in the BFA, ‘Quality in learning and education is a holistic, multidimensional concept and practice and demands constant attention and continuous development.

...quality in adult learning requires relevant content and modes of delivery, learner-centred needs assessment, the acquisition of multiple competences and knowledge, the professionalisation of educators, the enrichment of learning environments and the empowerment of individuals and communities’.

Source: UIL, 2010, pp. 8–9

The BFA underlines quality ALE provision as a ‘holistic, multidimensional concept and practice’, which should be regularly tracked and evaluated for improvement (see **Box 1.16**). Quality requires relevant content, delivery and assessment so that provision can empower individuals and communities. Therefore, Member States committed to develop quality criteria for curricula, learning materials and teaching methodologies, and take steps to elaborate criteria for assessing learning outcomes and improving training and employment conditions for adult educators.

### 5.1

#### HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Different methodological approaches are required to collect and analyse the wider, long-term benefits of quality ALE provision for the learner and society. Not only is more time required to capture links between quality ALE provision and economic and social gains, this work also requires inter-agency collaboration and stronger ties to the research community to develop new ideas. Therefore, *GRALE* reports have addressed different priorities and used different variables to monitor and assess the development in quality and its impact on achieving successful provision for adult learners.

*GRALE 1* focused on relevance to stakeholders, and whether ALE provision matched different learners’ needs. It also focused on equitable access, which is covered in the BFA thematic area on participation. Efficiency and effectiveness of ALE provision were also flagged in *GRALE 1* as the main indicators for determining quality.

In terms of relevance, *GRALE 1* concluded that the needs of learners were likely to change depending on their particular economic, social and political contexts and conditions. It stands to reason that a learner needs to change depending on contextual shifts at the local, regional or national level. In *GRALE 1*, efficiency and effectiveness were seen as embedded in other thematic areas. However, quality includes effectiveness when looking at countries' commitments to the BFA, excerpted in **Box 1.16**.

*GRALE 2* furthered thinking about quality by looking at four features of ALE provision:

- Teaching methodologies: Member States agreed that learner-centred pedagogical approaches were more relevant in provision for adults than were traditional approaches.
- Training, employment conditions and professionalization: Member States acknowledged the importance of training and continuing professional development of ALE teachers.
- Monitoring, evaluation and quality management systems: Member States agreed that without regular information and analysis of quality in ALE provision, it was impossible to track the effectiveness and efficiency of adult learning.
- Continuing research to inform policy and practice: Member States recognized the importance of sharing data and analysis, and therefore knowledge and good practice in ALE provision, to inform evidence-based policy-making.

*GRALE 3* reiterated and built on this understanding by closely tracking:

- Inputs to improving teaching methodologies.
  - Pre-service education and training programmes for ALE teachers.
  - Requirement of initial qualifications for teaching in ALE programmes.
  - Continuing in-service education and training for ALE teachers.

- Inputs to improving teacher training, employment conditions, professionalization.
  - Pre-service education and training programmes for ALE teachers.
  - Requirement of initial qualifications for teaching in ALE programmes.
  - Continuing in-service education and training for ALE teachers.
- Inputs to monitoring, evaluation and quality management systems.
  - Systematic collection of relevant information about ALE provision.
- Inputs to inform ALE policy and practice.
  - Substantial research produced on interdisciplinary and specialized topics.

*GRALE 3* collected relevant information about ALE provision, such as systematic monitoring of participation and completion rates, outcomes for adult learners, and training for teachers and educators. Of 132 countries that responded to *GRALE 3* in 2015, 66% collected information about learner completion rates, and 72% collected information about certificates or qualifications issued. These findings are linked by administrative procedures that recognize achievement through standardized qualifications, which are embedded in the larger ALE system. Such immediate outcomes of ALE provision are easy to track.

However, *GRALE 3* showed that tracking the economic and social outcomes of ALE provision for the learner and society—whether from a non-formal programme with recognized qualifications or informal learning activities—was not done systematically. Challenges remained for the adequate monitoring of ALE outcomes over time. In this respect, in *GRALE 3*, less than half (40%) of countries reported systematic collection on employment outcomes; only 29% reported collecting on wider social outcomes of adult learning; and 17% reported not collecting any information on outcomes from ALE provision.

**TABLE 1.10**  
**Proportion of countries reporting improvement in the quality of ALE since 2015**

|                                  | Frequency | Yes % |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 142       | 75%   |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |           |       |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 29        | 86%   |
| Arab States                      | 17        | 76%   |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 32        | 63%   |
| North America and Western Europe | 21        | 71%   |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 19        | 63%   |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 24        | 88%   |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |           |       |
| Low income                       | 20        | 85%   |
| Lower middle income              | 33        | 76%   |
| Upper middle income              | 41        | 68%   |
| High income                      | 48        | 75%   |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

## 5.2 WHERE DO WE STAND?

GRALE 4 collected information on improvements in curricula, learning materials, teaching methodologies, training and employment conditions for ALE trainers and facilitators, and assessments of ALE since 2015. These indicators of quality were also disaggregated according to RALE fields of learning (i.e. literacy and basic skills, continuing training and professional development, and citizenship education). Qualitative data were also requested from countries on good practice in improving ALE quality.

## 5.3 HOW ARE WE DOING?

**Table 1.10** shows that 75% of countries (107 countries) reported making major improvements to ALE quality since 2015. Regionally, Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa reported the highest rates of progress in ALE quality at 88% and 86%, respectively. These rates were followed by 76% in the Arab States, 71% in North America and Western Europe, and 63% in Central and Eastern Europe and Asia and the Pacific.

By income group, 85% of low-income countries, corresponding to 20 countries, reported major improvements to ALE quality (see **Table 1.10**). This was followed by 76% in the lower middle income group, 75% in the high-income group, and 68% in the upper middle income group.

**TABLE 1.11**  
**Progress in developing quality criteria for curricula and assessment in ALE**  
**since 2015**

|                                  | <b>Total responses<br/>GRALE 4</b> | <b>Curricula</b> | <b>Assessment</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 150                                | 75%              | 73%               |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |                                    |                  |                   |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 33                                 | 82%              | 77%               |
| Arab States                      | 17                                 | 65%              | 63%               |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 35                                 | 74%              | 71%               |
| North America and Western Europe | 21                                 | 52%              | 75%               |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 18                                 | 94%              | 89%               |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 26                                 | 81%              | 67%               |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |                                    |                  |                   |
| Low income                       | 24                                 | 88%              | 73%               |
| Lower middle income              | 36                                 | 69%              | 66%               |
| Upper middle income              | 44                                 | 77%              | 74%               |
| High income                      | 46                                 | 72%              | 79%               |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

### 5.3.1

#### **DEVELOPING QUALITY CRITERIA FOR CURRICULA AND ASSESSMENT**

Globally, 150 countries reported on whether there was progress in developing new or reformed curricula for ALE since 2015 (see **Table 1.11**). Overall, 113 out of 150 countries (75% globally) reported making much progress in developing criteria for curricula. Regionally, most countries in Central and Eastern Europe reported making much progress in developing ALE curricula (94% of 18 countries, see **Table 1.11**). Many countries described new and reformed ALE curricula based on rationales of demand and needs assessment, competencies and intended learning outcomes, subjects and priority groups, and availability and purposes of special funds.

Overall, 107 out of 147 countries (73% globally) reported making progress in developing assessments for enhancing ALE quality since 2015 (see **Table 1.11**). Regionally, again, countries in Central and Eastern Europe reported making much progress in developing ALE assessments at 89% (17 out of 19 countries, see **Table 1.11**). Respondents in the Arab States

proportionally reported the lowest progress in developing ALE assessments (63%).

The Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Iceland, Indonesia, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, South Sudan, Timor-Leste and Zimbabwe offered some examples of developing new quality curricula. Ecuador elaborated a dedicated curriculum to ALE, with corresponding adjustments to educational material for students and teachers. Indonesia and Iceland have developed new curricula, with Iceland consolidating curricula in a central database with open access. Mozambique designed new curricula for literacy and adult education. South Sudan developed its adult literacy curriculum. The Dominican Republic designed modular and flexible basic-level curriculum and, through Ordinance 01-2018, revised and updated the curriculum for basic education of youth and adults. Timor-Leste developed a curriculum for an equivalence programme, with a corresponding manual about literacy and the programme. Finally, South Africa introduced a curriculum related to a new qualification, titled General Education and Training for Adults (GETCA), and the national senior certificate for adults (NSCA).

Also important are examples of reform to existing curricula for ALE. Countries such as Guatemala, Liberia, Thailand, Namibia and the Philippines reported reforms of this type. Curricular reform for out-of-school education is under way in Guatemala, corresponding to a revision in educational resources for students. Liberia has improved curriculum development for ALE, and Thailand reported improvements in the national qualifications framework and ALE curricula. Namibia has revised curricula for programmes and courses to reflect current demands in the country. It has also streamlined technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in adult learning and school curriculum. The Philippines updated curriculum for the Alternative Learning System (ALS) to be on par with the K-to-12 basic education curriculum, and to include twenty-first century skills for eventual graduates.

In **Table 1.11**, only the North American and European countries recorded more quality progress in assessment than in curricula. The fact that all other regions reported the opposite distribution emphasizes a distinctive characteristic of North American and European approaches to ALE.

Countries gave different descriptions of ALE assessment, learning outcomes, tests to determine outcomes from provision, and processes for the accreditation of prior learning that includes assessment. For example, Trinidad and Tobago, Italy, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Dominican Republic and Hungary use different assessments to determine intended learning outcomes from ALE. The work of the National Training Agency in Trinidad and Tobago led to standardized assessments tied to national curricula. In 2016, the Ministry of Education in Italy coordinated the production of guidelines to assess student competences, a shared outcome of *Il Piano di Attività per l'Innovazione dell'Istruzione degli Adulti* (Activity Plan for the Innovation of Adult Instruction: PAIDEIA) to enhance multi-regional collaboration (across regional school offices and provincial adult education centres). Jamaica has started to conduct online assessment.

Countries described the assessment of learning outcomes as follows:

- Kenya has reviewed learning outcomes from ALE related to practical skills and competencies.
- Hungary is participating in the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) Survey of Adult Skills for the first time (2014–2020).
- Montenegro assesses learning outcomes as part of its curricula in the formal education system and in non-formal education based on a modular principle.
- Poland plans to assess learning outcomes from ethics and integrity training through pre- and post-provision tests. This form of verifying change in the learner's level of awareness is an integral part of the training programme.
- El Salvador designed plans with teachers for the Flexible Modalities Programme to improve results of PAES (Prueba de Aptitudes para Egresados de Educación Media), the learning and aptitude test for school graduates, and external tests.

#### BOX 1.17

#### Assessing learning outcomes from ALE provision in New Zealand—the ACE Learner Outcomes Tool

New Zealand's Adult and Community Education (ACE) Aotearoa network has developed the ACE Learner Outcomes Tool, a web-based, learner-centred framework used to track learner outcomes. It provides measurable evidence that learners are better off as a result of their participation in adult education. The outcomes tool uses learner surveys to measure whether an education provider made a positive difference in the life of a learner, as well as achieving its objectives. This tool enables learners to take a comparative survey pre- and post-education. Results provide an indication of the contribution the education service has made for the learner in question.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

**TABLE 1.12**  
**Progress in developing learning materials and teaching methodologies since 2015**

|                                  | Frequency | Learning materials | Teaching methodologies |
|----------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 147       | 65%                | 72%                    |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |           |                    |                        |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 33        | 82%                | 85%                    |
| Arab States                      | 17        | 65%                | 71%                    |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 34        | 74%                | 73%                    |
| North America and Western Europe | 19        | 47%                | 61%                    |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 19        | 53%                | 68%                    |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 25        | 52%                | 67%                    |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |           |                    |                        |
| Low income                       | 24        | 88%                | 87%                    |
| Lower middle income              | 35        | 66%                | 74%                    |
| Upper middle income              | 43        | 60%                | 70%                    |
| High income                      | 45        | 56%                | 64%                    |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

A particular example of accreditation of prior learning for adult learners was introduced in Malaysia, where the Ministry of Higher Education has implemented Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), a systematic process involving the identification, documentation and assessment of prior experiential learning to determine the extent to which an individual has achieved desired learning outcomes from ALE. This process determines the individual's access to a programme of study and/or award of credits. APEL provides an opportunity for individuals with work experience but a lack of formal academic qualifications to pursue their studies in higher education institutions. In general, the APEL process assesses knowledge obtained through formal education and work experience.

### 5.3.2 DEVELOPING ALE LEARNING MATERIALS AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

Quality in adult learning and education requires not just reforms to curricula, but constant development of learning materials and teaching methodologies—required for provision to be relevant and effective

for adults in a changing world. **Table 1.12** shows that out of the 147 countries that responded, 72% had made much progress on developing teaching methodologies and 65% had made much progress on developing learning materials since 2015. By region, countries in sub-Saharan Africa reported greatest progress in the areas of teaching methodologies and learning materials, corresponding to 27 countries out of 33.

Improving teaching methods and materials can be done through different means, for instance by developing teaching competencies for ALE, or matching teaching quality to learner needs and then developing materials. The following country examples highlight some approaches to improving teaching methods and learning materials carried out since 2015:

- The National Training Fund in Armenia supports private organizations in developing better teaching methods for short-term education.
- Estonia has carried out several courses for adult educators in relation to its outcomes-based curricula for continuing education.

**BOX 1.18****Developing quality criteria for teaching methodologies in ALE provision in Germany: The GRETA standards**

Significant progress has been achieved in defining universal standards for the ability to teach in the field of ALE. Such standards have recently been developed in the research and development project, GRETA (2015–2018). The acronym, GRETA, stands for *Grundlagen zur Entwicklung eines trägerübergreifenden Anerkennungsverfahrens für die Kompetenzen Lehrender in der Erwachsenen-/Weiterbildung* (Basics for the Development of a Cross-Provider Recognition Procedure for the Competences of Teachers in Adult and Continuing Education). The project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and led by the German Institute for Adult Education.

GRETA developed a model based on theory and empirical research that includes all competences required for teaching activities in ALE and can use a variety of methods to validate and strengthen educators' activities. For example, the model can be a reference for portfolio-based assessment of informally or non-formally acquired teacher competences. It can also serve as a reference framework for train-the-trainer programmes.

To support the broad ownership and success of the standards, GRETA was created in partnership with major ALE provision associations in Germany. These include:

- Association of German Educational Organizations,
- National Committee Work and Life,
- National Association of VET Providers,
- German Protestant Consortium for Adult Education,
- German Association for University Continuing and Distance Education,
- German Adult Education Association,
- Association of Continuing Education Organizations,
- Association of German Private Schools.

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

- Guinea is using the REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) approach in training of trainers.
- Ecuador is monitoring and evaluating teaching practices in relation to ALE, and has developed a new curriculum with adjustments to teaching materials.
- Azerbaijan has an e-resource for improving ALE teaching curated by the Educators' Professional Development Institute.
- The Ministry of Education in Italy coordinated inputs across regional school offices and provincial adult education institutes to develop adult instruction, as part of the Activity Plan for the Innovation of Adult Instruction (PAIDEIA) aimed at enhancing multi-regional collaboration.
- In Poland, quality assurance within the Integrated Qualifications System involved improving and testing select elements of training materials, including a simulation game. According to feedback, this improvement contributed to better teaching methodologies.

**TABLE 1.13**  
**Progress in pre-service training and employment conditions since 2015**

|                                  | Frequency | Pre-service training | In-service training | Employment conditions |
|----------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 146       | 52%                  | 70%                 | 58%                   |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |           |                      |                     |                       |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 32        | 72%                  | 73%                 | 60%                   |
| Arab States                      | 16        | 44%                  | 82%                 | 63%                   |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 33        | 55%                  | 70%                 | 70%                   |
| North America and Western Europe | 21        | 33%                  | 67%                 | 25%                   |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 18        | 50%                  | 68%                 | 63%                   |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 26        | 46%                  | 63%                 | 54%                   |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |           |                      |                     |                       |
| Low income                       | 23        | 74%                  | 70%                 | 50%                   |
| Lower middle income              | 35        | 54%                  | 69%                 | 55%                   |
| Upper middle income              | 43        | 51%                  | 77%                 | 69%                   |
| High income                      | 45        | 40%                  | 65%                 | 52%                   |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

### 5.3.3 DEVELOPING ALE PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING, AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Previous *GRALE*s have looked closely at progress reported on pre-service and in-service training for ALE teachers. *GRALE 4* also focuses on training for ALE educators and changes in their employment conditions since 2015. Globally, 52% of countries (76) reported improving pre-service training for ALE educators, 70% (105) reported improving in-service training, and 58% (79) reported improving employment conditions (see **Table 1.13**).

Regionally, the highest rate of progress in pre-service training was in sub-Saharan Africa (72%, corresponding to 23 of 32 countries with responses, as shown in **Table 1.13**). The highest rate of progress with respect to in-service training was for Arab States (82%, corresponding to 14 of 17 countries). The highest rate of progress in employment conditions was in Asia and the Pacific (70%, corresponding to 21 of 30 countries). The lowest rate of progress in pre-service training and employment conditions was reported in countries in North America and

Western Europe, where only 33% reported improvements in pre-service training, and 25% reported improvements in employment conditions. The lowest rate of improvement for in-service training for ALE educators was seen in Latin America and the Caribbean, with 63% or 17 of 27 countries.

In terms of income group, low-income countries reported the highest rates of progress for pre-service training for ALE educators (74%, as shown in **Table 1.13**), whereas the highest rate of progress for in-service training and employment conditions was for upper-middle income countries (77% and 69%, as in **Table 1.13**, respectively). Upper income countries reported the lowest progress on both pre-service and in-service training for ALE educators, whereas low-income countries reported the lowest levels of progress on employment conditions since 2015.

Countries offered examples of improvement to ALE quality in the form of teacher training. In Congo, social educators are being trained, and in Sudan literacy supervisors and trainers are learning to teach life skills. Senegal has improved its training system for educators by means of 12 modules. Continuous facilitator

training is offered in South Sudan. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the level of academic attainment of facilitators has increased.

Training programmes are provided by the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus to target adult educators with the aim of improving their knowledge and competences in teaching adults. In Croatia, within the European Social Fund programme, a number of activities have been organized to increase competences of adult educators, including:

- 144 workshops for strengthening andragogical competences,
- three international andragogical symposiums,
- three conferences dealing with professional and scientific aspects of adult education.

In Oman, new literacy teachers receive training for a two-week period every year, and 'refresher' training programmes are organized every year for literacy teachers in all educational governorates. Centralized training programmes at the ministerial level are organized for all literacy and adult education teachers, in line with requirements of the job and training needs.

Georgia reported that much progress in teacher training had been achieved, as reflected in the Teacher Pre-service, Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme, which demarcates teachers as (1) teacher practitioners (only applies to active teachers within the scheme), (2) senior teachers, (3) leading teachers, or (4) mentors.

In 2017, the Adult Education Law was amended in Montenegro to include regulation of andragogical training. This includes an intensified obligation—training is a prerequisite to gaining a licence to work in adult education. This regulation is operational, and has resulted in an increasing number of trainees in andragogical programmes.

To motivate citizens to participate in lifelong learning, the Republic of Korea fosters and sends 'lifelong educators' to 'lifelong education institutions'. The country also offers training to enhance educators'

professional expertise. Accordingly, the National Lifelong Learning Agency redefined the roles and responsibilities of lifelong educators in 2017, and developed training courses targeting different competence levels. In 2018, these courses were piloted and revised based on monitoring and evaluation results. Such systematic training will help promote the professional expertise of lifelong educators, and is intended to help develop and maintain the quality of lifelong education services provided to citizens.

For pre-service training in Uganda, institutions, including universities such as Kyambogo and Makerere, have quality assurance directorates. Curriculum is further assessed by the National Council for Higher Education, while examinations councils also have a role. The quality of in-service training is supported by rigorously selected master trainers at national level, and focuses on key aspects of adult literacy programme development, such as facilitation skills, materials development, assessment (including measurement of literacy outcomes), and multi-level learning. They also cover policy analysis and multi-sectoral approaches to development. For district-level training, the focus is on facilitation skills, assessment and monitoring, and evaluation, as these are critical at the operation level.

To improve pre-service training, the Network of Italian Universities for Lifelong Learning (RUIAP) identified qualified individuals as 'expert in support of the recognition of competences and validation of prior learning'. Two universities now offer a master's degree in this area. Since 2015, part of the content of this programme has been made available as a MOOC (massive open online course) by a university consortium (EDUOPEN), with one-off financial support from the Ministry of Education. It is open to anyone who can access the platform, and is free.

To improve in-service training for educators, the 2017 cycle of Italy's PAIDEIA initiative was dedicated to in-service training of leaders, teachers and other personnel from provisional adult education institutes. The aim was to update and consolidate required competences at the various levels, and to adopt and further develop the outputs produced thus far from implementing the plan.

Azerbaijan reported that the quality of in-service training is gradually changing in a positive way, such as through:

- content change in programmes towards building competencies;
- a new system of final evaluation of teachers after completing each in-service programme;
- attempting to shift towards online in-service training to address logistical problems, such as involving teachers from rural areas;
- archiving and posting e-resources for teacher improvement on the educators' professional development institute's official site.

## 5.4

### PROGRESS BY LEARNING FIELD

**Table 1.14** shows that most progress in RALE fields of learning in terms of quality was made in literacy and basic skills, as well as in continuing training and professional development. Very little progress was made in citizenship education. With respect to developing quality criteria for curricula, 111 countries reported making at least some progress, mostly in literacy and basic skills (52% of the 111 countries), followed by continuing training and professional development (44% of the 111 countries). Employment conditions were more improved in the area of continuing training and professional development than in literacy and basic skills. Only 2% of 111 countries reported progress in developing quality criteria for curricula in citizenship education, and a further 2% of the same group reported not having information on the matter. Another interesting observation is that no country reported progress in liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills) in relation to developing quality criteria for learning materials and assessing learning outcomes.

**TABLE 1.14**  
**Progress in the quality of ALE with respect to RALE fields since 2015**

|                                                        | <b>Total<br/>responses<br/>GRALE 4</b> | <b>Literacy<br/>and basic<br/>skills</b> | <b>Continuing<br/>education and<br/>professional<br/>development<br/>(vocational<br/>skills)</b> | <b>Liberal, popular<br/>and community<br/>education<br/>(active<br/>citizenship<br/>skills)</b> | <b>Do not<br/>know</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                                           |                                        |                                          |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                 |                        |
| Developing quality criteria for curricula              | 111                                    | 52%                                      | 44%                                                                                              | 2%                                                                                              | 2%                     |
| Developing quality criteria for learning materials     | 93                                     | 59%                                      | 40%                                                                                              | 0%                                                                                              | 1%                     |
| Developing quality criteria for teaching methodologies | 104                                    | 55%                                      | 43%                                                                                              | 1%                                                                                              | 1%                     |
| Improving pre-service training for educators           | 73                                     | 47%                                      | 45%                                                                                              | 1%                                                                                              | 7%                     |
| Improving in-service training for educators            | 102                                    | 46%                                      | 48%                                                                                              | 1%                                                                                              | 5%                     |
| Improving employment conditions                        | 78                                     | 41%                                      | 49%                                                                                              | 3%                                                                                              | 8%                     |
| Assessing learning outcomes                            | 105                                    | 56%                                      | 39%                                                                                              | 0%                                                                                              | 5%                     |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

## 5.5

### WHAT WE FOUND OUT: KEY FINDINGS ON QUALITY

The main points from countries' responses on ALE quality are:

- Seventy-five per cent of countries (107) reported major improvements to ALE quality since 2015. Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa reported the highest rates of progress in ALE quality at 88% and 86%, respectively. Progress was lowest in upper middle income countries.
- Of 150 countries, 113 (75% globally) reported making much progress in developing criteria for ALE curricula since 2015, although this pertains only to 52% of respondents from North America and Western Europe. Of 147 countries, 107 (73% globally) reported making much progress in developing ALE assessments.
- Of 147 countries that responded, 72% reported much progress in developing teaching methodologies, and 65% in developing learning materials since 2015. By region, countries in sub-Saharan Africa reported greatest progress in these areas.
- For ALE educators, 52% of countries (76) reported improving pre-service training, 70% (105 countries) reported improving in-service training, and 58% (79 countries) reported improving employment conditions. This chapter highlights good practice in these areas.
- In particular, progress was reported in literacy and basic skills, and continuing education and professional development (vocational skills). All rates for liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills) were between 0 and 3%.



## CHAPTER 6

PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION  
AND EQUITY

Participation is the result of individuals engaging in ALE provision that is available to them. It is also the thematic focus of *GRALE 4* and will be explored in more detail in Part 2 of this report. This chapter reports on countries' responses to the *GRALE 4* survey; it might usefully be read in conjunction with UIS's assessment of progress against global education indicator 4.3.1, the participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex (UIS, 2018c, pp. 29–31). Together, they represent the most comprehensive global picture available of adult participation in education and learning.

ALE provision should be accessible to all learners, regardless of income, location, gender, ethnicity, disability, language or any other social, economic, demographic or cultural marker of differentiation. As highlighted in **Box 1.19**, the BFA equates fair access to ALE provision with achieving social development and helping to establish peace and prosperity. It emphasizes no exclusion of an individual in any circumstance. Equality and inclusion are also highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals and are important to guarantee that the benefits of ALE are available to all.

**BOX 1.19****Fair access in the BFA**

'Inclusive education is fundamental to the achievement of human, social and economic development. Equipping all individuals to develop their potential contributes significantly to encouraging them to live together in harmony and with dignity. There can be no exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment. Combating the cumulative effects of multiple disadvantage is of particular importance.'

Source: UIL, 2010, p. 8

Guided by the BFA recommendation, improving participation is seen as an inclusive process that involves learners, providers, policy-makers and other stakeholders and should result in accessible ALE provision. Participation is a key indicator for monitoring whether or not provision is accessible and people are actually enrolled and, hopefully, benefiting from ALE provision. Quality is key to effective ALE, considering, in particular, both the process of provision as well as outcomes for participants from this process. Quality is reported on as another BFA thematic area that is monitored through *GRALE*.

Collecting and analysing adequate participation data should enable countries to adjust and offer better, more targeted ALE provision in the future. Without it, planners have no way of knowing if people are actually

participating in ALE, what their needs are and if they are benefiting from the provision. Therefore, monitoring data on the personal, family, and social benefits of ALE is important to capture the returns that countries are achieving on ALE investment. Countries made a commitment to track participation and learner progression in ALE in the BFA, as shown in **Box 1.20**. More detailed insights on monitoring and data collection on participation will be provided in the thematic part of this report.

Another advantage of monitoring learner participation and progress in ALE provision concerns identifying good practice. This is useful for confirming the effectiveness of ALE provision, and the policy and governance that informs and organizes it. But it does not stop there. Good practice can be disseminated within and between countries and adapted to the contextual and specific realities of learners. In fact, countries made a commitment to share good practice, including through South–South cooperation, in the BFA, as shown in **Box 1.20**.

#### **BOX 1.20** **Tracking participation and sharing good practice**

To track implementation of the BFA, Member States agreed to ‘regularly collecting and analysing data and information on participation and progression in adult education programmes, disaggregated by gender and other factors, to evaluate change over time to share good practice’. They also committed to ‘supporting South–South cooperation’ in the areas of adult literacy, adult education and lifelong learning.

Source: UIL, 2010, p. 9

## 6.1 HOW DID WE GET HERE?

*GRALE 1* (2009) raised awareness of low participation rates in ALE provision across most countries, and highlighted the unequal nature of that participation within countries. *GRALE 2* (2012) reported that many groups were still excluded from ALE provision, in particular those living in poverty and in rural areas, ethnic minorities, women, migrants and refugees. When they did have access, quality was in question. *GRALE 3* (2016) reported overall changes in participation between 2009 and 2015. Sixty per cent of 126 countries reported that participation in ALE had, in general, increased during that period and 13% reported no change. Only 7% reported a decrease. Nineteen per cent of countries reported not knowing changes in overall participation in their countries as there were no data available to track participation.

Participation in ALE provision by gender was one of the foci of *GRALE 3*. A total of 44% of countries reported that more women than men participated in non-formal ALE programmes and informal opportunities. Another 23% reported equal participation between genders, followed by 9% with more male participation. Close to a quarter (24%) of countries did not answer this question as there were no data available on participation by gender. By subject, 58% said more women participated in literacy programmes, whereas 54% said more men participated in TVET.

Data on participation by other markers of disadvantage, such as refugee status, disability or poverty, were nearly absent from *GRALE 3*. For example, 62% of countries reported not having participation rates for ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, 56% reported not having participation data for migrants and refugees, 46% reported not having data on participation for adults with disabilities, and 43% did not report participation rates of low-skilled workers, or those with low wages in precarious employment. Therefore, a main recommendation of *GRALE 3* was for better, more specific monitoring and evaluation data on different groups.

## 6.2 WHERE DO WE STAND?

The *GRALE 4* survey captured overall changes in participation rates in ALE since 2015. Countries provided national participation rates, whether these were from actual figures or based on estimates. In addition, *GRALE 4* captures participation for different groups of learners, as well as for different fields of learning according to RALE. Finally, *GRALE 4* captures a self-assessment by countries of overall progress in access and participation in ALE provision, providing an opportunity for countries to share examples of good practice for improving ALE participation. Since participation is a main focus for *GRALE 4*, Part 1 features only quantitative trends and main findings, leaving qualitative responses from countries for Part 2 of this report.

## 6.3 HOW ARE WE DOING?

**Table 1.15** shows changes in participation rates in ALE since 2015. Globally, over half of countries responding to the *GRALE 4* survey, or 57% of 152, reported an increase in the overall participation rate in ALE provision. More than a quarter (28%) reported no change (stayed the same), followed by 9% reporting a decrease, corresponding to 13 countries. Importantly, 7% of countries (10) reported not knowing if there was a change in ALE participation, which is significantly lower than in *GRALE 3*.

A higher proportion of countries in sub-Saharan Africa reported an increase in ALE participation since 2015 (72% corresponding to 22 out of 32 respondents). The lowest increase in participation was reported in North America and Western Europe (8 out of 21 countries). Of 25 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 60% reported an increase, 24% no change, and 12% a decrease in participation in ALE since 2015. Countries in Asia and the Pacific had the highest proportion reporting uncertainty about changes in ALE participation, as 16% (6 out of 37 countries) do not have data.

**TABLE 1.15**  
**Changes in overall participation rates<sup>5</sup> in ALE since 2015**

|                                  | Frequency | Decreased | Stayed the same | Increased | Do not know |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 152       | 9%        | 28%             | 57%       | 7%          |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |           |           |                 |           |             |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 32        | 9%        | 16%             | 72%       | 3%          |
| Arab States                      | 18        | 11%       | 17%             | 67%       | 6%          |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 37        | 8%        | 27%             | 49%       | 16%         |
| North America and Western Europe | 21        | 0%        | 62%             | 38%       | 0%          |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 19        | 11%       | 26%             | 58%       | 5%          |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 25        | 12%       | 24%             | 60%       | 4%          |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |           |           |                 |           |             |
| Low income                       | 22        | 9%        | 14%             | 73%       | 5%          |
| Lower middle income              | 38        | 11%       | 18%             | 61%       | 11%         |
| Upper middle income              | 45        | 4%        | 24%             | 62%       | 9%          |
| High income                      | 47        | 11%       | 45%             | 43%       | 2%          |

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

**TABLE 1.16**  
**Monitoring of participation rates based on actual figures**

|                                  | Countries with data | Total responding | % with actual data |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 103                 | 152              | 68%                |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |                     |                  |                    |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 21                  | 32               | 66%                |
| Arab States                      | 15                  | 18               | 84%                |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 20                  | 37               | 54%                |
| North America and Western Europe | 14                  | 21               | 67%                |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 15                  | 19               | 79%                |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 18                  | 25               | 72%                |
| <b>INCOME GROUPS</b>             |                     |                  |                    |
| Low income                       | 15                  | 22               | 68%                |
| Lower middle income              | 26                  | 38               | 69%                |
| Upper middle income              | 30                  | 45               | 67%                |
| High income                      | 32                  | 47               | 68%                |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

Low-income countries reported the largest increase in ALE participation (72%), trailed by lower-income and upper middle income countries (61%–62%). Notably, only a small fraction of upper income countries and none of the countries located in North America and Western Europe reported not knowing information.

An important factor to consider in reporting ALE participation accurately is whether monitoring by countries is based on actual figures rather than estimates. Of the total 152 countries that provided an estimate of change in overall ALE participation rates since 2015, 10 did not have actual figures on participation. Additionally, only 125 countries responded as to whether they had actual figures, with 103 countries indicating that they monitor participation based on actual figures. This represents 67% of 152 countries giving information on participation over time based on actual figures, or numbers obtained from nationally representative surveys in the country (see **Table 1.16**). A high proportion

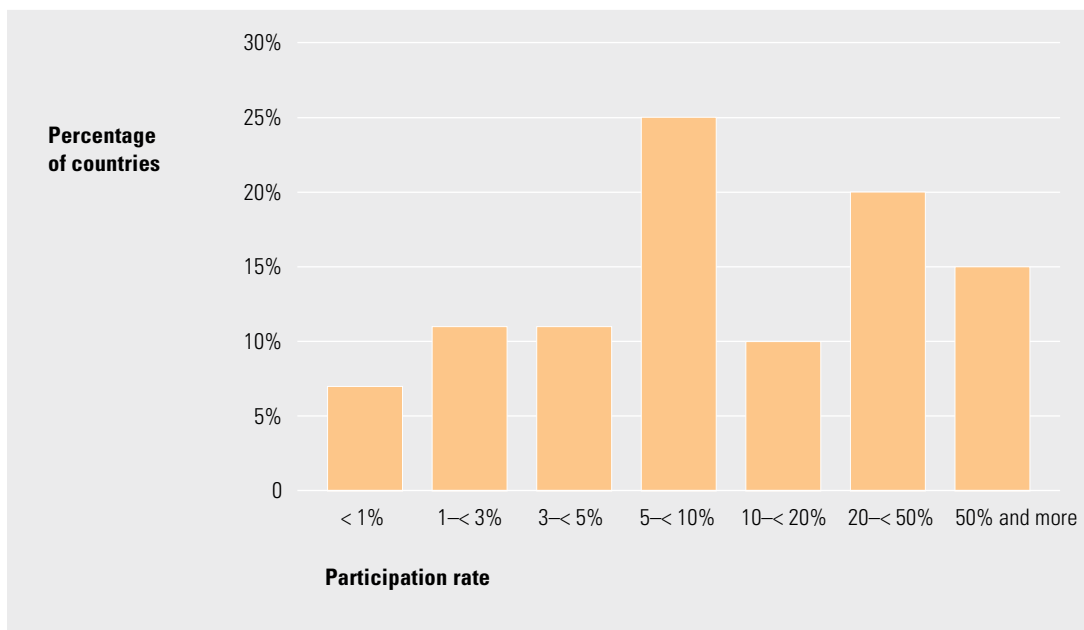
of countries in the Arab States (84% or 15 out of 18 countries) reported having actual figures to estimate participation rates, compared to only 54% of countries in Asia and the Pacific (20 out of 37 countries). By income group, little over two-thirds of countries, regardless of income classification, have data on participation rates based on actual figures. More critical engagement with the availability of participation data will be provided in the thematic chapter of this report.

Countries that had actual figures on ALE participation were asked to provide rates. Out of 103 countries with actual data, 96 reported participation rates. **Figure 1.4** shows that 25% of these countries reported participation rates between 5 and 10%, 10% reported participation rates between 10 and 20%, 20% reported participation rates between 20 and 50%, and 15% reported participation rates higher than 50%. Around 29% of these countries reported participation rates below 5%.

In total, 96 countries reported overall participation in ALE on the basis of actual figures. Over half of low-income countries with actual figures reported participation rates above 20%: Comoros, Congo, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, South Sudan and Togo. Over

5 Respondents were asked to indicate whether their participation rates were based on estimates or available statistics. In case of data, they were asked to indicate the year of data collection.

**FIGURE 1.4**  
Overall participation rates in ALE globally based on actual figures



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

one-quarter of lower middle income countries with actual figures reported participation rates in excess of 20%, and the same can be said for about one-third of upper middle income and high-income countries with actual figures. As for low ALE participation rates, 21% of low-income countries with actual figures reported below 5%, whereas 42% of lower middle income countries with actual figures reported the same. About

one-third of lower middle income countries reported ALE participation below 5%, along with just under 20% of upper middle income countries reporting the same—both based on actual figures.

Again, based on 96 countries with actual figures on participation in ALE, **Table 1.17** shows participation rates by region. There is no common pattern of ALE participation

**TABLE 1.17**  
Participation rates by region, based on actual figures

|                     | Sub-Saharan Africa | Arab States | Asia and the Pacific | North America and Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | Latin America and the Caribbean |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Below 1%            | 5%                 | 29%         | 5%                   | 7%                               | 0%                         | 0%                              |
| 1–< 3%              | 0%                 | 21%         | 11%                  | 0%                               | 29%                        | 13%                             |
| 3–< 5%              | 16%                | 0%          | 16%                  | 7%                               | 14%                        | 13%                             |
| 5–< 10%             | 21%                | 14%         | 32%                  | 36%                              | 36%                        | 13%                             |
| 10–< 20%            | 0%                 | 7%          | 11%                  | 0%                               | 21%                        | 25%                             |
| 20–< 50%            | 37%                | 14%         | 11%                  | 21%                              | 0%                         | 31%                             |
| 50% and more        | 21%                | 14%         | 16%                  | 29%                              | 0%                         | 6%                              |
| Number of countries | 19                 | 14          | 19                   | 14                               | 14                         | 16                              |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

across different regions, but some highlights are worth describing. More than half of countries with actual figures in sub-Saharan Africa and in North America and Western Europe reported participation rates in excess of 20%. In Central and Eastern Europe, no country with actual figures reported participation above 20%. Half of countries with actual figures in the Arab States reported participation at or below 5%, and 43% of countries with actual figures in Central and Eastern Europe also reported participation at or below 5%. It is important to highlight that these rates are based on about two-thirds of participating countries with actual figures to substantiate ALE participation.

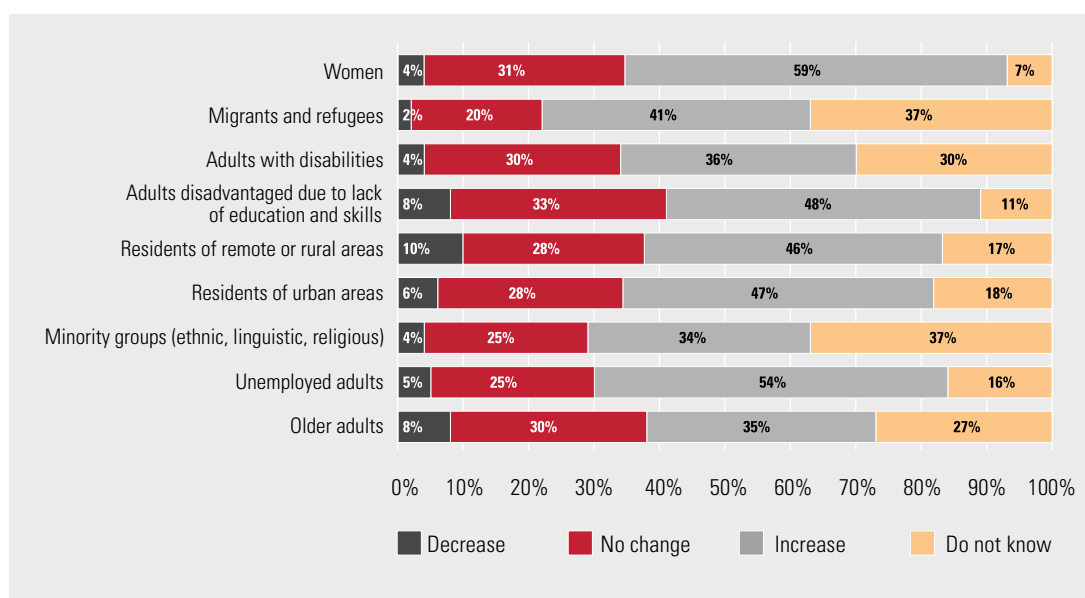
#### 6.4 BREAKING IT DOWN

Countries were asked if ALE participation and provision had changed since 2015 for the following groups:

- women,
- migrants and refugees,
- adults with disabilities,
- adults disadvantaged due to lack of education and skills,
- residents of remote or rural areas,
- residents in urban areas,
- minority groups (ethnic, linguistic, religious),
- unemployed adults,
- older adults.

**Figure 1.5** shows reported changes in global percentages on ALE participation for different groups, and **Figure 1.6** shows reported changes in provision for these groups.<sup>6</sup> The largest increase in participation since 2015 (**Figure 1.5**) was for women (59% of 139 countries), followed by unemployed adults (54% of 134 countries) and adults with disadvantaged due to lack of education and skills (48% of 136 countries). These three groups demonstrate also the highest increase in provision of ALE since 2015 (shown in **Figure 1.6**).

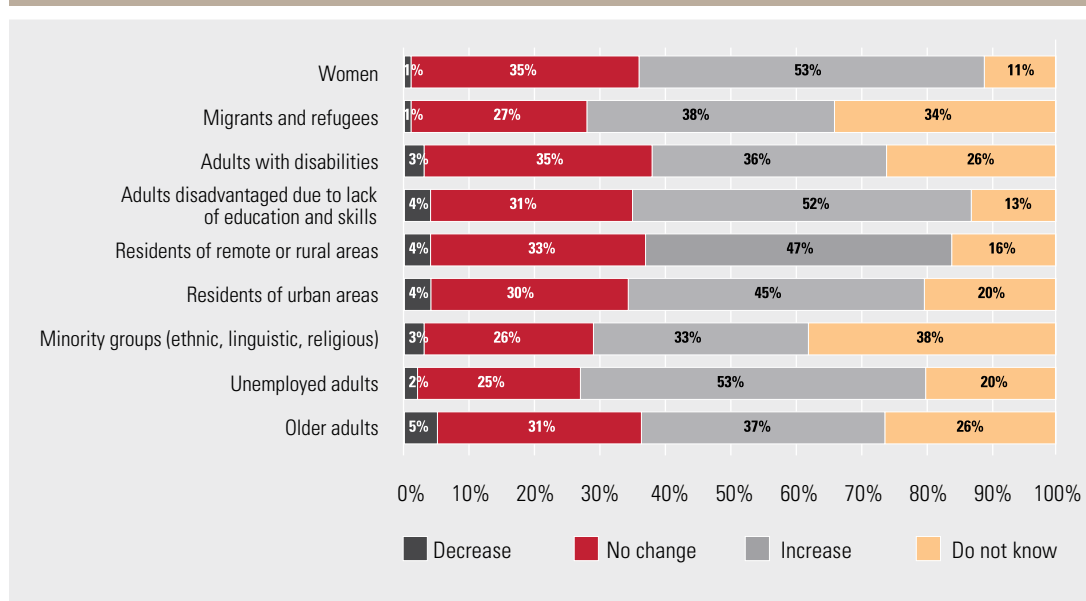
**FIGURE 1.5**  
Reported changes in ALE participation for different groups since 2015



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey. Note: Total number of countries which responded on participation varied, from a minimum of 131 for participation of residents of urban areas to a maximum of 139 for participation of women.

<sup>6</sup> In contrast to other target groups, migrants and refugees are not equally represented in different parts of the world and might therefore have varying significance for different countries, depending on region. However, the small number of responses from those countries most affected by mass population movements meant that further analysis was not possible here.

**FIGURE 1.6**  
Reported changes in ALE provision for different groups since 2015



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey. Note: Total number of countries which responded on ALE provision varied, from a minimum of 140 for provision for minority groups to a maximum of 148 for provision for women.

Countries reported the lowest changes in participation for adults with disabilities (36% of 135 countries), older adults (35% of 134 countries) and minority groups (34% of 131 countries), shown in **Figure 1.5**. The same groups reported the lowest increase in provision since 2015 (**Figure 1.6**).

Some countries reported no change in ALE participation and provision of different groups since 2015. Globally, between 20% and 33% of countries reported no change in participation by different groups (**Figure 1.5**).

Similar percentages were reported for provision for the different groups (**Figure 1.6**). More importantly, 37% and 34% of countries reported not knowing or not having information about the participation of minority groups, migrants and refugees (**Figure 1.5**). Further, 34%–38% reported not knowing about ALE provision for these groups (**Figure 1.6**). In addition, 30% of countries did not have information to report participation of adults with disabilities (**Figure 1.5**), and 26% did not know about provision for these adults (**Figure 1.6**). Lastly, 26% and 27% did

**TABLE 1.18**  
Changes in participation according to fields of learning since 2015

| WORLD                                                                | Frequency | Decrease | No change | Increase | Do not know |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-------------|
| Literacy and basic skills                                            | 136       | 7%       | 26%       | 57%      | 10%         |
| Continuing training and professional development (vocational skills) | 136       | 4%       | 26%       | 57%      | 13%         |
| Liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills) | 132       | 2%       | 36%       | 36%      | 27%         |

Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

not have information on ALE participation and provision for older adults (**Figure 1.5** and **Figure 1.6**), respectively.

Finally, **Table 1.18** shows whether ALE participation has changed for fields of learning in RALE. Fields with the biggest increase in participation since 2015 are literacy and basic skills and continuing training and professional development, indicated in 57% of 136 responses from countries. For citizenship education, 36% of 132 countries reported increases in participation, while 36% reported no change in participation in this field. Again, the lack of data for monitoring participation is an issue: 27% of 132 countries responded as not knowing whether participation for citizenship education has changed since 2015.

## 6.5

### WHAT WE FOUND OUT: KEY FINDINGS ON PARTICIPATION

Main points drawn from countries' responses on ALE participation in the *GRALE 4* survey:

- Globally, over half of countries, or 57% of 152 respondents, reported an (estimated) increase in overall participation rates in ALE provision. Over a quarter (28%) reported no change (stayed the same), and 9%, corresponding to 13 countries, reported a decrease.
- The majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa reported an increase in ALE participation since 2015 (72%, corresponding to 22 out of 32 respondents). The lowest increase was in North America and Western Europe (8 out of 21 countries).
- Only 103 of 152 countries, or 67%, responded that ALE participation rates were based on actual figures. By income group, a little over two-thirds of countries, regardless of classification, have data on participation rates based on actual figures. The lack of data was highlighted in the conclusions of *GRALE 3* as well. Issues of data monitoring will be further explored in Part 2.
- A total of 96 countries reported ALE participation rates based on actual figures. Of these countries, 25% reported participation at 5–10%, 20% reported participation at 20%–50%, and 15% reported participation higher than 50%. Almost a third (29%) reported participation below 5%. In a range of countries, ALE provision has decreased for vulnerable groups such as adults with disabilities and residents living in remote or rural areas. Exclusion of these groups is in line with findings of *GRALE 3*.
- A disappointing proportion, 37%, of countries reported not knowing the ALE participation rates of minority groups, migrants and refugees. Further, 34%–38% reported not knowing about ALE provision for these groups. This suggests that many countries have considerable work to do if they are to meet the challenges identified in the most recent Global Education Monitoring Report. The report showed that the right of refugee and migrant children to quality education, while increasingly recognized on paper, was challenged daily in practice and denied outright by some governments, and urged the inclusion of migrants and displaced people in national education systems (UNESCO, 2018a).





## CHAPTER 7

## CONCLUSION

Monitoring the different areas of the BFA has been the core focus of Part 1 of *GRALE 4*. This is important not only to comply with the commitment made as part of the BFA, but also to identify areas in need of future change. In line with the thematic focus of *GRALE 3*, and in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ALE aims to improve lives and to contribute to a society underpinned by economic and social proficiency. We therefore welcome the increased participation of Member States in the *GRALE 4* survey compared to previous *GRALE* cycles. Nevertheless, survey data for 46 countries (37 UNESCO Member States and nine Associate Members) were not available. A concern for the future will be how to ensure that these countries also respond to the survey.

Generally speaking, the monitoring part of this report has highlighted progress made in a range of areas. Two out of three countries reported that ALE policies had been strengthened compared to 2015. Stakeholders have been involved to a greater extent in policy issues, including in low-income countries much in need of extra support. A wide range of new policy plans have been put in place. However, one area that is progressing at a slower rate is the validation of non-formal and informal learning. This was also highlighted in *GRALE 3* and needs further detailed attention. Non-recognition of skills and previous experience might put adults in a weaker position and prevent them from accessing employment or gaining entry to other ALE activities.

Policies may not achieve their full potential if they are not accompanied by appropriate governance measures. One model of governance that shows particular promise is decentralization. This approach strengthens the focus on implementing policies close to

the learner and on better taking into account their needs. Governance can also be further optimized through policy-learning processes in which countries share good practices to enrich the knowledge base on what works. This *GRALE* report aims to act as an example of this approach.

One of the key findings of *GRALE 3* referred to the lack of funding for ALE across the world. The majority of countries reported a planned increase in ALE funding in response to the *GRALE 3* survey. It is clear from the data presented in this monitoring part that this intention has not been translated into concrete action. This is problematic, as a lack of funding is preventing adults from taking part in ALE and constraining stakeholders and providers in creating and implementing high-quality learning provision. This situation is especially worrying in those low-income countries in which ALE funding has further decreased (the *GRALE 4* survey found that 35% of low-income countries reported funding decrease in recent years) and for the most vulnerable adults in society, who need more targeted support.

While there seems to be a willingness to implement new policies and to make governance practices more efficient, it is clear that a lack of funding might undermine these actions. Reduced financial injections in ALE systems are likely to hit socially disadvantaged adults such as those with disabilities or minority groups. While countries have demonstrated an awareness of the importance of quality in ALE and are tending to pay more attention to these issues compared to 2015, several areas for improvement have been identified. ALE educators' employment conditions in a range of countries could improve, for example, as could their opportunities to engage in continuing education and training.

Last but not least, Part 1 has explored the participation of adults in ALE. The adult learner is the central agent in the entire ALE process, ideally supported by sound policies, efficient governance mechanisms and adequately funded provision which is high in quality. Ultimately, ALE—as demonstrated in *GRALE 3*—seeks to improve the life conditions of these adults and provide them with an opportunity to work towards this goal. However, as this part of the report clearly demonstrates, rates of participation in ALE remain uneven and progress is insufficient. Some countries appear to be going backwards, and while there has been progress for some groups, notably women,

there is a discernible pattern of exclusion of vulnerable groups in many parts of the world. This situation has persisted for many years and requires further detailed attention and action, from both Member States and the international community, if we are to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. The main message on participation is that we need to do much more, in terms of investment, support and awareness-raising, and with a particular focus on disadvantaged and excluded groups, if we are to ensure that no one in society is left behind and everyone has the opportunity to benefit fully from adult learning and education, irrespective of who or where they are.

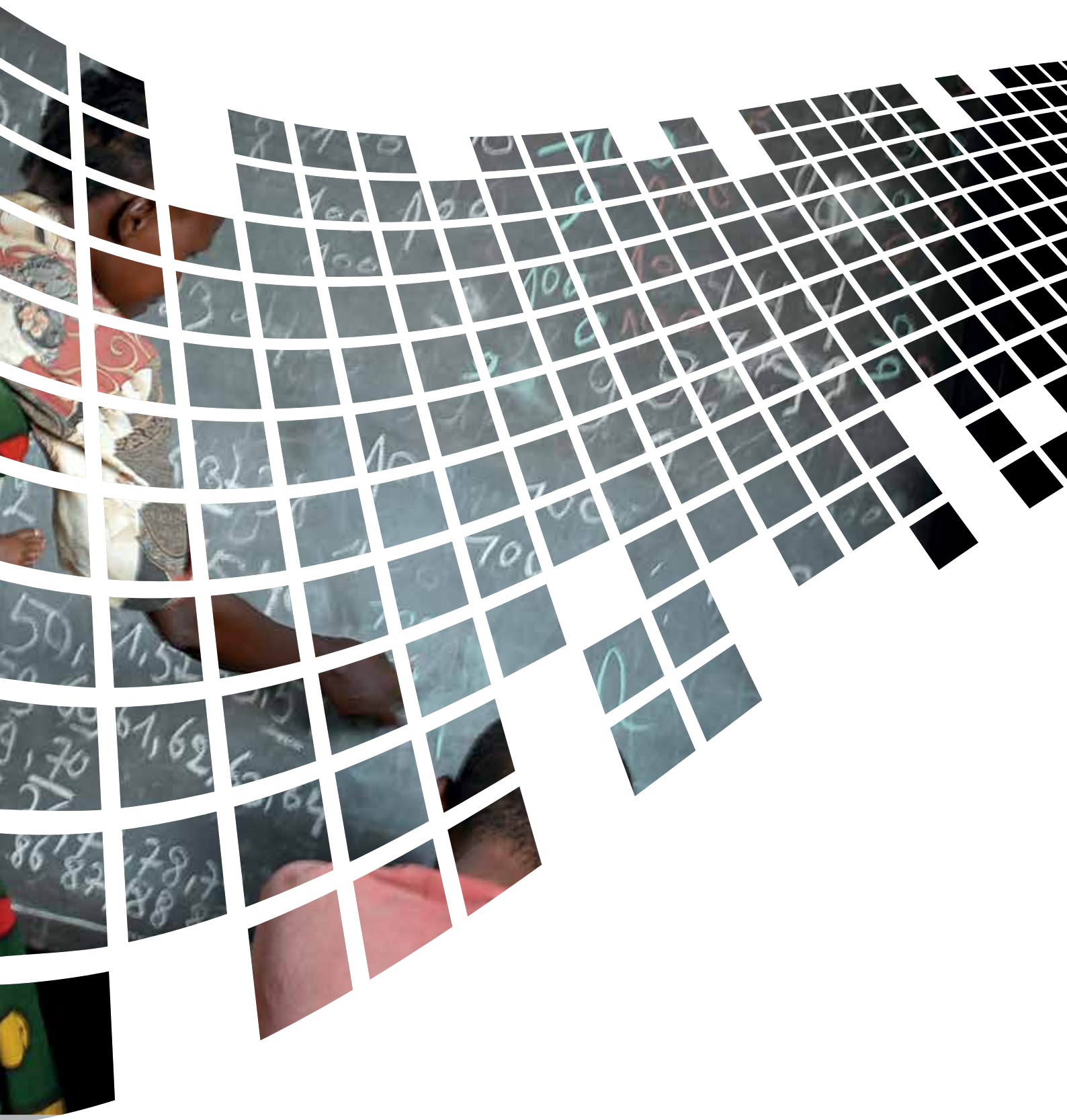




# PART 2

## FOCUS ON PARTICIPATION





## CHAPTER 8

## INTRODUCTION

Following the discussion of participation in Chapter 6, Part 2 deepens the analysis and considers more broadly what we know about participation, inclusion and equity, what we do not (yet) know, and what we need to do in order to be able to monitor and analyse participation more effectively. It starts by setting out why this matters.

### 8.1 PARTICIPATION MATTERS

As noted in the introduction to this report, the focus of *GRALE 4* on participation, inclusion and equity in adult learning and education should be understood in the context of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015). Directed by the Agenda's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), countries have pledged to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection in order to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies through a new global partnership, while ensuring that no one is left behind. In the spirit of the SDGs agenda, the 2015 World Education Forum presented what has become known as the Incheon Declaration, offering a new vision for education: 'Our vision is to transform lives through education, recognizing the important role of education as a main driver of development' (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 7).

The Incheon Declaration commits countries to promoting quality lifelong learning opportunities for all, in all settings, recognizing the important role not only of formal education, but also of non-formal education and informal learning. In this vision, ALE constitutes not only an essential part of SDG 4 on quality education, but also a key resource in efforts to achieve the other SDGs, such as those on gender equality, reducing inequality, providing decent work, and economic growth.

*GRALE 3* (UIL, 2016) presented research findings on the fundamental influence ALE can have on health and well-being, employment and the labour market as well as social, civic and community life. The findings of *GRALE 3* have been reinforced by subsequent research which further highlights the importance of ALE in the realization of the SDGs. Regarding health, longitudinal studies have shown not only the impact of ALE on a learner's own physical and mental health, but also the intergenerational health benefits for other family members (Schuller, 2017). For example, literacy programmes are a means through which mothers influence their children's health (Post, 2016, p. 758), while third-age learning produces positive impacts on older people's life satisfaction, self-esteem and depression level (Escolar Chua and de Guzman, 2014).

Several studies have found important social and community benefits of learning. This can be in the form of gains in social capital, improved social cohesion and integration, increased democratic participation and community involvement, or lowering the risk of crime, including reducing reoffending rates (Schuller, 2017). Furthermore, according to the World Values Survey, people who are literate tend to prioritize the environment over economic growth (Post, 2016, p. 759). ALE can also affect employment and the workplace in a number of ways (e.g. by leading to higher salaries and improved productivity of enterprises and whole economies) for individuals, enterprises and nations (see UIL, 2016a, p. 89). Interestingly, recent research on the effects of training seems to suggest that as well as the economic benefits, participating in vocational training also tends to increase participation in civic, political and cultural activities (Ruhose et al., 2018). While there appear to be slightly different effects from different types of learning (Jenkins, 2011), there has been little

systematic research so far into the ways in which the quality of ALE shapes outcomes, though it might seem reasonable to assume that improvements in quality will tend to foster improved outcomes.

Evidence that participating in different forms of ALE leads to higher levels of equality and inclusion provides a strong argument for the individual, employer and government to invest in adult education, and to promote improvements in quality. To realize positive results, however, the offer of and demand for learning opportunities need to match. For ALE to realize fully its potential value to the individual, economy and society, countries have to create the necessary conditions for encouraging all citizens to participate in learning activities. The 2015 Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE) calls on Member States to seek ways to better serve marginal groups and ‘promote equitable learning opportunities for youth and adults’ (UNESCO and UIL, 2016, p. 3). To assist in this development, policy-makers, researchers and practitioners need to be guided by:

- an understanding of the changing conceptualization and vision of ALE;
- comprehensive quality data on who participates in what form of ALE in order to provide a clear picture of existing national inequalities and the extent to which ALE is meeting the learning needs of target groups;
- an in-depth awareness of the processes that are driving the inequalities in ALE;
- a knowledge of programmes, reforms and policies that have proven successful in combatting existing inequalities.

## 8.2

### HOW TO READ PART 2 OF THE REPORT

Part 2 has been divided into six chapters. Chapter 9 will explore the vision of ALE as laid out in RALE, with special reference to the three key fields of learning identified there: literacy and basic skills; continuing education and professional development (vocational skills); and liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills). The response from Member States to the RALE framework will be discussed. In the context of RALE, Chapter 9 will assess the dominant ways in which participation is measured, both by Member States and other important national stakeholders, and by international organizations (OECD, EU, UNESCO and the World Bank). It will identify approaches to understanding and measuring participation that are particularly promising for UNESCO Member States. It will consider the challenges in monitoring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and, in particular, SDG 4 targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7, which relate directly to the RALE fields of learning. An overall picture of the current situation of participation in ALE will be outlined, with examples of BFA (Belém Framework for Action) implementation from different regions and Member States provided.

Chapter 10 will consider what we know about patterns of inequality in participation across the globe, with specific reference to women, ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, older adults, the low-skilled, people with disabilities, and people living in remote and rural areas. These groups especially need attention in relation to achieving the SDGs. Broader structural conditions that are hindering participation and inclusion and equity in ALE are discussed in Chapter 11, where the main barriers to participation will be highlighted. Chapter 12 considers the role of public support in promoting a wider culture of learning and stimulating motivation to participate, as well as which specific patterns of ALE provision have a proven track record of promoting greater equality and inclusion in ALE participation.





## CHAPTER 9

# UNDERSTANDINGS OF ALE, ISSUES AROUND MEASUREMENT AND AN OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATION

## 9.1

## A NEW VISION OF ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

UNESCO Member States' decision to replace the 1976 Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education with the 2015 Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE) reflects a new vision of ALE and its importance in meeting contemporary educational, cultural, political, social and economic challenges (UNESCO and UIL, 2016, p. 6). RALE reiterates its predecessor's message that, in many countries, the boundaries of youth and adulthood are shifting; it therefore proposes that 'adult' denote all those who engage in adult learning and education, even if they have not reached the legal age of maturity. This is the case particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, where youth and adult learning and education (YALE) continues to be the most commonly used classification, rather than ALE (UIL, 2017a). Similarly, many countries in the Asia and Pacific region view ALE policy and youth education policy as closely linked, even though some of them have independent policy statements on youth education and skill development (UIL, 2017b, p. 21). It is, therefore, not always advisable to make a sharp distinction between the education of youth and adult learning and education.

RALE contains far-reaching suggestions for how the field should be defined, and groups ALE into three core learning domains: literacy and basic skills; continuing education and professional development (vocational skills); and liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills).<sup>7</sup> These three RALE

learning fields will be referred to herein as 'the RALE typology'. RALE identifies key components of a national policy framework that are deemed necessary in order for adult learning and education to more fully contribute to the revitalization of learning in private, community and economic life in ways that would equip people with the capabilities to take control of their destinies. To address participation, inclusion and equity, Member States are urged to combat discrimination, give special attention to the learning needs of vulnerable groups and to better address learners' needs and minimize barriers to participation. RALE, building on the 2009 Belém Framework for Action (BFA) (for a detailed presentation of links between the BFA, RALE and *GRALE* see UIL, 2019a), specifically recommends that countries address the following areas of action: policy; governance; financing; participation; inclusion and equity; and quality. The extent to which countries have progressed in these areas of action was the focus of Part 1 of this report.

In contrast to the BFA, which was silent on the matter, RALE recognizes the value and relevance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for ALE, which are seen as holding great potential for improving access by adults to a variety of learning opportunities, resulting in greater equity and inclusion. It notes that ICTs offer various innovative possibilities for realizing lifelong learning, reducing the dependence on traditional formal structures of education and permitting individualized learning. Through mobile devices, electronic networking, social media and online courses, adult learners can access learning opportunities anytime and anywhere. Information and communication technologies also have considerable capacity for facilitating access to education for people with disabilities, permitting their fuller integration into society, as well as for other marginalized or disadvantaged groups.

<sup>7</sup> The third area conventionally encompasses learning programmes for personal and/or social growth, as well as civic, democratic and transformative ALE (Manninen, 2017).

RALE sees a strengthening of international cooperation as essential to addressing inclusion in ALE. Member States are asked to create a climate favourable to international cooperation and to make full use of mechanisms of regional integration. By freely sharing national expertise, countries can assist each other to build capacities in ALE, which will strengthen their work towards achieving the SDGs.

A comparison of the UNESCO 1976 and 2015 recommendations reveals the far-reaching changes that have occurred in the understanding of adult education. At the centre is a shift from a narrow preoccupation with adult education to a much broader understanding of the field, in which learning has become as central to the discussion as education. This is reflected in a change in the UNESCO terminology from 'adult education' to 'adult learning and education' (ALE). In accordance with the principle of lifelong learning, UNESCO and other organizations, such as the OECD, the EU and the World Bank, have fully embraced the argument that learning activities are not necessarily intentional and structured, nor always delivered in institutional settings.

This new paradigm is consistent with the traditional distinction between three basic categories of setting in which purposeful learning activity takes place: formal, non-formal and informal (OECD, 1996; European Commission, 2000). It is important to note that a distinction can be made between purposeful informal learning and what is known as incidental or random informal learning (European Commission, 2000). Formal learning takes place in an education or training institution that is a part of the formal education system of a country; it is structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leads to certification. Non-formal learning, on the other hand, is provided outside regular programmes of the formal educational system. It is typically offered in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars, and may happen in the workplace, in community centres or through the activities of civil society organizations and groups. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective; it typically does not lead to certification but it is structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support.

Purposeful informal learning includes forms of learning that are intentional or deliberate but are not institutionalized. It may include learning activities that occur in the family, workplace, community and daily life on a self-directed, family-directed or socially directed basis. Incidental or random learning refers to forms of learning that are not organized or designed to bring about learning. Incidental or random learning may occur as a by-product of day-to-day activities. While incidental learning falls outside the public policy sphere and is not usually addressed in statistics on participation in adult learning and education, it cannot be ignored. As Dohmen (1996) reminds us, informal or 'everyday' learning, whether positive or negative, forms the very core of lifelong learning. Accepting this premise, the focus falls on the nature and structure of everyday experiences and their consequences for a person's learning processes, ways of thinking and competencies. Looking at everyday life as the curricula of incidental learning, the issue becomes this: What opportunities does a person's lived life afford?

Participation in formal, non-formal and informal as well as incidental learning has demonstrable power to contribute to the SDGs. In the new broadened context of ALE, Member States are faced with difficult policy decisions: What is an appropriate balance between public funding for formal, non-formal and purposeful informal learning activities? What role should investment in new learning technologies have in an overall national adult learning and education strategy? How can appropriate non-formal and informal learning activities be accredited in the formal system? And what are the consequences of such decisions on inclusion and equity?

While recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) has received considerable attention, in both scholarly and policy literature (Andersson, 2011; Singh, 2015), its implementation often remains problematic.

Judging from the answers to previous *GRALE* surveys, the idea of a triad (consisting of formal, non-formal and purposeful informal learning) is partly used and accepted by countries. However, while many countries embrace all aspects of the triad, others only refer to non-formal learning or the combination of formal and non-formal learning or non-formal and purposeful informal

learning. For example, Indonesia states that 'ALE is an endeavour provided through all formal, non-formal and informal education channels' (*GRALE 3* survey). Likewise, Namibia notes that adult education contains 'the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities', a sentiment echoed by several countries, for example Denmark. Some countries, such as Mali and Eritrea, only refer to non-formal education, while Honduras sees ALE encompassing formal and non-formal learning. In Thailand, the main agency for ALE is called the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education.

Building on the triad, RALE, as mentioned previously, introduced a new typology of adult learning and education fields intended to capture the full range of ALE.

### 9.1.1

#### UNDERSTANDING THE RALE TYPOLOGY

In contrast to the 1976 document, which talks in general terms about adult education as organized education processes, RALE presents a specific typology of adult learning and education. Acknowledging that the types of adult learning and education vary widely, the RALE typology groups these activities into three key domains:

- literacy and basic skills,
- continuing education and professional development (vocational skills),
- liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills).

When embracing the RALE classification of adult learning and education, it is important to acknowledge that these three categories are not understood in a narrow sense and that the different types of ALE opportunities are not limited to either formal or non-formal and informal learning. As noted, although not discussed in detail in the RALE document, the literacy and basic skills category should be understood as two continua: a continuum of learning and education that carries on beyond school, and a continuum of proficiency levels, ranging from low to high (UNESCO and UIL, 2016b, p. 7, pt. 4). What is deemed the very minimum level of literacy and education required to being able to function in a society varies over time as

well as between countries. This can include literacy in the sense of reading and writing in the mother tongue or other languages in a multilingual context, but also refers to basic numeracy skills and basic digital skills. When adult basic education became a policy area in parts of the world in the 1960s, the main goal was to afford the first nine years of schooling to those lacking primary education. As the development process progressed and the economy and societies became more complex, this was no longer seen as sufficient, and the goal for adult basic education became to offer a full secondary education. In the quickly evolving knowledge society, policy-makers in highly industrialized countries have begun to question if even this level is adequate, and are beginning to think that a post-secondary certificate or degree might, in the not too distant future, become the new benchmark for how basic education should be understood in these societies. The Incheon Declaration (UNESCO, 2016a) does not include upper secondary education under basic education. However, a number of policy debates do consider the completion of secondary education as a condition for socio-economic integration: consider, for example, the discussions about migrants and refugees around the world, where reference is made to secondary education, notably in some of the Arab States such as Jordan (see ILO, 2018a).

Similarly, continuing training and professional development includes a range of vocational education and training activities, for example on-the-job training, adult apprenticeships, adult vocational programmes and training programmes for the unemployed, that award adults with the knowledge, competencies and skills required to engage in the economy, be it through family farming, a skilled job or self-employment. This can take place in formal, non-formal and informal settings.

The third RALE category, liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills), focuses on the promotion of skills that enable active citizenship. It seeks to equip people with a readiness to engage actively with social dimensions such as poverty, democratic participation, the rise of fake news, intergenerational solidarity, justice, equity, exclusion, violence, unemployment, environmental protection and climate change. On a personal level, those skills assist in terms of health and well-being and in other ways that contribute to personal development

and dignity. All these aspects discussed in relation to the three domains of RALE are essential, important and linked to the core aims of SDGs.

All three broad categories of the RALE typology matter. The third, liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills), can no longer be neglected. With the exception of higher education, which at present is not explicitly included in the RALE typology, levels of learning can be further developed (see **Table 2.1**), and, where possible, be linked to the national qualification framework (see CEDEFOP et al., 2019, for an overview of national qualification frameworks). The areas under the category of liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills) in the revised RALE typology presented in **Table 2.1** are frequently offered by various NGOs involved in ALE. It is noteworthy that a recent German study finds that low literacy levels are associated with lower political participation, e.g. voting (Grotlüschen et al., 2019, p. 34).

9.1.1.1  
**Are countries adopting the RALE perspective?**

It is difficult to reach an authoritative view as to the extent to which countries have embraced the RALE typology. Not only was the typology adopted relatively recently, but

also, as Selman and Dampier (1991, p. 2) previously noted, different terms are used for the same thing and people doing similar work may refer to it in various ways. In contrast to the 2015 survey, the 2018 survey does not contain a direct question on countries’ definitions. The picture is further blurred by the fact that some countries did not answer the 2015 questionnaire or provided insufficient information. However, available evidence (see, for example, Howells, 2018) allows us to draw a rough picture of the situation. What stands out is that while the two first categories, literacy and basic skills and continuing training, are mentioned in one way or another by most countries, there is a glaring absence of reference to the third category, liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills). Broadly interpreted, only 20 of the 139 countries that responded to the *GRALE 3* survey noted the latter. Most of these countries are from Latin America or the Nordic countries, which are widely known to be the two centres for popular and liberal education (see Tøsse, 2011).

A majority of countries report that the essential points of RALE are well reflected in their legislation, with some focus in Europe and North America and the Arab States (see **Table 2.2**). The same tendency is reported with regard to education policies (see **Table 2.3**).

| <b>TABLE 2.1</b><br><b>The RALE typology, by levels, types and areas</b> |                                                                                       |                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Literacy and basic skills, by level</b>                               | <b>Continuing education and professional development (vocational skills), by type</b> | <b>Liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills), by area</b> |
| Basic literacy                                                           | Workplace learning                                                                    | Health                                                                               |
| Pre-primary                                                              | Vocational adult secondary education                                                  | Culture                                                                              |
| Primary                                                                  | Vocational post-secondary education                                                   | Personal development                                                                 |
| Lower secondary                                                          |                                                                                       | Political                                                                            |
| Upper secondary                                                          |                                                                                       |                                                                                      |

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

**TABLE 2.2**  
Countries by region that reported the essential points of RALE (e.g. definition including the typology, scope, aims and objectives) to be reflected in legislation

|                                  | Total responses<br><i>GRALE 4</i> | Not at all | Not much | A little | Somewhat | Much | A great deal |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|----------|----------|----------|------|--------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 144                               | 1%         | 8%       | 8%       | 30%      | 31%  | 21%          |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |                                   |            |          |          |          |      |              |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 31                                | 0%         | 10%      | 10%      | 23%      | 32%  | 26%          |
| Arab States                      | 16                                | 0%         | 13%      | 6%       | 13%      | 50%  | 19%          |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 35                                | 6%         | 17%      | 6%       | 40%      | 23%  | 9%           |
| North America and Western Europe | 20                                | 0%         | 0%       | 10%      | 40%      | 10%  | 40%          |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 20                                | 0%         | 0%       | 0%       | 40%      | 50%  | 10%          |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 22                                | 0%         | 5%       | 18%      | 18%      | 32%  | 27%          |

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

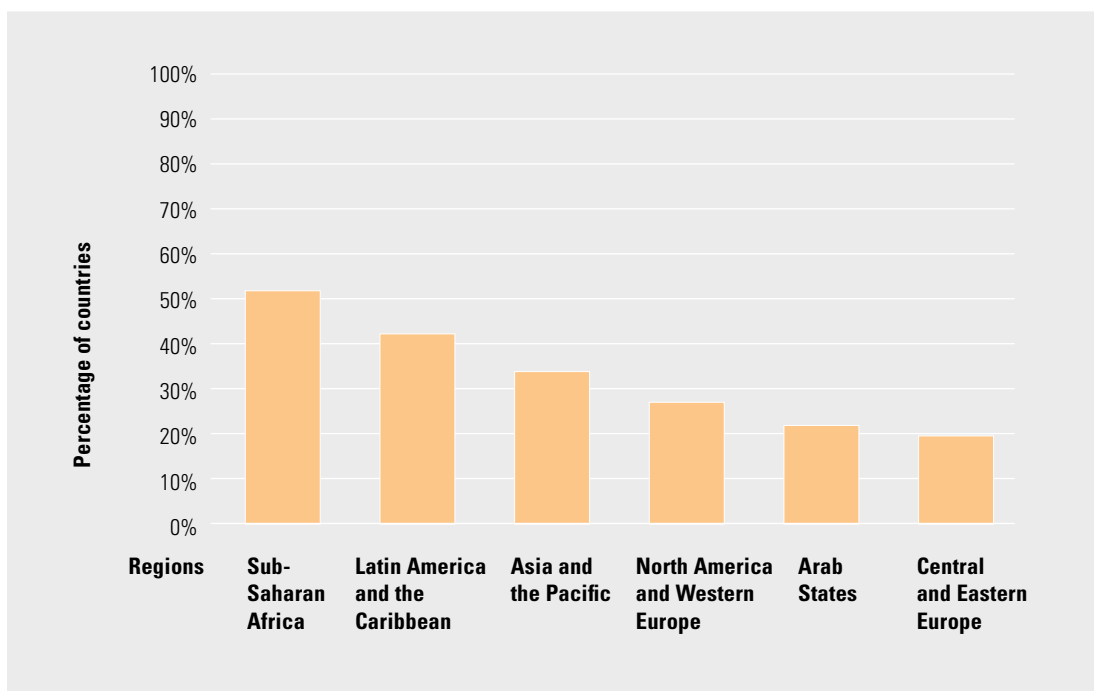
**TABLE 2.3**  
Countries by region that reported the essential points of RALE (e.g. definition including the typology, scope, aims and objectives) to be reflected in education policies

|                                  | Total responses<br><i>GRALE 4</i> | Not at all | Not much | A little | Somewhat | Much | A great deal |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|----------|----------|----------|------|--------------|
| <b>WORLD</b>                     | 150                               | 0%         | 7%       | 9%       | 31%      | 35%  | 19%          |
| <b>REGIONAL GROUPS</b>           |                                   |            |          |          |          |      |              |
| Sub-Saharan Africa               | 32                                | 0%         | 13%      | 9%       | 16%      | 41%  | 22%          |
| Arab States                      | 17                                | 0%         | 6%       | 12%      | 18%      | 53%  | 12%          |
| Asia and the Pacific             | 36                                | 0%         | 14%      | 11%      | 36%      | 22%  | 17%          |
| North America and Western Europe | 19                                | 0%         | 0%       | 11%      | 42%      | 21%  | 26%          |
| Central and Eastern Europe       | 20                                | 0%         | 0%       | 0%       | 40%      | 50%  | 10%          |
| Latin America and the Caribbean  | 26                                | 0%         | 0%       | 12%      | 35%      | 31%  | 23%          |

Source: *GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey*

The *GRALE 4* survey also provides insights into how countries are paying attention to RALE. Some countries, for example, had established a special taskforce or working group to implement RALE. In fact, out of the 154 countries that answered the question in the 2018 survey, 54 (35%) had done so but there were substantial regional variations (see **Figure 2.1**).

**FIGURE 2.1**  
**Percentage of countries per region with a specific taskforce, working group, office or other mechanism for implementing RALE**



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

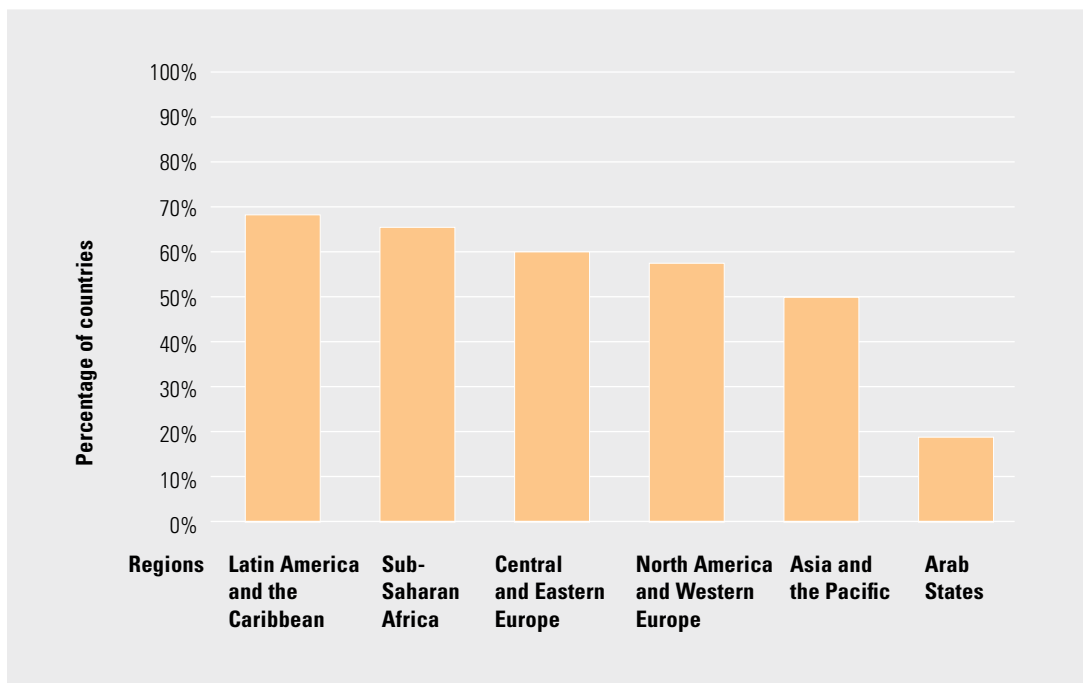
In sub-Saharan Africa, just over half of the countries (52%) reported having such a structure, somewhat less than half in Latin America and Caribbean countries (42%). In contrast, only 20% of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, 22% in the Arab States and 27% in North America and Western Europe had created a specific entity for the implementation of RALE. In the latter case, this can be partly explained by the fact that national plans on ALE commonly follow the structures proposed by the European Commission (which are understood as sufficient so that no specific taskforce or working group was necessary). The figure for Asia and the Pacific region mirrored the overall average, 34%. However, as can be seen in **Figure 2.2** there has often been an increased emphasis on the areas of action set out in RALE since its inception in 2015, even without the creation of a special taskforce. In these cases, RALE has most likely been promoted within regular governance structures. In total, 80 of 147 countries (54%) reported having done so.

With the exception of the Arab States, of which only 18% had given increased emphasis to RALE, the figures for the other regions range from 50% in the Asia Pacific region to 68% in Latin America and the Caribbean. The figures for Central and Eastern Europe and North America and Western Europe were respectively 60% and 57%.

Of the areas of action outlined in RALE, there were two that have been given particular attention (see **Figure 2.3**). Of the 80 countries that had made progress on RALE, 77% had addressed governance, and almost the same proportion of countries, 71%, had noted attention to policy. Finance (40%) and participation (42%) were areas that were addressed to a lesser extent, while quality fell in-between, with 57%. Overall, increased emphasis on RALE is perceived as important as it is hoped to help countries to achieve the SDGs.

FIGURE 2.2

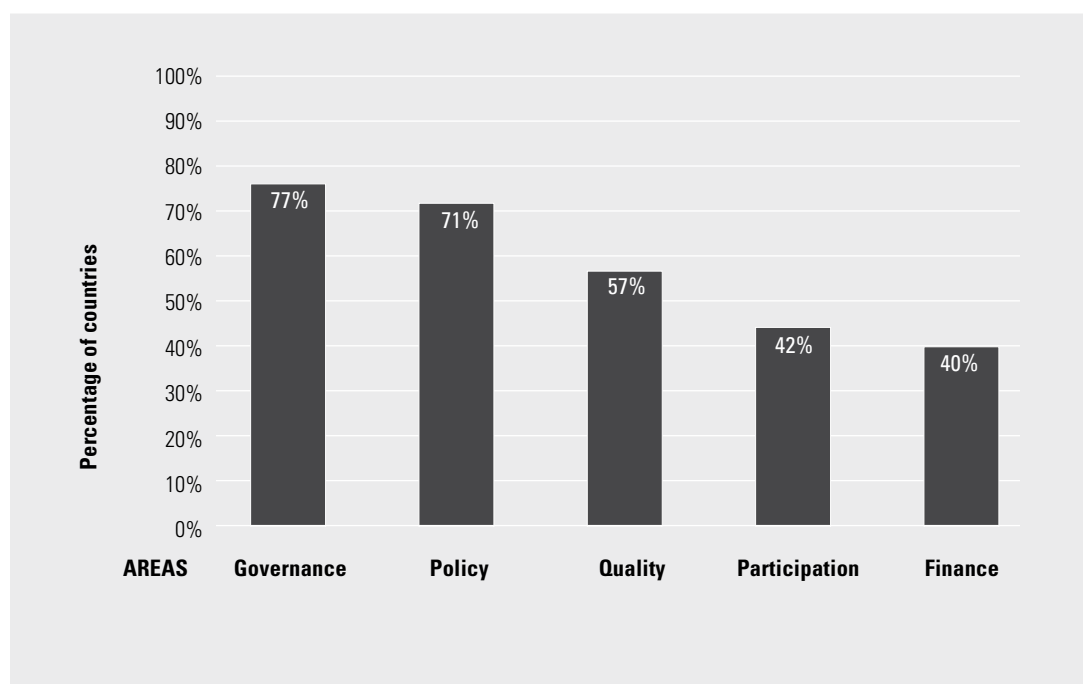
Percentage of countries in which there has been an increased emphasis on the areas of action set out in RALE since its inception in 2015



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

FIGURE 2.3

Percentage of countries per region in which there has been an increased emphasis on the respective areas of action set out in RALE



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

In light of the new challenges posed by the acceptance of the RALE typology and Member States' commitment to monitor closely SDG 4, it is important to review what data on participation in ALE are presently available in the different UNESCO regions in addition to those collected as part of the *GRALE* surveys. Will existing information allow an assessment of participation in ways that permit understanding of the role ALE can play in social and economic inclusion and its contribution to the SDGs across domains by 2030?

### 9.1.2

#### **MONITORING PARTICIPATION IN ALE AND SDG 4 FROM A RALE PERSPECTIVE**

##### 9.1.2.1

##### **Availability and quality of data on participation**

The different approaches to collecting data on participation in ALE can broadly be classified into four core categories:

- Surveys of Member States regarding information on ALE providers, offers and characteristics of participants.
- Household surveys exploring distribution of ALE participation in the population, collecting information from the respondents on the nature of their participation in ALE and various background characteristics relating to the respondents.
- Surveys of enterprises, collecting information on the extent of company training and company training policies.
- Time-use surveys, which also are household surveys, designed to assess the time a person spends on various activities, including different forms of learning.

##### 9.1.2.2

##### **Surveys of Member States**

UIS collects data through harmonized education surveys sent to Member States on an annual basis (UIS, 2018a). These include the:

- Survey of Formal Education: collects data on the number of students, teachers and educational expenditure for all levels of education;
- Questionnaire on Educational Attainment Statistics;
- Questionnaire on Literacy Statistics.

In 2018, UIS also administered version 2.0 of its Catalogue of Learning Assessments (CLA 2.0) to collect national data for some specific SDG 4 indicators on learning outcomes, ICT skills and literacy and numeracy skills.

UIS data are based on the following data sources provided by Member States: administrative data (government administrative records, schools censuses), household surveys, population censuses and learning assessments. UIS has put in place a rigorous system to validate data with Member States.

Until now, the UIS education surveys, with the exception of one regional survey (see UIS, 2013), have not collected information on adult participation in non-formal education. The Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG 4—Education 2030 (TCG) has developed a set of questions that can be added to household surveys to collect data on participation in formal and non-formal education. Depending on what information is available in Member States, this module, if widely used, has the potential to provide a good overview of the non-formal ALE sector. However, without more information, it is difficult to assess to what degree this data-collection method will be able to provide information on all three RALE domains.

The part of the *GRALE* survey that is linked to UIL's monitoring of the implementation of the Belém Framework for Action, as reported in Part 1, offers a broad overview and relies on self-reporting. Hence, it may not provide a detailed reading on inequalities in participation. The strength of the survey is

that it is presently the only truly global survey that provides comparative information on ALE from all regions. Another important advantage of *GRALE* is that it collects information on a broad set of policy initiatives, which can provide insights into addressing low and/or unequal participation.

### 9.1.2.3

#### Household surveys

International organizations have taken the lead in responding to the need for information on participation in ALE, and, during the last decade, have initiated comprehensive programmes for the collection of information related to ALE. The OECD (2013) has established the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), also known as the Adult Skills Survey, a household survey covering the age range 16–65 (a small number of countries have chosen to include older adults in the sample). The first round of PIAAC collected data in 24 countries, with a second and third round increasing the number of participating countries to nearly 40. PIAAC collects information on participation in formal and non-formal adult learning and education during the previous 12 months on top of its core business of undertaking direct skills assessments in the areas of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments.

From a RALE perspective, PIAAC, despite some obvious advantages, such as being able to relate participation in adult learning and education to competencies and economic development, has in its present form some limitations. It tends to privilege formal learning. The information collected on non-formal ALE does not allow for a closer analysis of how well different providers and particular provisions serve vulnerable groups (Boeren, 2016; Desjardins, 2017). With regard to the three key domains of learning and skills identified in RALE, PIAAC provides a quite detailed account of formal programmes related to literacy and basic education; it presents information on continuing education and professional development (vocational skills), but fails to address the third category, liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills). PIAAC, as a household survey, does not collect any information on policies related to ALE nor any administrative data on ALE. Consequently,

the system of ALE is more or less treated as a black box from which information is provided on participation, but it is difficult to get a handle on how the ALE system impacts on participation or what policy initiatives may have impacted on the participation structure.

The European Commission, through Eurostat, administers two household surveys that address participation in adult learning in Member States. The Adult Education Survey (AES) methodology has several similarities with that of PIAAC but also some noticeable differences (Eurostat, 2019a). While having a clear focus on learning for work, AES does not privilege job-related activity to the same extent as PIAAC. Another important difference from PIAAC is that AES asks about providers and, moreover, this data collection identifies the full range of organizers, including, among many others, non-profit organizations. Thus, AES is better aligned with the RALE typology. In addition, it also collects specific information on purposeful informal learning. What it lacks is the direct measure of skills that is available in PIAAC. It also suffers from the same shortcoming as PIAAC in that it lacks information on specific national policies and administrative data on ALE. This information needs to be combined with the dataset from other sources.

Eurostat also oversees the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS; Eurostat, 2019b). This is a quarterly household survey that asks those 25 years and older about participation in formal and non-formal education in the previous four weeks. The national participation rate in this survey is used to monitor progress towards fulfilling the EC benchmark of a participation rate of 15% in ALE that each member country is expected to have reached by 2020. The EU-LFS provides a good overall rate on participation in formal and non-formal learning but lacks specificity on learning activities, policies and administrative data, which, combined, makes it less well suited to monitoring the RALE typology.

While large comparative surveys like PIAAC and AES are initiated and governed by international organizations, some countries also maintain a national survey on participation in ALE. The Republic of Korea is one country that has maintained a yearly survey, the Korean Lifelong Learning Survey, which is of particular interest for the way it operationalizes and collects information on ALE (Republic

of Korea Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute, 2018). Like AES, the focus is on formal, non-formal and informal learning, but, in contrast to AES and PIAAC, it provides a more detailed description of non-formal learning, broken down into six categories:

- supplementary education,
- basic education and literacy,
- vocational,
- liberal education,
- culture, art and sports,
- civic participation.

In contrast to PIAAC and AES, which, with few exceptions, are geared to high-income countries, the recent World Bank's Skills Measurement Survey (STEP, Skills Towards Employability and Productivity), based on data collected between 2012 and 2017, is focused on low- or medium-income countries. More information about these countries is essential to inform the design of evidence-based policies that will help in achieving the SDGs. STEP (World Bank, 2014) consists of two core surveys, a household survey and an employer survey, that aim to assist the target countries in collecting the information they need for the development of appropriate policies. The household survey contains a literacy competency-based component that builds on the PIAAC instruments. In addition, it collects information on skills-acquisition history, educational attainment, including continuing education and training, from a randomly selected individual, aged 15–64, within the household. It is important to note that courses taken for leisure are not recorded, only training that improved the respondent's skills and that might potentially lead to more success in the job market. While recognizing the serious limitations of STEP in providing information on the three RALE categories, there is no denying that it is a valuable contribution to the monitoring of employer-sponsored job-related training, and the retrospective questions also provide some insight into the role adult learning and education can play. However, there is no administrative survey directed to governments. So far, some 10 countries have administered STEP.

Notwithstanding the contribution of STEP, the availability of data on ALE participation in most UNESCO Members States outside the EU and the OECD sphere has been limited

and sketchy at best. However, some national surveys have been done in cooperation with national and international aid organizations, and often with involvement of UNESCO Regional Offices. Examples of national surveys are the Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey (KNALS) and Bangladesh Literacy Assessment Survey (LAS). KNALS acted as a baseline survey in 2006, with plans to repeat the survey later on (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). It is a good example of a single-country survey conducted with the assistance of an international aid organization.

The Literacy and Assessment survey in Bangladesh was conducted in 2008 and 2011 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), with the support of UNESCO. The latter survey aimed to assess the literacy status of the youth and adult population aged 11–45 and classify the adult population by the levels of literacy skills they possess. The data were disaggregated by sex and residence (urban and rural) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2013). In 2014, a Literacy Assessment Survey was included in the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) as a 'Core Survey' of BBS and was planned to be conducted every three years.

In an effort to make such initiatives sustainable over time and in order to address the needs of countries that do not have the resources to implement elaborate programmes such as PIAAC or STEP, UIS developed the so-called Mini-LAMP (UIS, 2018b), which includes a shortened version of the skills instruments developed for its Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (for more on LAMP, see UIS, 2017a). It also includes a module on participation in ALE. Mini-LAMP, made available in 2019, offers various options to reduce the cost of running a large-scale survey, for example by not covering all LAMP skill domains. Its potential is considerable, whether used in the form of a stand-alone assessment survey or an add-on to an existing survey, and whether offered as a paper-pencil or computer-based project. The administration of Mini-LAMP can be coordinated by an international organization or a country, following a well-developed guideline. As UIS (2018b, p. 5) points out, experience with PIAAC, STEP and LAMP has shown that there is a strong need for quality assurance and support during the process.

The ALE component of Mini-LAMP will collect information on participation in formal and non-formal ALE during the previous 12 months. Formal education will be classified as general education, technical-vocational or literacy programme. The questions on non-formal activities are similar to those in AES and PIAAC and ask if the activities were in the form of courses, workshop-seminars, guided on-the-job training or a private lesson. Those who participate will be asked if the activity was technical-vocational in nature and/or to improve the respondent's literacy skills. The responses can be used to calculate performance against SDG indicators 4.3.1, 4.3.3 and 4.6.3. In addition, Mini-LAMP will be able to provide information on two of the RALE categories, literacy and basic education and continuing education and professional development (vocational skills), but does not address the third category, liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills).

If widely implemented by developing countries, Mini-LAMP will offer new possibilities to analyse comparable data on some aspects of ALE and will provide empirical evidence to further underpin the development of actions to be undertaken in order to reach the SDGs.

#### 9.1.2.4

##### **Enterprise surveys**

The Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS; Eurostat, 2019c), which is overseen by Eurostat and implemented by participating national governments, is directed to organizations with 10 or more employees. The survey, which is administered every five years, collects information on:

- continuing vocational training, skills supply and training needs;
- forms, content and volume of training;
- enterprises' own training resources and the use of external providers;
- the costs of continuing training;
- initial vocational training.

While CVTS does not directly provide information on participation at an individual level, it affords a deepened understanding of employer-sponsored ALE and the role it plays in a country's overall provision of ALE.

This, too, is important for reaching several SDGs, particularly SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth.

#### 9.1.2.5

##### **Time-use surveys**

Time-use statistics are quantitative summaries of how individuals 'spend' or allocate their time over a specified period—typically over the 24 hours of a day or the seven days of a week. Most use some form of diary, often combined with a questionnaire. They offer a unique tool for exploring a wide range of policy concerns, including learning. Between 1966 and 2015, 85 countries from all world regions conducted time-use surveys. In order to support Member States' collection of comparable statistics, the United Nations Statistics Division in 2016 introduced the International Classification for Time Use Statistics (UNSD, 2016).

The time-survey methodology can provide information complementary to the more traditional surveys on ALE, which is the case in Japan, where the 2016 Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2016) collected information on ALE activities during the previous 12 months, using a questionnaire and a diary to gather information on time spent on learning activities during a 48-hour period in units of 15 minutes. However, it is unclear to what extent the present time-use surveys allow a monitoring of participation taking the full RALE typology into account and most engagement with participation statistics tends to come from the typical households surveys such as PIAAC and AES.

#### 9.1.2.6

##### **Conclusion**

The last decade has seen vast improvements in the collection of information on participation in ALE. Despite this, several challenges remain. First, while appropriate survey designs have been created for use in developing countries, under the leadership of UIS and the World Bank, it is still unclear to what extent countries have the required economic and human resources to make the designs a reality. Second, with some exceptions, such as the Korean national survey and, to some extent, also the AES, information on participation is not detailed enough and often suffers from an economic

**TABLE 2.4**  
**Overview of the strengths and weaknesses of various data initiatives**

| Programme    | Strengths                                                                                                                                        | Weakness                                                                                                                      |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PIAAC        | Sophisticated skills assessment measuring proficiency levels, comprehensive background questionnaire, provides good overview of job-related ALE. | Lacks enough detail on participation in non-formal ALE, no information on ALE provision and/or policies.                      |
| AES          | Detailed questions on ALE including formal learning, informative background questionnaire.                                                       | Lacks skills assessment, no information on ALE provision and/or policies.                                                     |
| STEP         | Provides good overview of job-related ALE, sophisticated skills assessment.                                                                      | Lacks enough detail on participation in non-formal ALE, no information on ALE provision and/or policies.                      |
| Mini-LAMP    | Appropriate skills assessment well suited for developing countries, questions on ALE are coordinated with PIAAC.                                 | Need to give more information to collect information on some aspects of ALE, no information on ALE provision and/or policies. |
| <i>GRALE</i> | Reaches almost all Member States, information on areas of action that can impact on participation.                                               | No detailed information on participation, no administrative statistics.                                                       |
| Time survey  | Can be a valuable complement to traditional participation surveys.                                                                               | Lacks detailed information on participation, no information on ALE provision and/or policies.                                 |

bias. The situation is particularly precarious when it comes to monitoring participation in the third RALE category, liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills). Third, in many cases, information on the BFA areas of action is absent. These concerns are summarized in **Table 2.4**.

These problems with data availability have profound consequences for Member States' ability to monitor their progress towards SDG 4 and ALE's ability to help them reach the other 16 SDGs. Sub-section 9.1.3 focuses more closely on monitoring purposes in relation to the SDGs.

### 9.1.3

#### **MONITORING SDG 4 FROM A RALE PERSPECTIVE**

There are four levels of monitoring SDG 4:

- global,
- thematic,
- regional,
- national.

After intensive global consultations and meetings involving UN Member States, international and regional organizations, academia, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society, a list of 11 global indicators to monitor SDG 4 was formally adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2017. In order to better answer to the needs of national and international education stakeholders, a further set of 32 indicators was developed and set alongside the 11 global indicators; hence, there are a total of 43 thematic SDG 4 indicators

TABLE 2.5

**SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Tier classification as of May 2019**

| Target                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Indicator                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Partner Agency (ies) | Updated Tier Classification (by IAEG-SDG Members) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 4.3.1. Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex.                                                                                                                                                        | OECD, Eurostat, ILO  | Tier II                                           |
| 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 4.4.1. Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill.                                                                                                                                                                    | OECD                 | Tier II                                           |
| 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 4.5.1. Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated.                              | OECD                 | Tier I/II/III depending on indices                |
| 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 4.6.1 Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex.                                                                                                                         | World Bank, OECD     | Tier II                                           |
| 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment. | OECD, UNEP, UN WOMEN | Tier III                                          |
| <p><b>Tier I:</b> Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology with standards available, and data are regularly produced for at least 50 % of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant.</p> <p><b>Tier II:</b> Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology with standards available, but data are not regularly produced by countries.</p> <p><b>Tier III:</b> No internationally established methodology or standards are yet available for the indicator, but methodology/standards are being (or will be) developed or tested.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                      |                                                   |

(UIS, 2016). The thematic indicators can, in addition to global monitoring, also be used for examining progress at regional, national and sub-national levels. In addition, regions can opt to develop a set of indicators to monitor issues of common interest to countries within that particular region. One such example is the African Union, which is aligning the targets and indicators for its regional Agenda 2063 with the SDG framework.

The state of methodological development of each indicator, and its data availability on a global scale, is constantly monitored and, as progress is made, the indicators are updated by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). Looking critically into these indicators and how they are measured is vital to understand how valid and reliable data are and how useful they are in the design of evidence-based policies to create ALE opportunities which help countries achieve the SDGs by 2030.

IAEG-SDG classifies the global indicators according to so-called tiers. Tier 1 and Tier 2 indicators are considered to have internationally established methodologies and standards, but Tier 2 indicators are not available for a sufficient number of countries (UIS, 2016). Tier 3 indicators lack internationally established measuring procedures and require the development of appropriate methodologies and standards. The recent tier classification for the global SDG 4 ALE-related indicators (UNSD, 2019) is reported in **Table 2.5**. In addition to describing the target, it includes the indicators and updated tier classification. **Table 2.5** also shows which organizations partner with UIS on a particular indicator. According to the most recent update, while there exist established methodologies and standards for some of the indicators, there is a problem with the number of countries that presently are able to collect the required data. This is the case for global indicators 4.3.1, 4.4.1, 4.6.1 and, in some aspects, 4.5.1. For target 4.7, no appropriate standards presently exist.

From a RALE perspective, there are reasons to be more cautious regarding the availability of data for some of the targets, particularly target 4.3, than the current discussions around the monitoring of SDG 4 seem to suggest (see, for example, UIS, 2016; UNESCO and UIS, 2018; UNESCO, 2017a, 2018).

**Target 4.3** reads as follows: ‘By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university’, and has three indicators (UIS, 2018a):

- 4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex.
- 4.3.2 Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education, by sex.
- 4.3.3 Participation rate in technical-vocational programmes (15- to 24-year-olds), by sex.

The Tier 2 classification for target 4.3 refers to the global indicator 4.3.1. The situation is somewhat similar for 4.3.3, for which UIS’s administrative survey covers enrolment in formal technical and vocational training at the secondary education level but does not capture the full spectrum of non-formal TVET providers. In contrast, information on 4.3.2 is widely available in most regions through the UIS administrative survey. Looking at how the three thematic indicators have been worded, it is interesting to note that they only make direct mention of one of the three RALE categories, continuing education and professional development (vocational skills). Literacy and basic skills, the first RALE category, may be covered under formal education in 4.3.1. The third category, liberal, popular and community education, is nowhere to be found. It is true that it may be included under non-formal education in indicator 4.3.1, but a close review of available information on non-formal education indicates this is hardly likely.

In the UIS review of the tier classification and directions for improvement, AES and PIAAC are held up as gold standards for collecting data on non-formal education for indicator 4.3.1. However, as discussed in subsection 9.1.2, these two surveys are not designed to provide detailed information on non-formal learning other than work-related and are mainly carried out in EU and OECD countries; they are also extremely costly to implement. For non-job-related ALE, the surveys can distinguish between learning offered in the form of seminars, workshops, private lessons or e-learning, but they cannot properly provide information regarding

liberal, popular, community education. From a RALE point of view, one can argue that even in high-income countries with access to sophisticated household surveys such as AES and/or PIAAC, it would be more appropriate to classify target 4.3 as Tier 3. It is thus important to understand that these indicators have not been specifically designed with the RALE typology and its three domains in mind. As such, understanding progress towards the SDGs from a RALE perspective has its limitations. Furthermore, limitations on the use of these surveys for measuring participation have been acknowledged by various authors, including Boeren (2016) and Manninen (2017), especially in the areas of non-vocational education.

The use of administrative surveys to monitor lifelong learning is, as reported for the Asia-Pacific region, for example, very much a work in progress with limited comparable data available (UNESCO, 2018). Presently, the UIS administrative survey suffers from countries

having limited capacity to report information on non-formal education. Further, the attempts that have been made, for instance in Southeast Asian countries, have generally yielded low response rates.

Targets 4.4, 4.6 and 4.7 all focus on learning outcomes. Under the leadership of the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (see **Box 2.1**), a highly collaborative approach has been established to develop the SDG 4 global and thematic indicators related to learning and skills, as well as the methodological tools and standards needed to ensure global comparability. For 4.6, there are established procedures available, such as those developed for PIAAC and STEP, but both are too expensive for most medium- and low-income countries, which are also likely to lack the necessary methodological expertise. Mini-LAMP (UIS, 2017b) will hopefully provide data on literacy in developing countries, but, at present, it is unclear how many countries will sign on

#### **BOX 2.1**

#### **Measuring and monitoring the progress on SDG indicator 4.6.1 within the framework of the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning**

To fulfil the international community's SDG 4 commitments, accurate global measures of learning outcomes are essential. However, many countries are still unable to sustain long-term youth and adult literacy assessments aligned with international standards. The Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML), an initiative led by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, supports national strategies for measuring learning and enables international reporting against the targets of SDG 4. UIL has been part of GAML since its inception and contributes to indicator development, with particular reference to indicator 4.6.1, which looks at 'the proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex'. GAML maintains for each of the learning indicators of SDG 4 targets a special taskforce. UIL, together with OECD, chairs Taskforce 4.6 and convenes experts and partners on the conceptual, methodological and reporting frameworks for measuring and monitoring adult literacy and numeracy.

The goal of the Taskforce 4.6 is to address the lack of global learning data by ensuring the accuracy of global reporting and providing support to countries to implement monitoring of learning. Accurate quantitative and qualitative data should be used to provide a more holistic understanding of the literacy needs of men and women, to better inform policy and programme planning, and to allocate adequate funding. UIL plays a key role in facilitating discussions among UN Member States, international experts and implementation partners, and in presenting recommendations on the three issues underlying the work of the Taskforce 4.6: the comparability of data across countries; the definition and the description of 'adult proficiency' in literacy and numeracy; and the reporting of data to track changes and guide policy effectively.

to use it. The issue with target 4.4 is that the available methodology developed by Eurostat and adopted by the International Telecommunication Union defines relevant skills rather narrowly (UIS, 2018c). Further, this indicator is based on self-reported information, providing data on the types of activities but not their proficiency level. As pointed out by Benavot and Lockhart (2016, p. 61), skills beyond literacy and numeracy, such as life-skills and environmental awareness (target 4.7), are insufficiently detailed to allow precise measurement instruments to be developed. However, it should be noted that all the measuring issues surrounding learning outcomes are of a more general nature and not particularly related to RALE.

What seems quite obvious is that the way SDG 4 is constructed represents a limited view of ALE and the meaning of participation. This stands in opposition to the broad understanding of learning that informs the sustainability agenda and the 17 SDGs, as outlined in the report *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning objectives* (UNESCO, 2017b): 'To create a more sustainable world and to engage with sustainability-related issues as described in the SDGs, individuals must become sustainability change-makers.' It is argued that for citizens to be in a position to do this, they need to develop a set of competencies, including cognitive, affective, volitional and motivational elements. The report notes that competencies cannot be taught but must be developed by the learners themselves. 'They are acquired during action, on the basis of experience and reflection' (p. 9). This approach has been made clear in the construction of a set of learning objectives for each SDG that identifies learning approaches and methods. For example, among the 15 learning objectives identified for SDG 8, on decent work and economic growth, are:

- The learner is able to facilitate improvements related to unfair wages, unequal pay for equal work and bad working conditions.
- The learner is able to collaborate with others to demand fair wages, equal pay for equal work and labour rights from politicians and from their employer.

The learning approaches and methods that are recommended for achieving these objectives seem in general to be almost exclusively related to formal education situations for children and youth. While initial education is of fundamental importance, it is obvious that the extent to which the learning objectives identified for the 17 SDGs can be achieved will also depend on the existence of a vibrant adult learning and education 'system' where the third RALE category, liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills), plays a central role. The present conceptualization of SDG 4 will have to be vastly expanded to incorporate fully the expansive understanding of learning as outlined in the 17 SDGs. Moreover, the SDG 4 targets are currently rather disconnected from the RALE typology. Although the adult population is referred to in the targets, there is a general strong bias towards youth.

#### 9.1.4

#### CONCLUSION

In the introduction it was noted that access to comprehensive quality data on who participates in what form of ALE is one of the conditions for policy-makers to be in a position to develop evidence-based strategies promoting more equal participation, as well as monitoring SDG 4. However, as has been discussed above, monitoring of participation in ALE and SDG 4 and other relevant SDGs is hampered by a:

- narrow definition of what constitutes ALE in surveys on participation, which is a global phenomenon;
- lack of capacity in many Member States around the globe to collect information on participation and for monitoring SDG 4.

While the international community has initiated several significant initiatives to address the data need for monitoring SDG 4, and, to some extent, also participation in ALE, there is an urgent need for more comprehensive data on ALE. This need to pay more than lip service to ALE within a framework of lifelong learning has been a recurrent tension for decades (see Elfert, 2018, 2019) and now the same neglect seems to be happening again in connection to the monitoring of SDG 4. For future purposes, alternative data collection and

analyses might need to be developed, for example investigating the potential of big data analytics for the field.

Despite the limitations of available ALE data across the globe, it is important for the purpose of this report to delve deeper into the current global picture on participation, including participation in relation to the third RALE category. However, because of said data limitations, the following chapter, 10, will inevitably present an incomplete picture of ALE initiatives happening across the world. Nevertheless, we will fully engage with the data that are available and focus on best practices we have been able to identify. It is hoped that this information will stimulate a learning process among countries and help all Member States in working towards achieving the SDGs.

## 9.2 OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATION

Building on surveys on participation and the available literature, a brief overview of participation will be provided.

### 9.2.1 WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE GRALE 4 SURVEY?

Three findings stand out in the responses to the *GRALE 4* survey:

- Participation is uneven, with just over half of the countries surveyed reporting an increase in overall participation rate.
- Actual figures on participation point to substantial regional differences.
- Improvements to areas of action outlined in the Belém Framework for Action positively affect participation in ALE.

#### 9.2.1.1 Improved participation rates

As noted in Part 1 (see **Table 1.15**), over half of the countries, 57%, experienced increased overall participation rates between 2015 and 2018. All regions saw increases, especially sub-Saharan Africa, where 72% of the countries had seen a rise, and the Arab States, where 67% of the countries reported

improvements. North America and Western Europe and Asia and the Pacific were the regions with the lowest proportion of countries noting an increase, 38% and 49%, respectively. Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean were somewhere in between, with 58% and 60%, respectively, of countries in these regions recording higher overall participation rates.

The Belém Framework for Action rests on an assumption that improvements to the areas of action will positively affect participation in ALE. It is therefore of interest to examine whether countries that have made improvements in the areas of action have also increased their participation rates to a higher degree than countries that did not report progress in these areas of action.

#### 9.2.1.2 Improvements to areas of action can positively affect participation rates

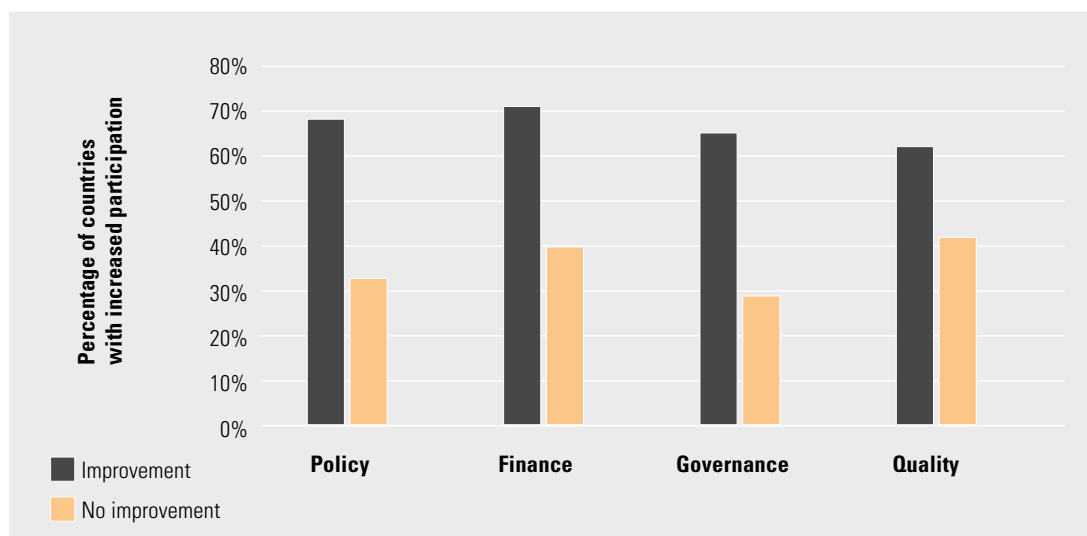
Considerable care is required in evaluating any possible causality between improvements to the various areas of action and changes to participation based on the analyses of the *GRALE 4* survey. With that in mind, in all areas of action, the proportion of countries that had registered improvements in the areas of action more often saw an increase in participation greater than those that had not (see **Figure 2.4**).

Improving the governance of adult learning and education was positively related to higher participation. While close to two-thirds of countries that had undertaken some of these measures reported increased participation, only 29% of those that had not attended to governance improved in participation. In the area of governance reform, these countries reported various implemented strategies that might help explain the increases, although one has to be very careful in drawing far-reaching conclusions from the *GRALE* data. These strategies spread across both horizontal and vertical levels and include the participation of concerned stakeholders, collaboration and cooperation with civil society organizations, inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial coordination, transnational cooperation, and decentralization.

Broadening and increasing stakeholder participation facilitates smoother

FIGURE 2.4

## Increases in participation rates in relation to improvements in areas of action



Source: GRALE 4 Monitoring Survey

implementation of ALE policies and increases opportunities for diverse social groups to participate in ALE. Moreover, collaboration, cooperation and coordination between government agencies and civil society organizations, as well as among different levels of government, is a key strategy to improve ALE governance that contributes to higher participation in ALE programmes. Meanwhile, inter-sectoral collaborations help train more ALE workforce, promote involvement and sense of ownership among different ALE target groups, and can encourage more ALE funding, which results in increased ALE participation. Educational decentralization promotes increased involvement and collaboration between national and local ALE service/programme providers, allows for co-financing and fosters a sense of ownership and direct involvement, which leads to increased ALE participation.

Countries that had undertaken policy reform noted a similar positive effect in rates (68% versus 33%). There were four areas in particular that countries have focused on. First, policies addressing the broadening of aspects of lifelong learning (such as technical and vocational education), diversifying modes of learning (i.e. online/ distance learning), establishing learning centres in low-income areas, and targeting marginalized social groups, such as out-of-school learners). The second area of policy emphasizes

clearer definitions of non-formal and informal learning, particularly recognition of prior learning through qualification frameworks. This gives learners flexibility to switch between modes of learning, making it easier for them to participate in ALE programmes. Third, policies that broaden the aspects of literacy, which in turn enable more social groups to participate in ALE programmes. Finally, the area of policy that focuses on providing more training opportunities (including professional development training courses) to expand the ALE workforce, such as primary and secondary level teachers and literacy trainers, which in turn can contribute to an increased participation rate.

Not surprisingly, better financial support of adult learning and education was related to rising participation scores (71% versus 40%). The main strategy was co-financing or joint financing made possible thanks to expansive involvement of more stakeholders, thus reaching more ALE learners. This joint financing includes a combination of funds from government bodies, international donors, multilateral organizations, and other organizations that support ALE programmes. Having a separate budget line for ALE, rather than including it as part of the general education budget, is also a funding mechanism that some countries have adopted to ensure more stable support for ALE programmes. In addition, some countries have provided

incentives for individuals to help alleviate their financial burden in attending ALE programmes.

Improving the quality of adult learning and education also had positive effects, although to a somewhat lesser degree than was noted for the other three areas of action (62% versus 42%). Several countries reported recognition, accreditation and validation as major strategies for ALE quality improvement and thereby, hopefully, improving participation and reducing dropout. The introduction of online programmes through the use of ICTs was seen to have resulted in better quality and to have helped in reaching adults. Some additional strategies to improve quality, and thereby influence participation, include feedback of experts to define quality criteria, development of training manuals for adult educators, improved coordination with local stakeholders for the development of ALE programmes, and establishing new curricula.

The *GRALE 4* survey asks not only about changes in participation rates but also whether the information is based on actual participation rates and, if so, what the rates were.

### 9.2.2

#### **SUBSTANTIAL REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN ACTUAL PARTICIPATION RATES**

Two-thirds of the responding countries provided actual figures on participation rates. The proportion of countries responding varied from a low of 54% in Asia and the Pacific to a high of 84% in the Arab States. However, it is unclear how the reported participation data were collected. Many countries lack appropriate procedures for assembling this information and it is furthermore difficult to ascertain what countries construe participation in ALE to include. Consequently, one has to be cautious in interpreting the information on actual rates provided in the *GRALE 4* survey. With this in mind, **Table 1.17** in Chapter 6 suggests that two regions, sub-Saharan Africa and North America and Western Europe, had particularly high actual participation rates, with 58% and 50% of countries, respectively, reporting rates in excess of 20%. It should be noted that the former region also saw a very large proportion of countries reporting a rate below 10%. This was also the case in the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific. No countries

in the Central and Eastern European region had rates above 20%. In comparison, 37% of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean fell within this range, while 28% of the Arab States and 27% in the Asia and the Pacific had actual participation rates over 20%.

The findings on actual participation rates suggest that not only are there differences between regions but also between countries within the same region. This will be explored in somewhat more depth using some of the surveys referred to in the review of approaches to collecting data on participation.

### 9.2.3

#### **NATIONAL VARIATIONS IN PARTICIPATION**

All comparative datasets on participation clearly reveal vast national differences in participation in ALE. According to the 2016 AES, the EU-28 average participation rate in ALE that year was 45% (Eurostat, 2019d). The rates varied from a high of 64% to a low of 7%. Nine countries in AES reported rates in the 50%–65% range, slightly more than half of the countries recorded rates between 25% and 50%, while two had much lower rates. Similarly, the rates for the 37 countries surveyed through PIAAC vary from 18% to 65% with an OECD average of 47%.

Boeren (2016) and Desjardins (2017) note that countries that have repeatedly been found to have high participation rates in ALE, such as the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, have certain characteristics in common. Among these are a well-developed and flexible ALE system, active labour market policies and comparatively low general inequalities.

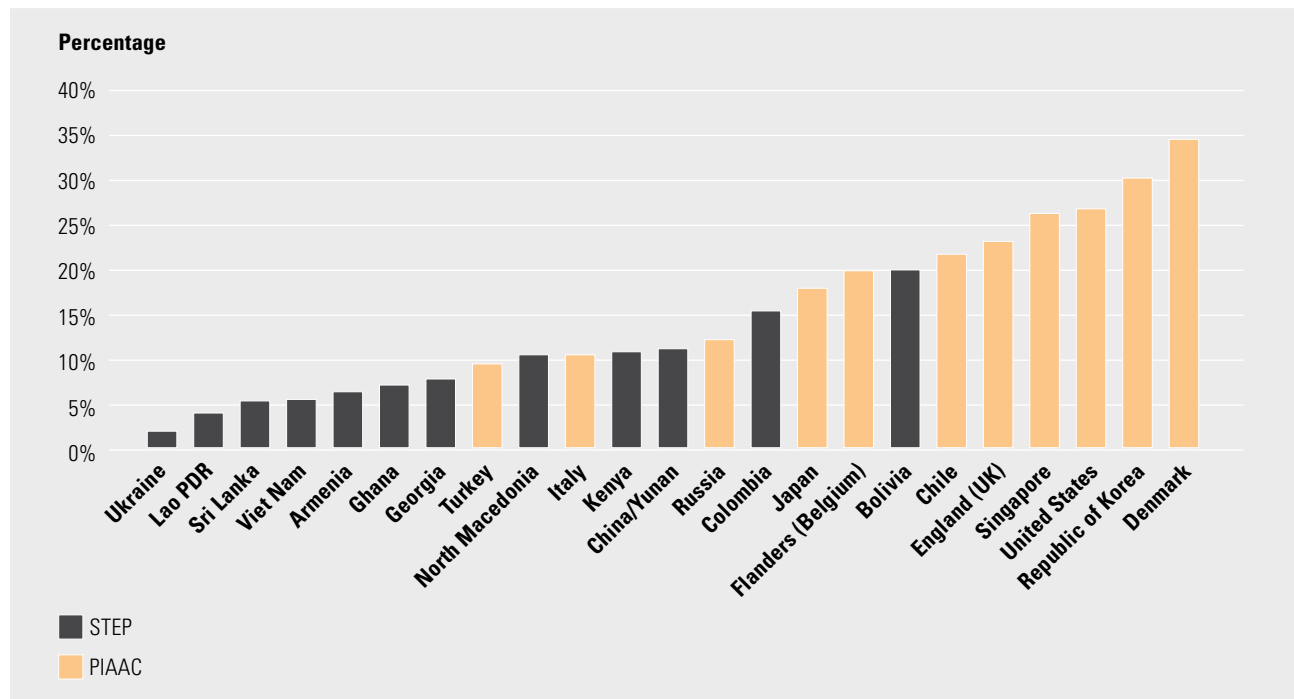
The overwhelming number of countries in PIAAC and AES are highly developed. However, by also including information from the STEP survey that targets middle- and low-income countries, it becomes possible to compare participation rates across a wider span of countries.

### 9.2.3.1

#### **Comparison of national participation rates using STEP and PIAAC**

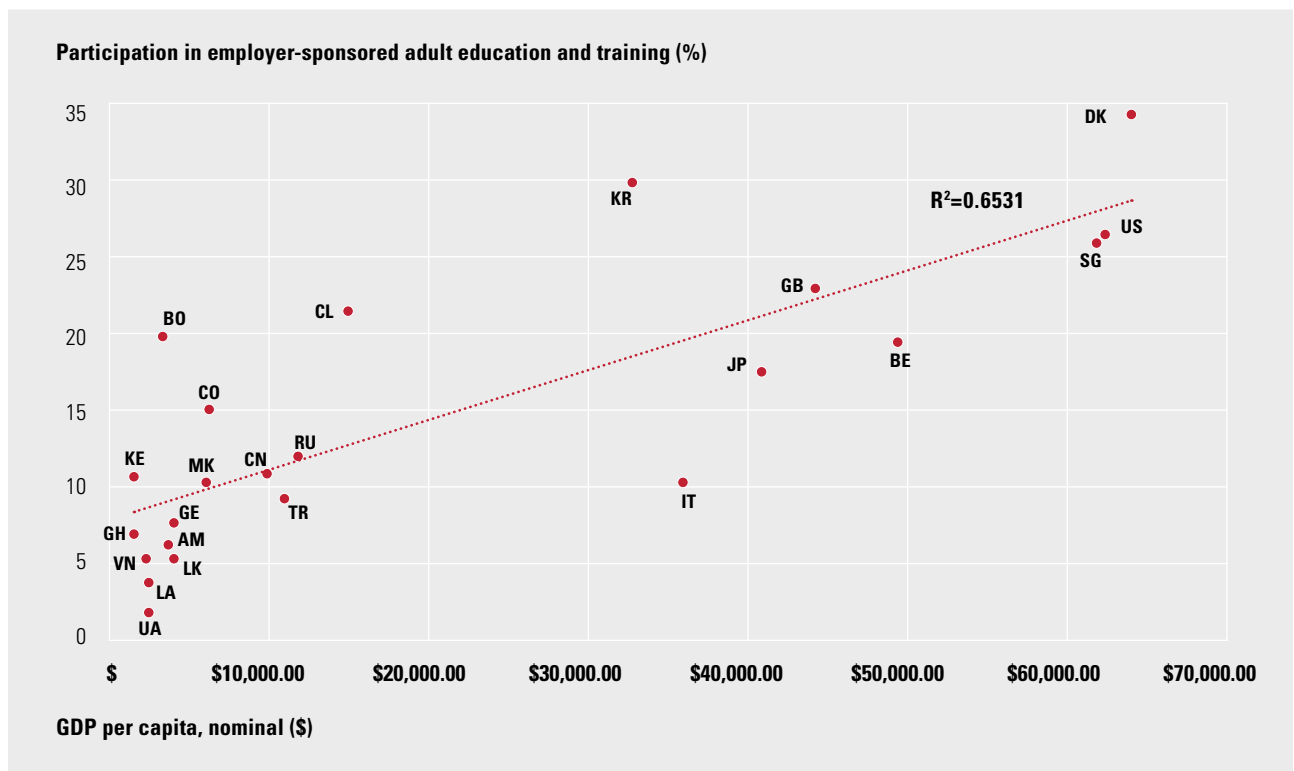
The STEP survey only contains information on participation in employer-supported adult education and training that lasted five days or

**FIGURE 2.5**  
**Participation in employer-sponsored adult education and training lasting five days or longer**



Source: World Bank, 2019; OECD, 2019a

**FIGURE 2.6**  
**Participation in employer-sponsored adult education and training by GDP (nominal)**



Source: World Bank, 2019; OECD, 2019a; IMF, 2018

Labour market structures and technological advances have profound impacts on demand for adult learning and education. This is captured in **Figure 2.6**, which reports on the extent of employer-sponsored adult education and training by GDP, a measure of economic development.

**Figure 2.6** shows that the participation rate for the Republic of Korea far surpasses what would be expected in view of its GDP. The rate for employer-sponsored ALE was also higher than expected in the three Latin American countries, Chile, Bolivia and Colombia; this was especially true for the first two. This was also the case in Denmark. The reverse was true for several countries, particularly Italy and Ukraine, where participation rates were far lower than would be predicted from their GDP.

It is very difficult to pinpoint why employees in some countries received employer-supported ALE to a substantially higher degree than could be expected. However, there appears to be one thing that they all have in common: public initiatives that encourage employer-supported training

(although in different forms and to different degrees). Thus, Chile and Bolivia invest in active labour market policies with a major share of the resources going to training (ILO, 2016). The Republic of Korea has its Employment Insurance System (EIS), which offers a programme that provides funds for companies to train (KDI School, 2019). Similarly, Denmark invests heavily in active labour markets including training benefitting the workforce (CEDEFOP, 2012).

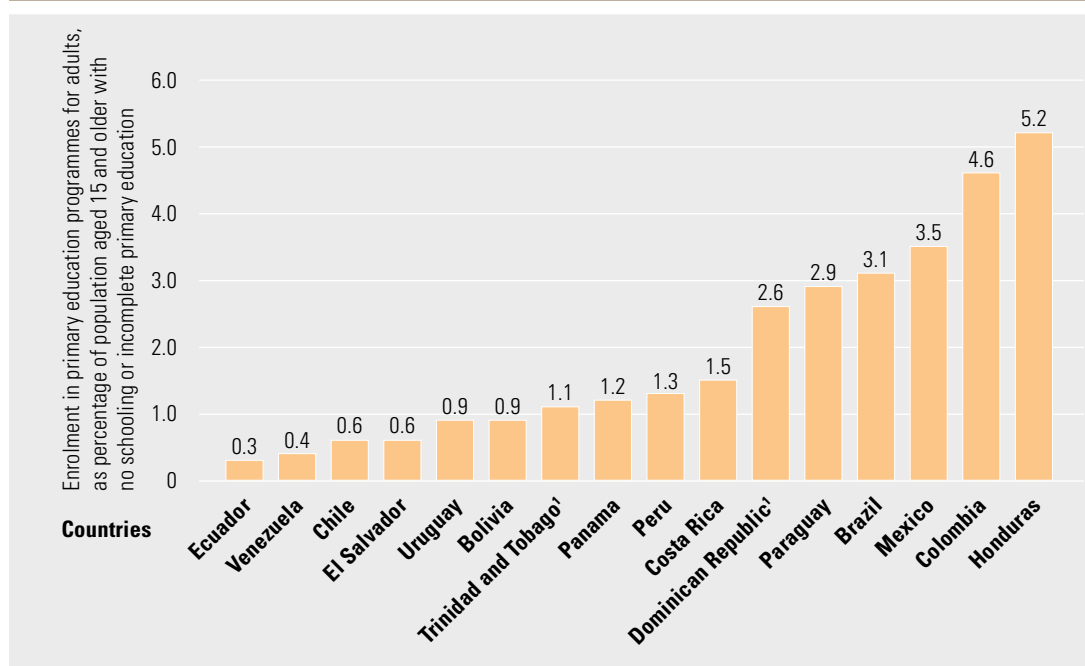
#### 9.2.3.2

#### Enrolment in primary and secondary programmes for adults in Latin America and the Caribbean

**Figure 2.7A** and **Figure 2.7B** present enrolment in primary and secondary education for adults as a percentage of the adult population that had not completed these levels of schooling in Latin America and the Caribbean. The data are based on a regional administrative survey directed by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS, 2013). The access figure is calculated by comparing enrolment data at each educational level with the corresponding target population.

**FIGURE 2.7 A**

#### Access to primary adult education programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean

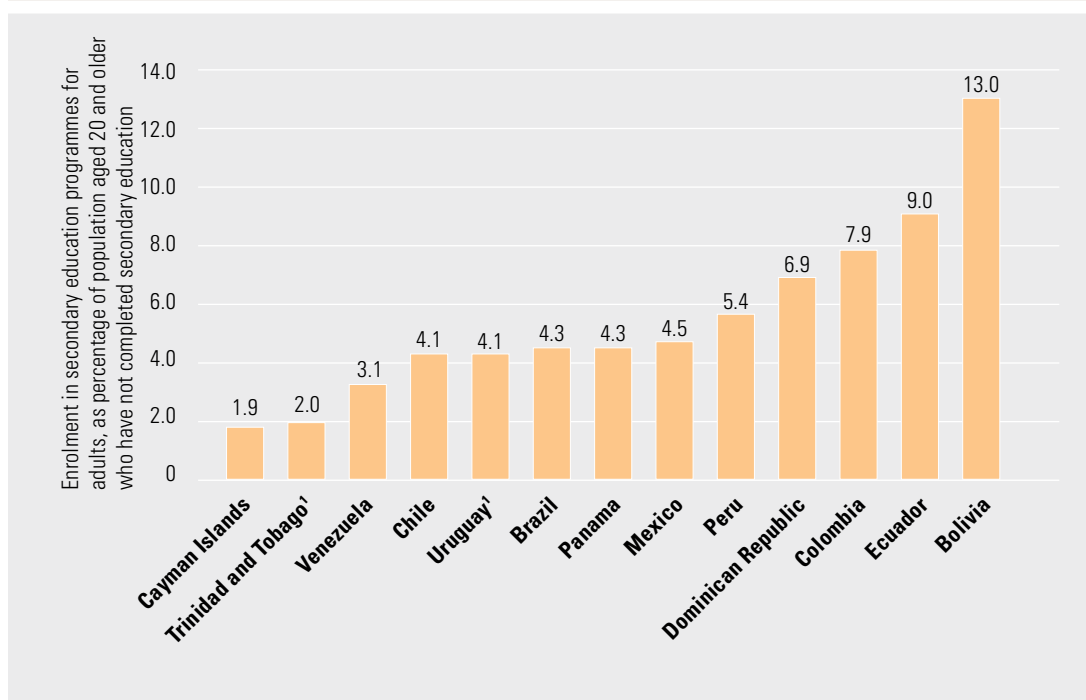


Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data Centre, May 2013, and Regional Questionnaire for Latin America and the Caribbean on Statistics of Adult Education, 2011.

Notes: The reference year for enrolment data is 2010, except for Bolivia (2009) and Chile (2011).

1) Data cover the public sector only.

**FIGURE 2.7 B**  
**Access to secondary adult education programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean**



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data Centre, May 2013, and Regional Questionnaire for Latin America and the Caribbean on Statistics of Adult Education, 2011.

Notes: The reference year for enrolment data is 2010, except for Bolivia (2009) and Chile (2011).

1) Data cover the public sector only.

As is evident from **Figure 2.7A** and **Figure 2.7B**, countries were more successful in enrolling adults into secondary adult education programmes than into primary adult education programmes.

Enrolment of adults with no, or incomplete, primary education into primary adult education varied from a low of 0.3% in Ecuador to a high of 5.2% in Honduras. Five additional countries had enrolment rates for this group below 1%. Four countries fell in the range 1% to 1.5% while the remaining six countries reached between 2.6% and 5.2% of the target group. In addition to Honduras, Colombia and Mexico had comparatively high rates. The report (UIS, 2013, p. 20) notes that the Mexico case is interesting from the institutional perspective, since the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) is among the best examples of an adult education institution in the region.

Bolivia, which reached only 0.9% of the target population for enrolment in primary adult education, had by far the best

enrolment in adult secondary education, reaching 13% of the target population. According to UIS (2013), the success of Bolivia is a result of a sizeable infrastructure of adult education centres supported by the Ministry of Education. This has offered those doing well in a literacy programme an opportunity to pursue further learning. Combining general adult education with vocational training has made it possible for students to obtain a qualification certificate from a professional school.

### 9.2.3.3

#### Conclusion

The discussion has pointed to certain conditions in the national context that seem to contribute to variations, such as level of economic development (STEP-PIAAC analysis), the institutional infrastructure (Latin America and the Caribbean), and the broader political economy (explaining constant high participation rates in certain countries). In looking at national variations as well as rapid increases in participation, particularly in high-

income countries, it is important to pay close attention to the way employer-supported ALE has come to reshape the landscape of provision.

#### 9.2.4

#### IS EMPLOYER-SPONSORED ALE REDEFINING THE ALE LANDSCAPE?

Sweden, with its access to participation data going back close to 50 years, can be used to illustrate the dramatic changes that have occurred to the ALE landscape in most high-income countries. Using the 2012 PIAAC survey and a 1975 Statistics Sweden survey on participation in adult education (SCB, 1991), **Figure 2.8** shows that the overall participation rate doubled over the period 1975 to 2012.

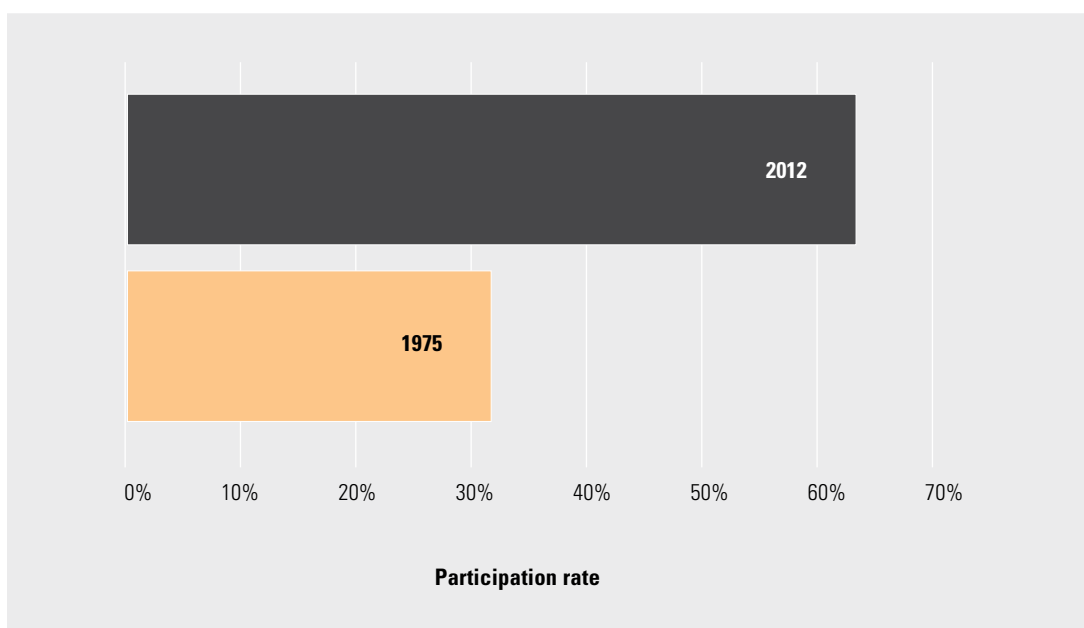
Historically, employer-sponsored activities in Sweden made up a relatively small proportion of total participation in ALE, but the proportion started to grow rapidly in the mid-1970s. Only 5.5% of the adult population (16–74) were involved in employer-sponsored learning activity in 1975. In the same year, 13.3% had been active in a study circle organized by one of the study associations linked to an NGO. By 1993, the comparable

figures were 15.7% and 10.1%, a tripling of the proportion involved in employer-sponsored activities (Rubenson, 1996). The rapid expansion of employer-sponsored ALE has continued uninterrupted and, by 2012, according to the PIAAC survey, it had reached 58%. During this period the participation rate in study circles did not change greatly.

In order to explore more widely the rising presence of employer-supported ALE, the Labour Force Survey (LFS), PIAAC and IALS (a precursor to PIAAC) can be used to shed light on developments that have taken place over the last two decades in the EU and OECD countries.

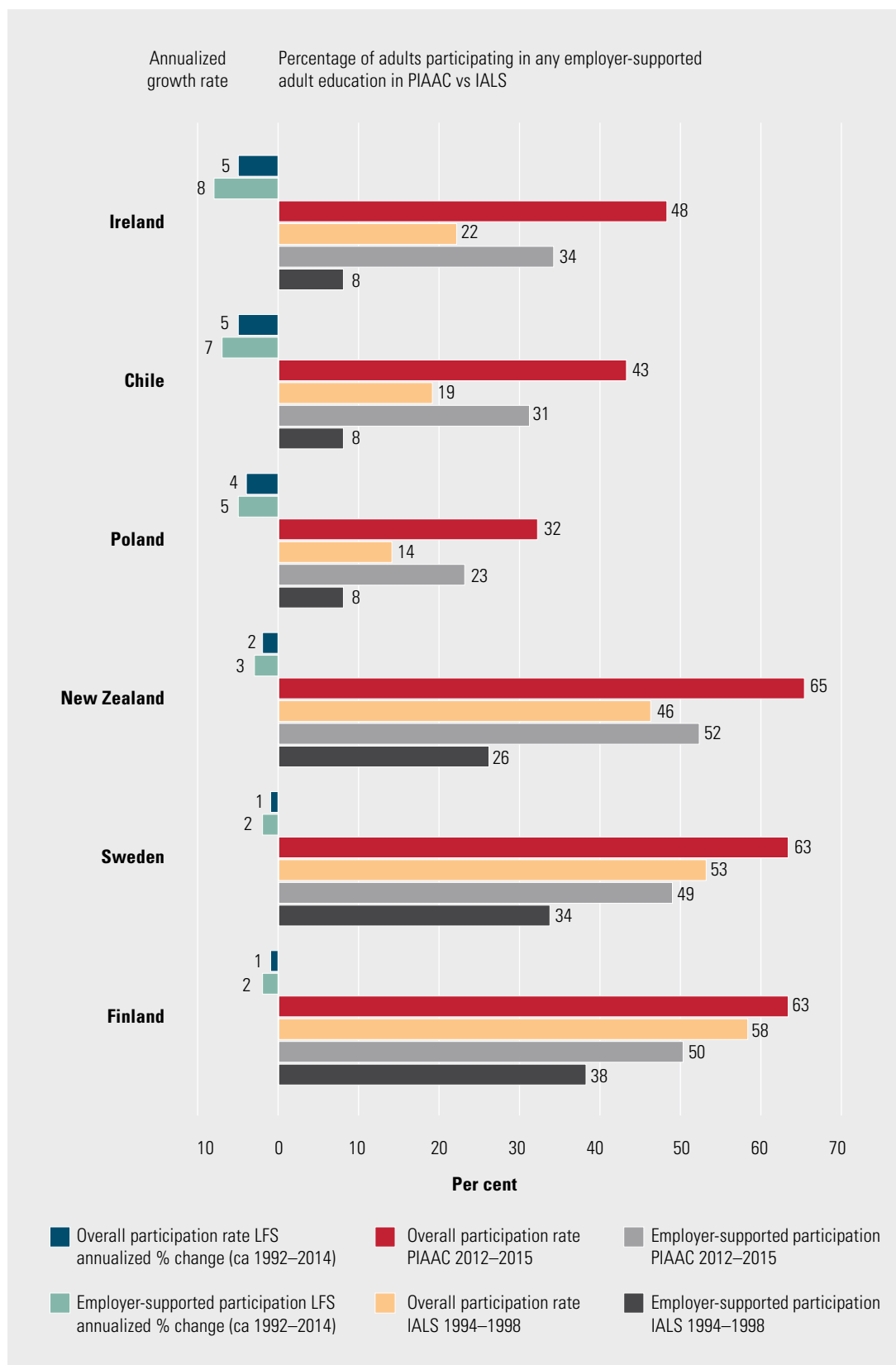
**Figure 2.9** is based on an analysis of annualized growth rates for the period 1992–2014, using the Labour Force Surveys (LFS) and a comparison of reported rates in IALS and PIAAC. A strength of the LFS is that it offers multiple data points (collected yearly), while a weakness of the IALS-PIAAC comparison is that there are only two points of data. Therefore, the LFS has been used to calculate the average yearly increase in participation rates. **Figure 2.9** (based on Desjardins, 2019) reports the development for selected countries, chosen to show the general trends.

**FIGURE 2.8**  
Long-term changes in participation in Sweden



Source: OECD, 2019a

**FIGURE 2.9**  
**Annualized growth rate of employer-supported and overall adult education**  
**between PIAAC (2012–2015) and IALS (1990s)**



Source: Desjardian, 2019

Reviewing the results, three findings stand out. First, most of the countries present in **Figure 2.9** have seen a rapid increase in overall participation since the mid-1990s. In Chile, the rate increased from 19% to 43%, and Ireland as well as Poland saw a doubling of the proportion that reported having attended some form of ALE. The lowest increase took place in Finland, which went from a rate of 58% to 63%. Despite impressive growth in participation in many countries, it should be pointed out that, according to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), of the countries in EU-28, by 2016 only eight had as yet reached the target set for 2020 of an average participation rate of 15% during a four-week period (CEDEFOP, 2019).

Second, as indicated by the difference in the change in participation, the variation between countries tends to shrink as those that started off with a comparatively low rate of participation have seen the most rapid increase. Thus, countries with a relatively low overall participation in IALS saw an annualized increase of 4% to 5% (Chile, Ireland, Poland) while Finland and Sweden, which had the two highest participation rates among the OECD countries administering the IALS, only reported a 1% annualized rise. New Zealand, with a somewhat lower participation rate in IALS than Finland and Sweden, registered a 2% annualized rate increase.

Third, the rise in rate is overwhelmingly caused by a surge in employer-sponsored ALE. As evidenced in **Figure 2.9**, Ireland, Chile and Poland recorded annualized increases as high as 8%, 7% and 5%, respectively. Countries with an initially high participation rate in employer-supported ALE had a more moderate rise: 2% for Finland and Sweden. Although these countries still have among the highest rates, the distance from lower-participation countries that experienced rapid rate increases shrank considerably. This development is most likely to be related to a recent modernization of the economy in the countries that have seen the most rapid growth in employer-supported ALE.

As a result of the dramatic increase in employer-supported ALE in high-income countries, the OECD average for employer-supported ALE represented well over two-thirds (72%) of all ALE activities (Desjardins,

2019). The proportion of employer-supported learning was particularly prevalent in countries with high overall participation rates, where about four out of five participants were employer supported. The explosion in employer-supported ALE over the last three decades has been fuelled by technological and organizational changes in the workplace and a growing awareness of the relevance of learning and adult education (see, for example, OECD, 1989).

Employers not only support non-formal adult education and training, but also, to some extent, formal job-related programmes. Looking at the OECD average, 4.4% of adult learners that had followed a formal work-related programme were employer supported, while only 1.1% who were not employer-supported had done so. There were substantial national variations but the trend was always the same: it was only among those whose reasons for study were not work-related that the employer seldom paid; 1% reported that they had received employer support for a formal or non-formal learning activity compared to 5.6% who were not employer-supported (Desjardins, 2019).

The rapid increase in employer-supported learning activities, which has dramatically altered the composition of ALE, sends a strong message to policy-makers and others who try to influence participation. Public policy in the area of adult learning and education can only directly affect an ever-diminishing proportion of the field as employer-sponsored learning continues to grow. This, however, does not in any way imply that public policy does not have an important role to play, particularly when it comes to addressing market failures. To find more comprehensive ways to affect the distribution of adult learning and education is something we will return to below. However, it is clear that what happens in the world of work is of crucial importance in determining who has access to adult learning and education.

Unfortunately, there are no similar data that enable an analysis of the changes in rates and composition that have been taking place in developing countries, but there are ample data on the growth of key ALE institutions such as community learning centres (CLCs). In Cambodia, the number of CLCs increased from 57 in 2006 to 347 in

2015 (Kingdom of Cambodia, 2016). Several other Asian developing countries saw similar drastic increases in the number of CLCs, gradually serving a larger segment of the rural population (UIL, 2017b).

### 9.2.5

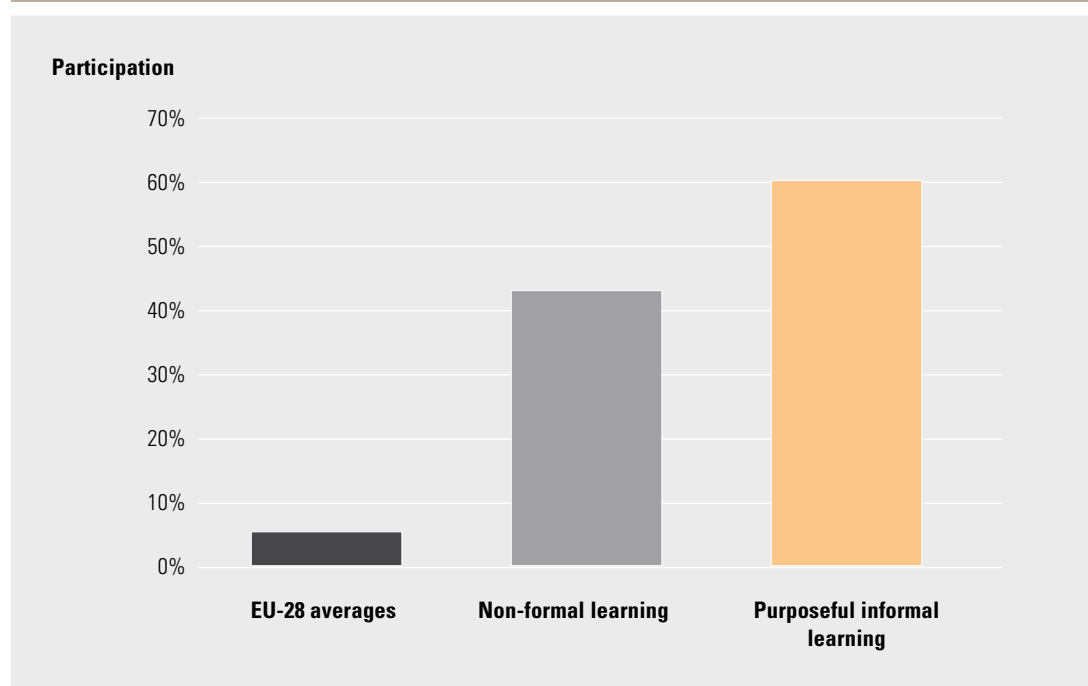
#### WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS OF LEARNING?

As previously highlighted, the triad of formal, non-formal and informal learning—or, as they may be more appropriately labelled, contexts of learning—is widely accepted by international organizations and most Member States. The Adult Education Survey (AES) allows a direct comparison between the frequencies of the different learning contexts (see **Figure 2.10**). As expected, purposeful informal learning dominated, with 61% reporting having engaged in this form of learning. Some 43% mentioned non-formal learning, while 6% had been involved in formal learning. The difference between the rates for purposeful and informal learning may seem smaller than expected.

It is worth remembering, however, that while there is a broadly shared understanding of how formal and non-formal learning should be understood, there is no such consensus when it comes to purposeful informal learning. Different approaches have yielded vastly different results and, depending on the probing techniques used, the estimated time spent on purposeful informal learning activities can vary from around 50% (Borgström, 1988) to well over 90% (Livingstone, 1999).

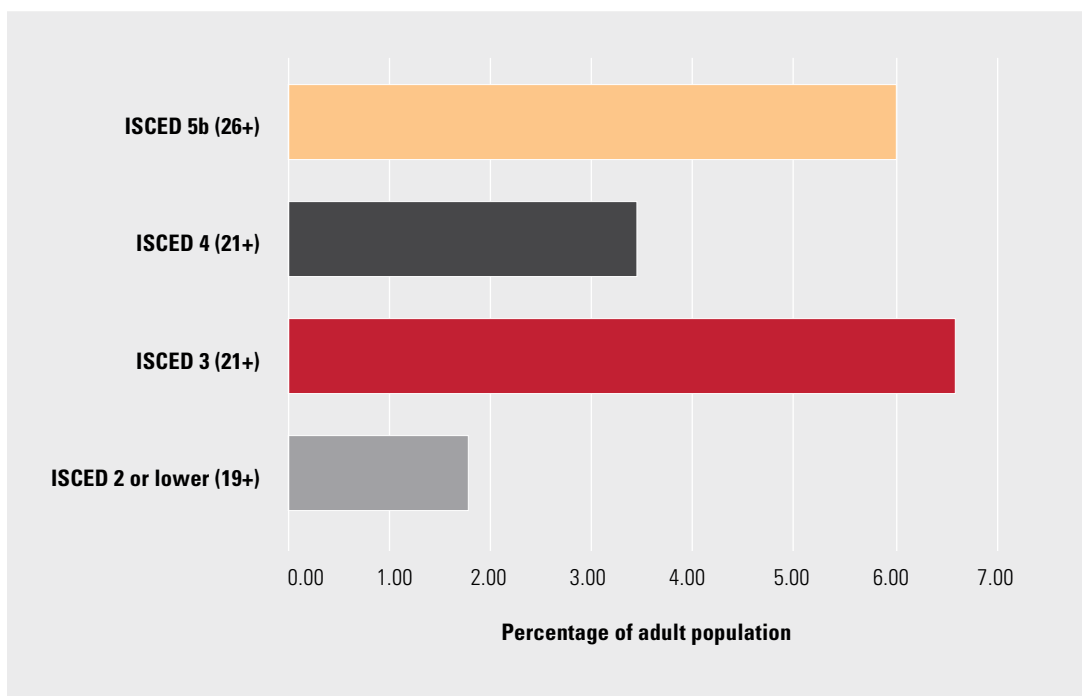
When interpreting the 2016 AES estimate for purposeful informal learning, it is important to note that respondents were asked if they had deliberately tried to learn anything at work or during their free time to improve their knowledge or skills, whether from a family member or friend, using printed material, using a computer (online or offline), through television/radio/video, on guided tours in museums or natural or industrial sites, or by visiting learning centres, including libraries.

**FIGURE 2.10**  
Participation in purposeful learning over a 12-month period by setting,  
EU-28 averages



Source: Eurostat, 2019e

**FIGURE 2.11**  
Qualifications attained via formal adult education, OECD averages



Source: OECD, 2019a

That only a small segment of the adult population had been attracted to formal learning is no surprise, as formal education becomes less relevant as people age. However, it is important to note that the formal system serves many so-called non-traditional adult students. These are students who either started a programme and then left for a longer period, or who returned later in life to advance their education. Desjardins (2019) has estimated the extent of qualifications attained via formal adult education (see **Figure 2.11** for the OECD average). As the age of regular students varies with regard to level of education, a different cut-off age is used for different forms of formal education, as indicated in **Figure 2.11**.

On average, 2% of the adult population had completed basic education, 7% secondary education, 4% a non-tertiary post-secondary programme and 6% a programme at tertiary level through studying in adult education. While it is difficult to judge who is a traditional or a non-traditional student, particularly at the tertiary stage, it should be evident that formal adult education plays an

important role in the stock of qualifications in the labour force, particularly in countries with a flexible formal education system that makes provision for non-traditional adult students.

Similarly, in Latin American and Caribbean countries, the adult education sub-system plays a central role in the qualification of the population (see **Figure 2.12**) (UIS, 2013). At the primary level, the adult education sub-system represents 4% of total enrolment, and as much as 12% at the secondary level.

Despite the increasingly important role ALE has come to play in many countries, the achievements are far from sufficient to address the enormous challenges of the twenty-first century.

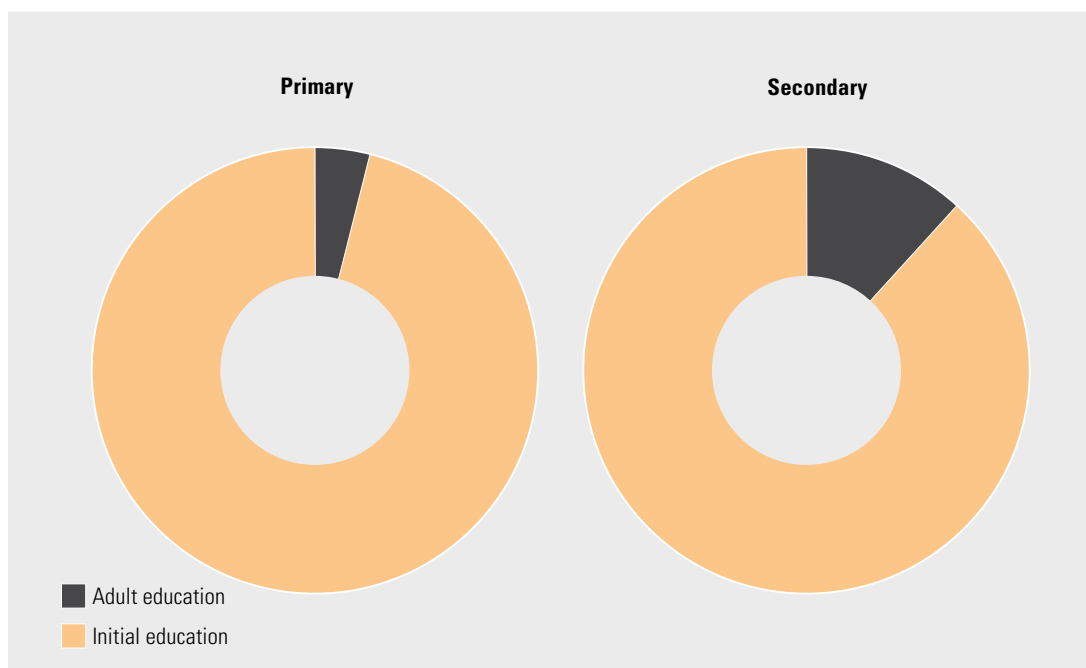
#### 9.2.6

#### **PARTICIPATION RATES ARE INSUFFICIENT**

Many regions have had intensive literacy and basic education campaigns, but, while some have vastly improved their situation, others still face great challenges and have only reached a small part of those with low

FIGURE 2.12

Participation in adult education programmes compared to total enrolment in Latin American and Caribbean countries, 2010



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data Centre, May 2013, and *Regional Questionnaire for Latin America and the Caribbean on Statistics of Adult Education*, 2011.

levels of literacy. According to the survey on adult education and literacy programmes in Latin America, adult and youth education programmes reached only a small share of the target population (UIS, 2013). On average for the region, about 3% of persons aged 15 years and older without education or with incomplete primary education attended a primary education programme. For secondary education, the enrolment rate was around 5% of persons aged 20 years and older without completed secondary education. Success in reaching the illiterate population varies between countries (see **Figure 2.13**).

Bolivia was the only country that could claim a high degree of success such that more than half of the illiterate population had access to literacy programmes (UIS, 2013). This high level of access was probably a result of an intensive national literacy campaign (2006–2008) inspired by the ‘Yes, I can’ programme, designed to reach the entire illiterate population (ibid.). In the rest of the listed countries, only between 0.1% and 16.9% of the illiterate population had access to literacy programmes. The situation is made worse by

the fact that one-third or more of participants abandoned the programme, a figure that in some cases was as high as 50% (ibid.).

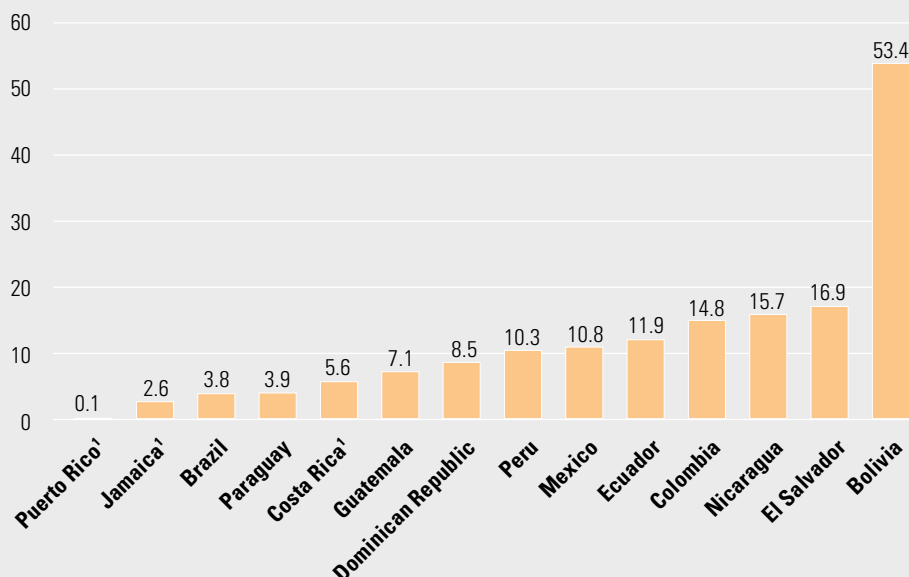
The evaluation of literacy campaigns in Nepal also speaks to the challenges of reducing illiteracy (Government of Nepal Ministry of Education Non-Formal Education Centre, 2017). While the early literacy campaigns had seen illiteracy rates fall considerably, the recent National Literacy Campaign and Literate Nepal Mission do not seem to have brought down the proportion of illiterates in the country. Furthermore, the rural-urban, gender and ethnic divides remain as stark as before. Disparities have been witnessed in terms of geographical location, caste, ethnicity and gender in literacy achievement. Nepal has a great diversity of race, culture, ethnicity and language.

The picture of insufficient progress is also evident in high-income countries, as shown by the most recent EU figures on participation in ALE. Despite impressive growth in participation in many countries, it should be pointed out that, according to

FIGURE 2.13

Participants in literacy programmes as a percentage of the illiterate population, by country

Participants of literacy programmes as a percentage of the illiterate population



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data Centre, May 2013, and Regional Questionnaire for Latin America and the Caribbean on Statistics of Adult Education, 2011.

Notes: The reference year for enrolment data is 2010, except for Bolivia (2009).

1) Data cover the public sector only.

CEDEFOP, of the countries in EU-28, by 2016 only eight had as yet reached the target set for 2020 of an average participation rate of 15% during a four-week period (CEDEFOP, 2019). Further, data on the distribution in participation in the EU and other OECD countries tell the same story as in the developing countries: some segments of the population are excluded from ALE.

### 9.2.7

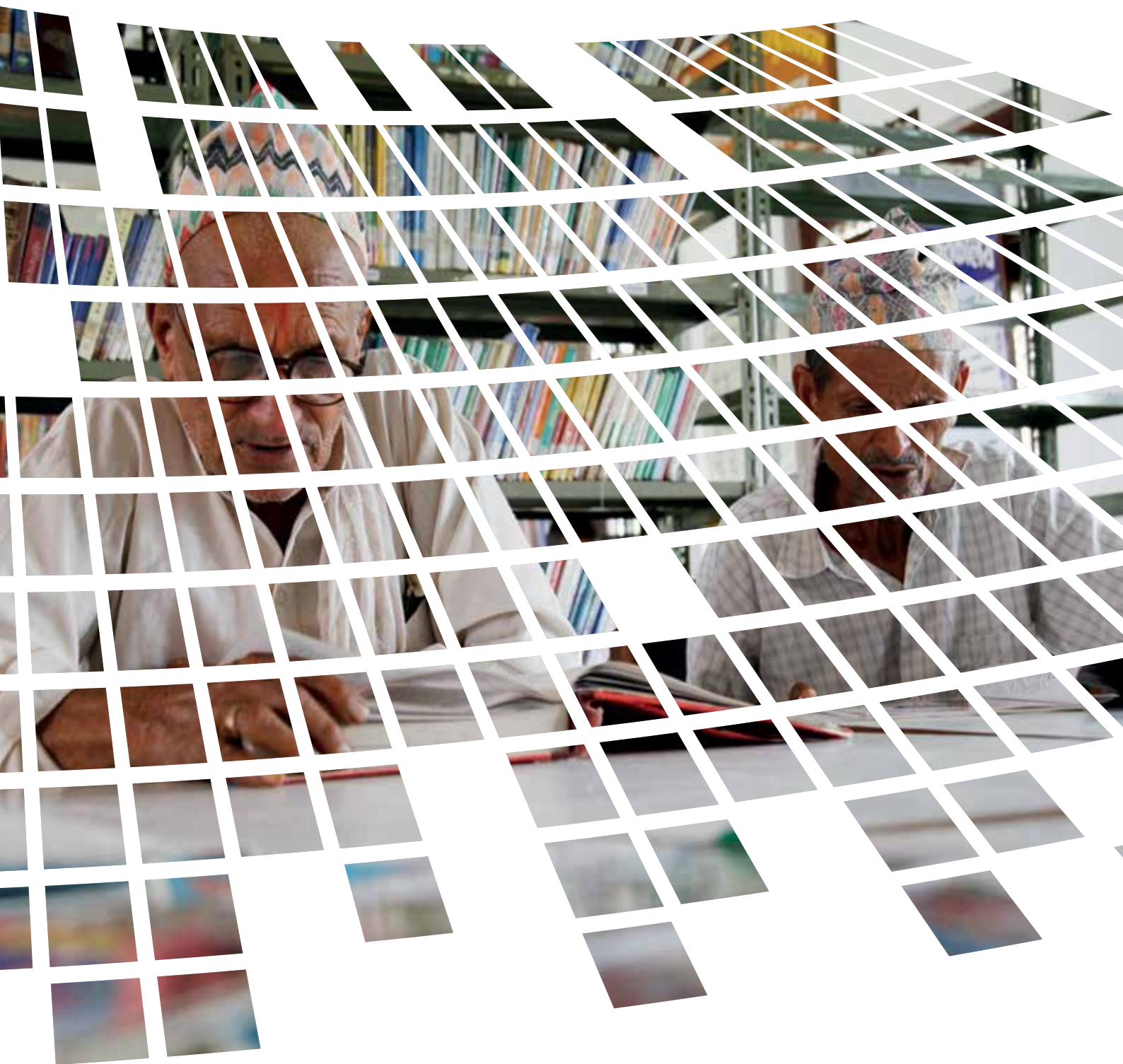
#### CONCLUSION

This brief review of participation points to some of the many challenges ALE is facing:

- Further increasing in participation rates, which remain inadequate in most countries.
- Rebalancing a changing adult education landscape, in which the employer role has become dominant, and a major part of ALE lies outside traditional public policy.

- Balancing investments in formal, non-formal and purposeful informal learning.
- Drawing conclusions from variations in participation rates between countries within the same region.

The discussion of participation thus far has provided an overview of participation rates, national variations and a warning of the changing landscape of ALE. However, as stressed in the introduction, to enable ALE to better contribute to the realization of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Member States have to find ways to better serve marginal groups and 'promote equitable learning opportunities for youth and adults'. This raises an important question: How do Member States serve marginalized groups when it comes to ALE?



## CHAPTER 10

# PATTERNS OF INEQUALITY AND EXCLUSION

The *Global Reports on Adult Learning and Education*, as well as decades of research on participation, have clearly demonstrated that opportunities to engage in ALE are far from equal. This is also demonstrated in Part 1 of this report. While some groups in society have access to a multitude of learning opportunities throughout life, others find themselves in situations that offer no or very limited prospects for engaging in ALE. This chapter will examine the forces that are driving these inequalities and expose dominant patterns of exclusion.

The Belém Framework for Action argued that ALE should be accessible to all, and that there should be ‘no exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement, or imprisonment’ (UIL, p. 8). The examination of inequities will open with a review of the extent to which ALE has managed to serve the target groups, with examples of successful programmes to include them highlighted. This will lead into a discussion of barriers that have been found to drive exclusion. Finally, the analysis turns to what needs to be addressed in order to better serve the target groups and move in the direction of creating learning opportunities for all, something that is also essential for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

## 10.1

## REACHING THE TARGET GROUPS

While there are rampant inequalities in participation in all countries, the pattern and extent vary between regions. In some parts of the world, for example, women are still excluded from opportunities to engage in organized learning.

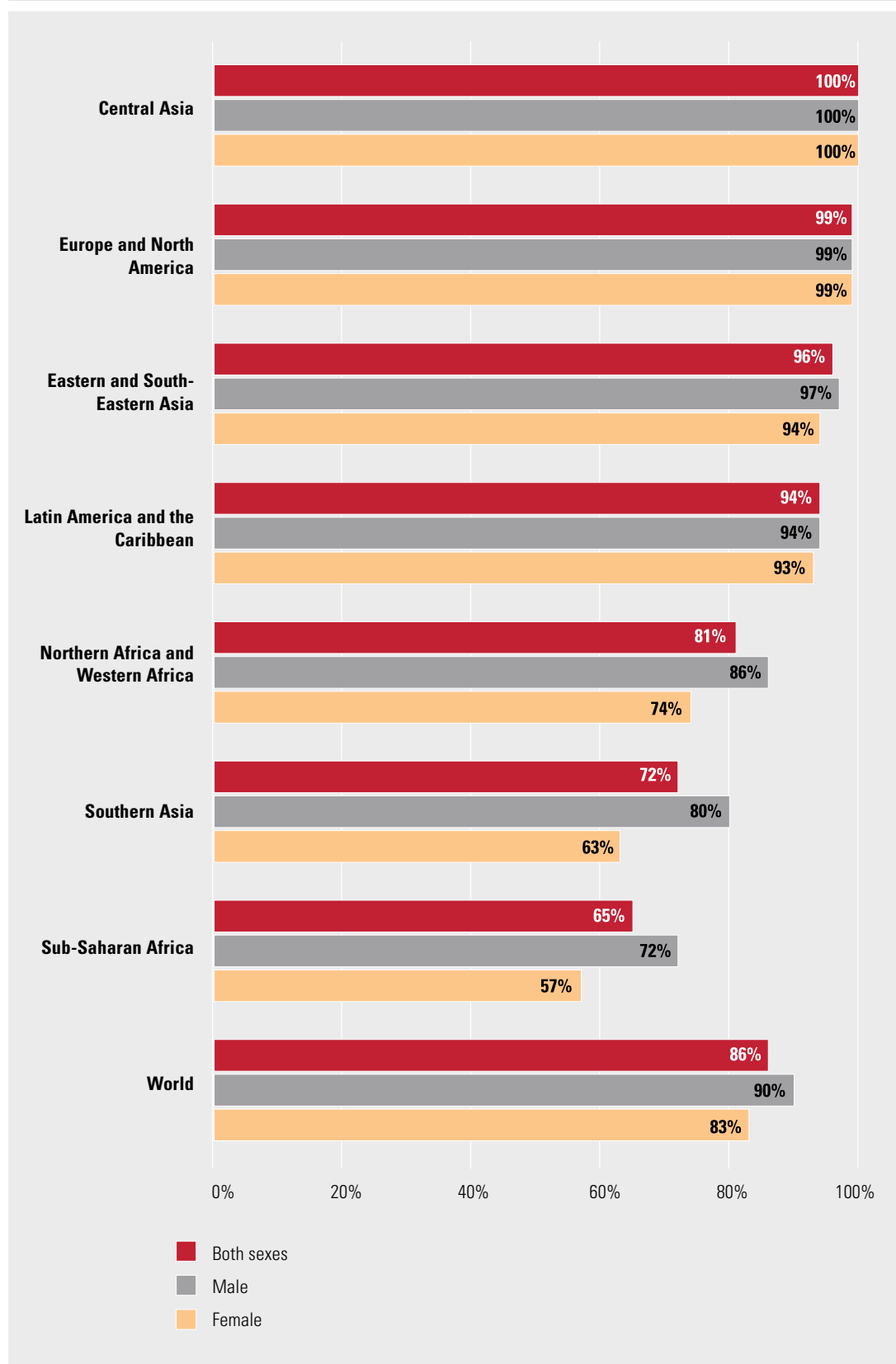
## 10.1.1

### WOMEN

Educating girls and women is one of the most efficient ways to combat poverty and improve economic growth in developing countries (Østby, Urdal and Rudolfson, 2016). Gender equality is also an important dimension and goal in the 2030 Agenda. Providing educational opportunities for women is therefore both a prerequisite and a driver for successful development (UIL, 2016, p. 124). The review of the economic and wider benefits of ALE conducted for *GRALE 3* showed that, by engaging in ALE, women can influence their economic development, improve their health and strengthen their civic engagement (ibid.).

Some encouraging developments have taken place in addressing the inequalities for women in education. According to recent figures, the gap between girls and boys globally is down to 1% in primary and secondary education. However, the majority (57%) of illiterate youth globally are still female (UIS, 2017b). Of adults aged 15 years or older, the estimated 473 million illiterate women make up 63% of the illiterate population. These disturbing figures hide some important regional differences in literacy, a basic capability for successfully engaging in youth and adult learning (see **Figure 2.14**).

**FIGURE 2.14**  
**How do literacy rates for men and women compare across regions?**  
**Adult literacy rates, by region and sex, 2016**



Source: UIS, 2017b

In the three regions with low literacy rates, Northern Africa and Western Africa, Southern Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, the situation for women is worrying. In sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that barely 57% of women are literate (ibid.), which speaks to a major demand for literacy programmes in these regions.

The situation is particularly precarious for women facing multiple disadvantages, which the case of Nepal exemplifies (see **Table 2.6**). Only 30% of Nepalese women living in poverty (first consumption quintile) were literate, and, among those in rural areas, just under half were literate. Even among the richest women, literacy rates were substantially lower than men's, 75% versus 93%.

#### 10.1.1.1

##### **Some encouraging signs in reaching women**

It is encouraging, as noted in Part 1, Chapter 6, that around three out of four countries with low to medium Human Development Index scores reported that women's participation in adult learning and education had increased since 2015. Although one has to be careful in interpreting progress based on these data, they seem to indicate that women in countries that are low on the Gender Inequality Index are making some progress not only on initial education but also when it comes to adult learning and education.

A number of countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Djibouti, Mali, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, gave examples of notable progress in improving access to ALE for women. In Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, an increase in actors working in the field of adult education has resulted in more programmes dedicated to women. In Eritrea, women and girls are the primary focus of new literacy programmes offered through learning centres, resulting from collaborations with different communities in remote areas. Djibouti has opened new centres especially for women. Similarly, Morocco is prioritizing women's literacy programmes focused on developing socio-economic skills. Hundreds of women's groups have been formed in several cities across Mali, with women enrolled in literacy and non-formal education programmes. Saudi Arabia has established equal access to high-quality education and improved the literacy rate among women. All of this indicates the system is transitioning from focusing on eradicating illiteracy to increased concentration on continuing education. In addition, Brunei Darussalam, Cabo Verde, Cambodia and Indonesia reported specific themes or types of interventions for women in ALE. In Brunei Darussalam, the Institute of Brunei Technical Education, Continuing Education and Training (IBTE CET) offers programmes and short courses based on community needs and social development principles. One example

**TABLE 2.6**  
**Literacy rates of populations in different categories in Nepal**  
**(Annual Household Survey, 2014/15)**

| <b>POPULATION GROUPS</b><br><b>Category</b> | <b>ADULT LITERACY</b> |               |              |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|
|                                             | <b>Male</b>           | <b>Female</b> | <b>Total</b> |
| Urban                                       | 85%                   | 66%           | 74%          |
| Rural                                       | 72%                   | 48%           | 59%          |
| <b>Consumption quintiles</b>                |                       |               |              |
| First quintile (poorest)                    | 55%                   | 30%           | 42%          |
| First quintile (richest)                    | 93%                   | 75%           | 83%          |
| Nepal                                       | 76%                   | 53%           | 64%          |

Source: Adapted from Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education Non-Formal Education Centre, 2017, p. 17

is a set of empowerment programmes for single mothers offered since 2017, a result of collaboration between the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Foundation and IBTE CET. Muslim women living in Cabo Verde are offered literacy interventions. In Cambodia, a programme for women expanded its scope from basic literacy to functional and information literacy, including financial literacy. Indonesia has created similar programmes, titled 'Education Movement of Independent Women Empowerment' and 'Women's Life Skills Education'.

It is also worth noting that, in Latin America and the Caribbean, where women represent 56% of the illiterate population, they made up almost two-thirds of the participants in literacy programmes (UIS, 2013; see **Figure 2.15**).

Similarly, women are over-represented in literacy programmes in several Southeast Asian countries (see **Figure 2.16**). In three of the four countries that reported on both literacy and non-formal programmes, women were in a clear majority, making up around 70% of the student population. However, this was not the case in non-formal programmes.

In all six countries, men were the dominant group, although in Myanmar and Lao PDR the differences were minute.

#### 10.1.1.2

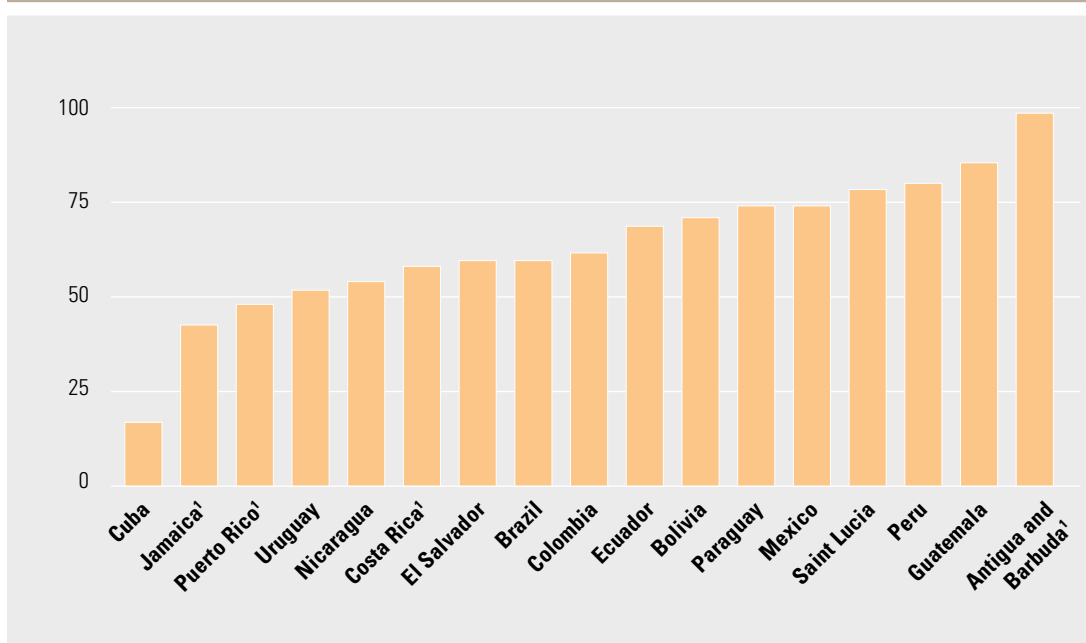
#### Women discriminated against in employer-supported ALE

That women tend to be disadvantaged in job-related, and particularly employer-supported, ALE is something that has been observed in the literature (Boeren, 2011; Desjardins, 2019). To explore this issue, data from STEP and PIAAC are being used to portray the extent to which women are excluded from employer-supported ALE in mid- and low-income countries as well as in high-income ones.

**Figure 2.17** presents the differences expressed in terms of the likelihood of women and men having participated in employer-supported ALE that lasted five days or longer. An odds ratio of one represents equal likelihood of respondents receiving or not receiving employer-supported ALE, whereas coefficients less than one represent a decreased chance (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 1989). For the purpose of the analysis presented in **Figure 2.17**, the likelihood (odds ratio) of men was set at one for all the countries.

**FIGURE 2.15**

**Female percentage of participants in literacy programmes, Latin American and Caribbean countries, 2010**



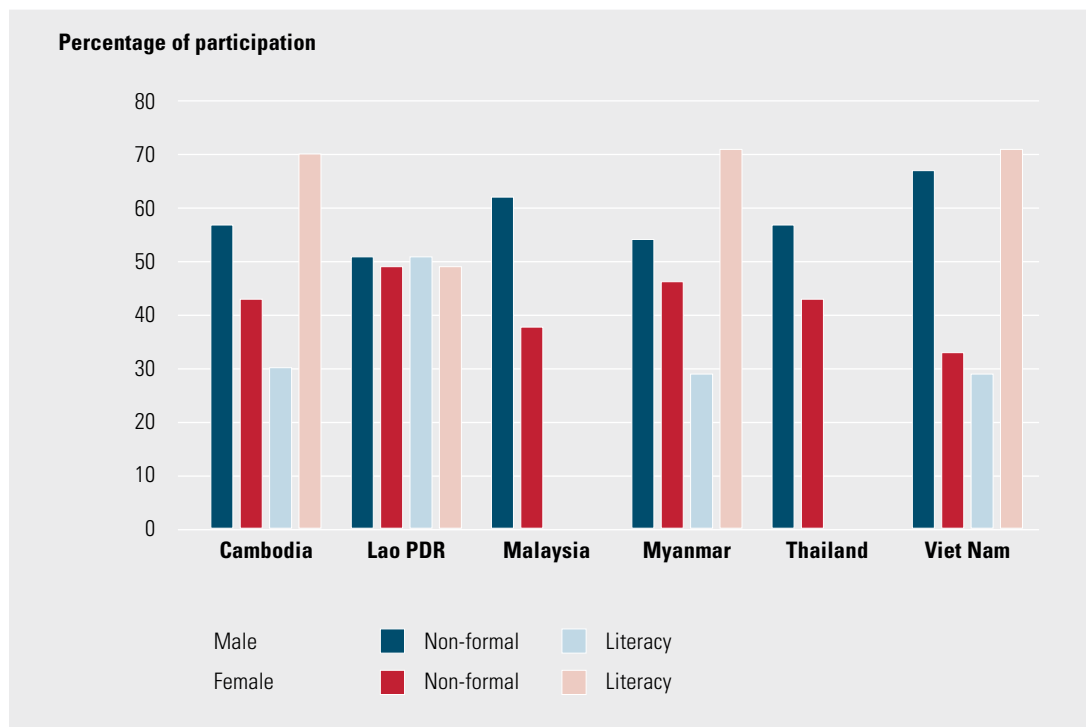
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics Data Centre, May 2013, and Regional Questionnaire for Latin America and the Caribbean on Statistics of Adult Education, 2011.

Notes: The reference year for data on participants is 2010, except for Bolivia (2008), Brazil (2009) and Guatemala (2011).

1) Data cover the public sector only.

FIGURE 2.16

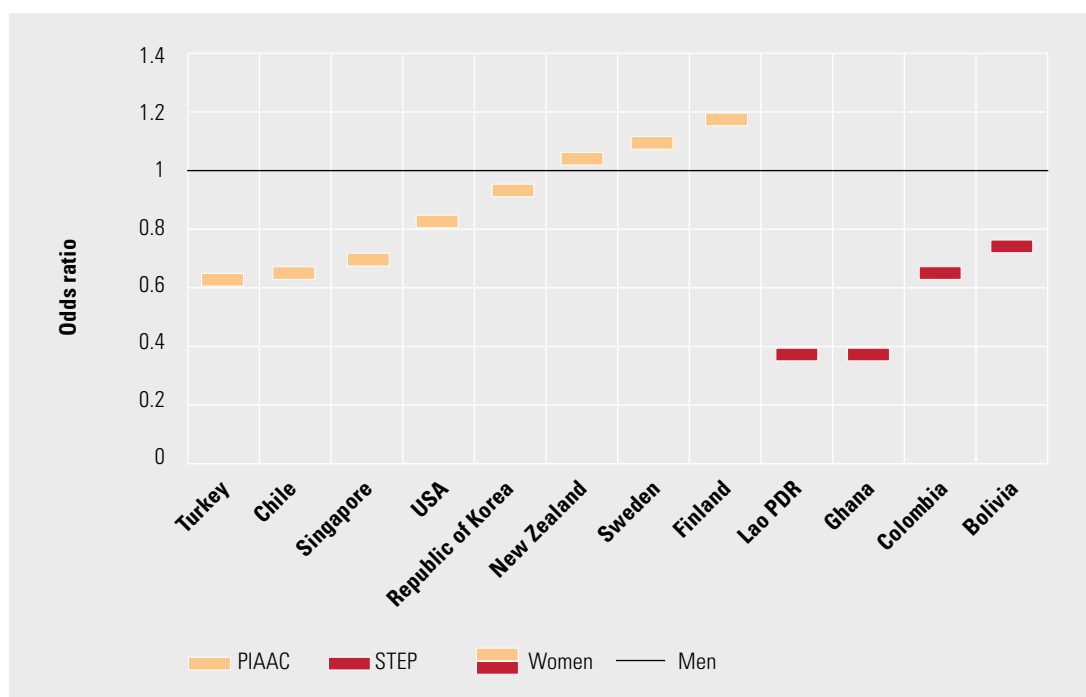
Participation in literacy and non-formal programmes in selected Southeast Asian countries, by sex



Source: UNESCO, 2018b

FIGURE 2.17

Likelihood (odds ratio) of women vs men (men's odds ratio = 1.0) participating in employer-supported ALE in selective countries



Source: World Bank, 2019; OECD, 2019a

In nine of the 12 countries included in **Figure 2.17**, men had a higher likelihood of receiving employer-supported ALE. This was particularly the case in Lao PDR and Ghana, where men were 2.5 times as likely to be supported by an employer. In Finland and Sweden, women were slightly more likely to have participated in learning supported by the employer. This is most likely a consequence of their standing in the labour market and regulations around access to training (e.g. for part-time employees).

#### 10.1.1.3

##### Digital divide

Another factor excluding many women, particularly in developing countries, from active participation in ALE as well as in work and in society at large is linked to the digital divide. According to the 2017 Measuring the Information Society Report (ITU, 2017), the digital gender gap fell in developed countries between 2013 and 2017 and is now estimated to be just under 3%. In developing countries, where overall internet access is just over half the rate in developed countries, it is much higher, 16%. The most pronounced gender gaps are in the least developed countries (LDCs), where they are estimated to be as high as 33%. The situation is particularly precarious in Africa, which is the only region where the gap increased by almost five percentage points between 2013 and 2017. Thus, while internet access rates in Africa have been rising, women have been relatively excluded from the upturn. And while the digital gender divide is small in developed countries, one disturbing fact is that women often have lower ICT skills. In some European countries, at most 25 women for every 100 men have programming skills, and only about 75 women for every 100 men could use basic arithmetic formulas in a spreadsheet (UNESCO, 2017a).

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU, 2017, p. 119) concludes that LDCs need to address not only infrastructure challenges but also shortcomings in capacity building and ICT education, with the latter being a particular concern with regards to women. This question has become particularly pressing in the light of a widespread shift towards open education, which includes massive open online courses (MOOCs), open textbooks and teaching videos, alongside a wide range of other open educational

resources. While these present extraordinary opportunities for extending participation in learning, there are also considerable but potentially solvable practical barriers to ensuring that open education truly is available to all (Hodgkinson-Williams and Arinto, 2017).

#### BOX 2.2

##### Literacy Project for Girls and Women using ICTs (Senegal)

The *Literacy Project for Girls and Women using ICTs (PAJEF)* was implemented in Senegal to introduce new technologies (ICTs, mobile phones, TV programmes) to create a sustainable literacy environment and ensure the reinforcement of basic literacy skills. Participants are illiterate and newly literate women aged between 15 and 55 years. The programme has used a number of different approaches to learning, including face-to-face classes, ICT-based tuition, and television. Courses are available on CD, on television, online and on mobile applications. The desire to read and write text messages is a major motivating factor in engaging girls and women in literacy learning. PAJEF is now considered a model of improving national literacy while achieving economies of scale and is being implemented in other African countries.

Source: UIL, LitBase

#### 10.1.1.4

##### Conclusion

Discrimination against girls and women in education is more due to the unwillingness of public authorities to act and less a consequence of capacity, for example bureaucratic quality and financial resources (Østby, Urdal and Rudolfson, 2016). Cultural traits, including traditions, result in practices that deny women not only access to education but also possibilities to participate in economic, social and political fields (Maity, 2016). The labour force participation rate for women is particularly low in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. Neglecting disparities in labour force participation comes with high economic and social costs. As an

example, it is estimated that if women in the United Arab Emirates and Egypt were to participate in the labour force to the same extent as men, GDP would rise by an estimated 12% and 34% respectively (Weinstein, 2018). In the literature, there is growing awareness that strengthening women's core rights, including education and participation in the labour market, is a way to improve their situation (Cherif, 2010). The argument is that these core rights function as building blocks for obtaining other rights (citizenship, inheritance, etc.) through promoting socio-political organization. To assist in this process, there is a need for more ALE interventions that strengthen women's capacity to be involved in and shape the society in which they live. Two such programmes are presented in **Box 2.3** and **Box 2.4**.

#### **BOX 2.3** **Pink Phone (Cambodia)**

Pink Phone is an Oxfam-supported programme structured on the model of the NGO Women for Prosperity's Women for Leadership programme, in which women attend capacity-building training to prepare them for positions as community leaders and enable them to influence the development and monitoring of public policy. Women participating in the programme must be proficient in the Khmer language and should be in a leadership position or have leadership potential. Participants are each given a pink phone and attend capability-building workshops on SMS text-messaging, the role and responsibility of facilitators, how to identify and categorize issues, and how to develop strategies to resolve them. They also learn how to make reports, ask questions and develop their listening skills. Programme achievements include improved communication, work performance, decision-making and time management as well as positive impacts on literacy skills, primary education, the employment prospects of participants and opportunities to step out of the traditional role of housewife.

Source: UIL, LitBase

#### **BOX 2.4** **Civic Education Information Service for Female Iraqi Leaders (Iraq)**

The Civic Education Information Service for Female Iraqi Leaders was launched by Souktel, a technology company with a non-profit branch. The programme's objectives were to enable local leaders of women's groups to send each other news and information by text message, thereby helping to develop communication and build a network for solving problems through sharing information without the need to travel. These objectives were achieved through building the capacity of women leaders working at a grassroots level through mobile technology and, where possible, in-person training; encouraging them to work together in support of common civic goals; and promoting effective public education and advocacy actions in support of women's rights. The mobile phone information service contributed to equipping more than 26,000 Iraqi women and girls with information about democracy and women's rights.

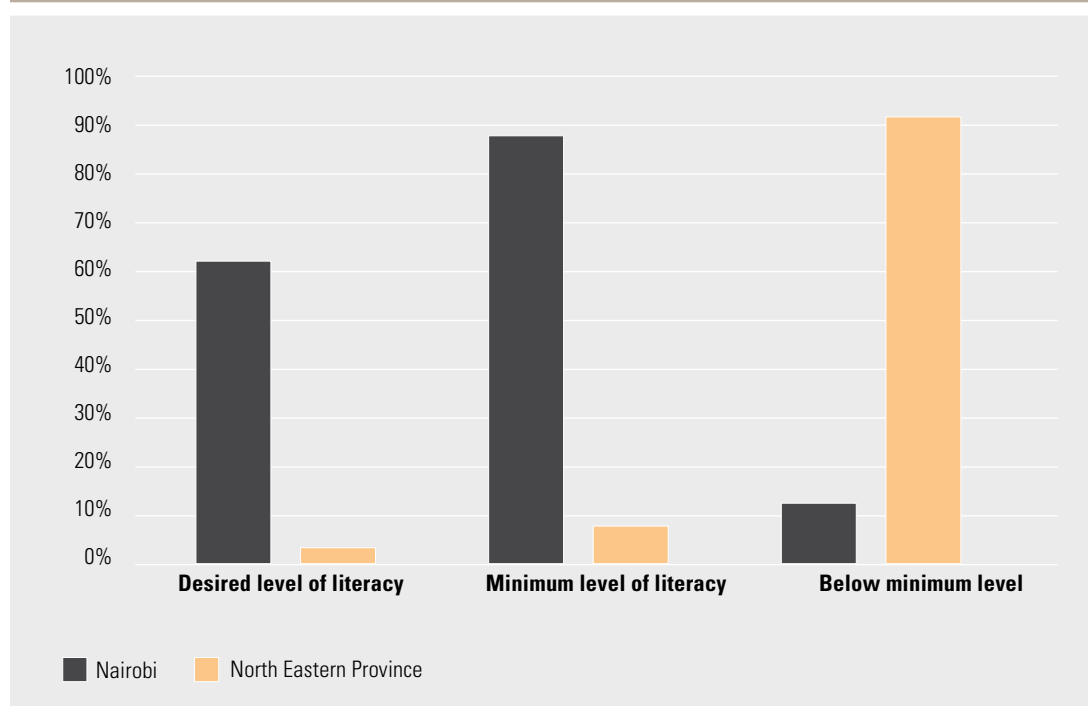
Source: UIL, LitBase

### 10.1.2 **RURAL POPULATION**

#### 10.1.2.1 **Primarily an issue in the developing world**

According to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), of the 1.6 billion people identified as living in acute multidimensional deprivations, 85% live in rural areas (OPHI, 2018, p. 65). Two regions, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, are particularly hard hit by MPI among the rural population. One of the greatest challenges in serving this group is providing opportunities for quality education for all ages (FAO, 2009). At the centre of deprivation is poor education among the rural population. A recent UIS and Global Education Monitoring Report paper found that '26 young people living in rural areas complete upper secondary school for every 100 young people living in urban areas who do so' (UIS and GEMR, 2019, p. 8).

**FIGURE 2.18**  
**Literacy in urban and rural Kenya**



Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2007

It is estimated that children from rural areas are twice as likely to be out of school as children from urban areas (UNICEF, 2018, p. 47). An overwhelming number of these children will enter adulthood as illiterates and with very limited economic prospects. The situation in Kenya (see **Figure 2.18**) exemplifies the urgency in developing countries of providing ALE opportunities to rural populations.

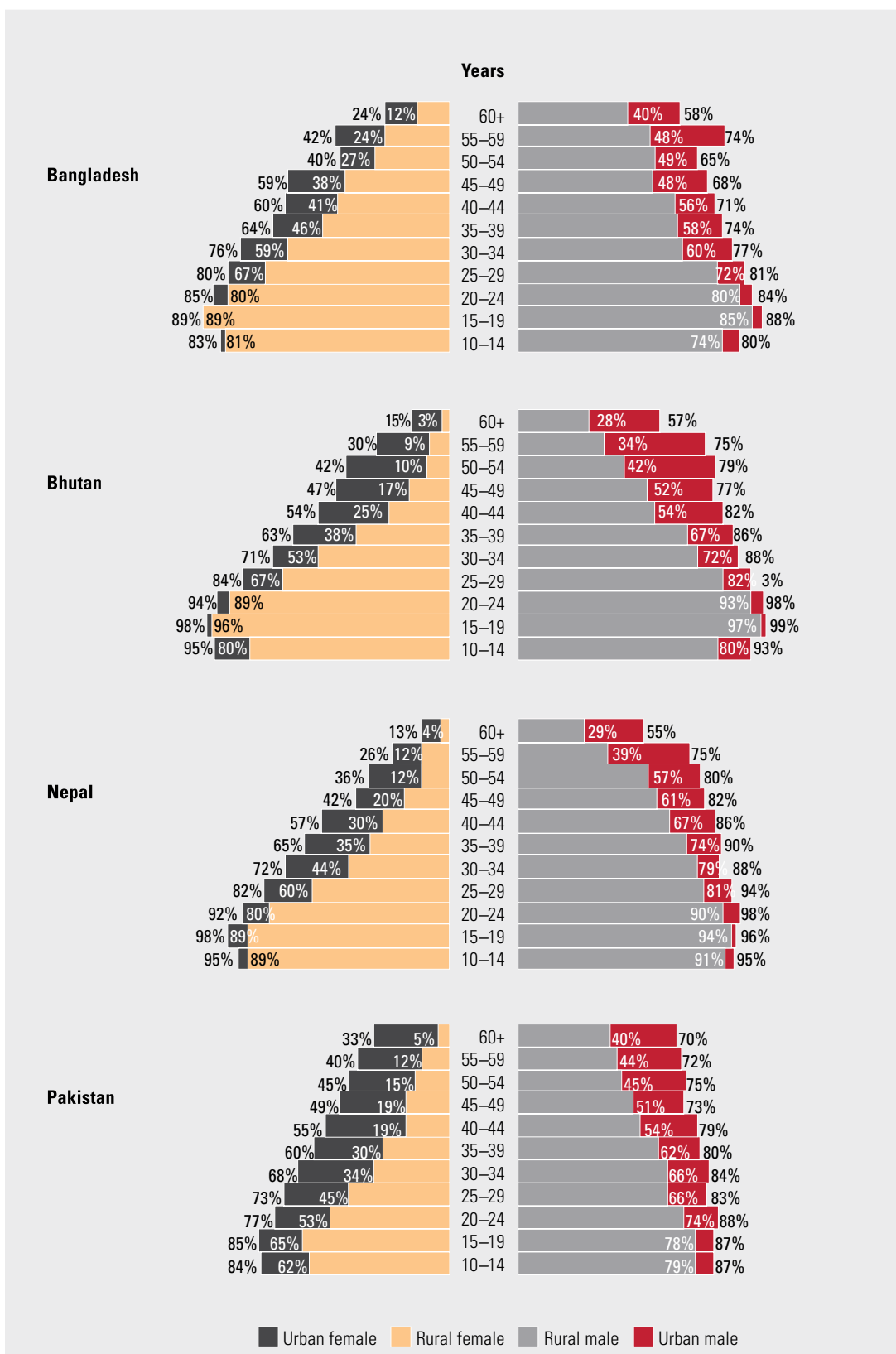
In its North Eastern province, only 8% of the population had reached a minimum standard of literacy and 4% had achieved the desired literacy skills (master level) in 2007, when the country's last national survey of adult literacy took place. In contrast, the figures for Kenya's capital, Nairobi, were 87% and 62%, respectively. While the Kenyan National Literacy Survey found that 9% of the population 15 years or older in the North Eastern province reported ever having participated in a literacy programme as compared to only 1% in Nairobi (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2007), the effort is far from enough to address the literacy challenges. **Figure 2.19** also demonstrates this urban-rural divide in other countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan.

In view of the situation in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, it is, therefore, not surprising that it was countries in these two regions in particular that identified residents of rural areas as a target group for ALE initiatives; just over 50%, as compared to an average of 31% across all countries.

In the *GRALE 4* survey, some countries gave examples of notable progress to improve access to and participation in ALE for residents of remote or rural areas. One, Botswana, has introduced out-of-school education for children who do not attend formal schools due to distance. This, in turn, enables parents to attend ALE provision while children attend their courses. In isolated parts of the Cook Islands, meanwhile, formal and non-formal learning opportunities through short-term courses and community education are offered with the support of learning 'brokers'.

FIGURE 2.19

Literacy rate for age groups by gender and location in Bangladesh (2015), Bhutan (2012), Nepal (2016) and Pakistan (2014)



Source: UNESCO 2018c, p. 80

Costa Rica has launched ALE projects, offices and institutions for adult education in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Cyprus too has prioritized this group of learners by implementing new programmes in rural areas and at the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers at Kofinou in 2016. In Seychelles, there are more centres in the districts outside of town, and, in Uruguay, youth and adult education has been introduced to diverse and remote groups and spaces where formal education is not yet available.

Eritrea has worked collaboratively to mobilize resources and open learning spaces in cooperation with different communities in remote areas. As a result, there is an agreement to engage all citizens in a given area, including schoolchildren, in literacy programmes in the learning centres that have opened in remote parts of the country.

Guyana has extended the teacher certificate programme in its hinterland area. Morocco has literacy programmes focused on developing skills related to the socio-economic lives of learners. Priority is also given to rural inhabitants. In Viet Nam, special attention has been given to rural workers.

Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan described agriculture as a subject of ALE for residents of remote or rural areas. More specific programmes on agriculture are available in Côte d'Ivoire based on the increase of actors in the field of adult education. Sudan has activities designed to generate income, such as the production of saplings and small-scale agriculture.

In Asia, community learning centres (CLCs) have come to play an essential role in providing the rural population with appropriate ALE opportunities. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam have all significantly increased the number of CLCs, which has dramatically increased the number of rural learners in literacy, life skills and various vocational programmes (UIL, 2017b).

### BOX 2.5 Lifelong learning for farmers (L3F) initiative

The Livelihoods Fund for Family Farming (L3F) initiative aims to mobilize marginalized communities, train them for improved livelihoods, link them to financial resources and integrate farming with environmental conservation.

Using information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones, radios and CDs, L3F seeks to increase farmers' access to information about farming practices, and introduce them to corporate literacy. Farmers are encouraged to form community banks or savings and loan groups. Members are then linked with opportunities from their banking groups or formal financial institutions. The intergovernmental organization Commonwealth of Learning catalyses the partnerships between farming communities, experts, financial institutions, IT providers and the market to create a win-win situation for all.

Some L3F partners have created innovative learning platforms that enable farmers to exchange information with extension officers in their indigenous language using basic mobile phones. The L3F model has been successful in reaching a large number of farmers at low cost and was able to enhance the empowerment and livelihood of marginalized farming households, particularly women, in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, India, Sri Lanka and Mauritius.

*Source: Commonwealth of Learning, 2018*

A central focus of ALE programmes in rural areas is to provide inhabitants with skills that will help them to earn a living. Many of these focus on improving the sustainability of the agricultural sector (see **Box 2.5**).

In some regions of the world, such as Latin America and the Caribbean, there are large indigenous populations in rural areas, often with their own languages, which can create additional demands for ALE. In an attempt to reach even the most remote areas of Mexico, the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) offers classes in indigenous languages across eight states.

In concluding this review of ALE for the rural population of primarily developing countries, it is important to make the connection between rural poverty and the growth of urban slums. Poverty in rural parts of the world is driving people into the cities. It is estimated that over 90% of that urban growth will occur in cities and towns of the developing world, mostly in Africa and Asia (UNDP, 2016).

In these regions, rural migrants are very likely to end up in slums, often living under even worse conditions than before. As an example, in Venezuela, children from the richest families received about 12 years of schooling on average in 2012, regardless of whether they lived in rural or urban areas. By contrast, the urban poor only reached four years of education, which was two years less than poor children living in rural areas (Eide, 2012). To provide education opportunities for children and young adults living in the slums is a most urgent matter and important in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals that aim to achieve positive life chances for all.

So far, the discussion has focused on the situation in developing countries, many of which encounter multidimensional deprivation. The situation is far different in the highly industrial countries, and this is reflected in relatively small differences in participation in ALE between cities and rural areas. **Figure 2.20** illustrates the situation in the EU.

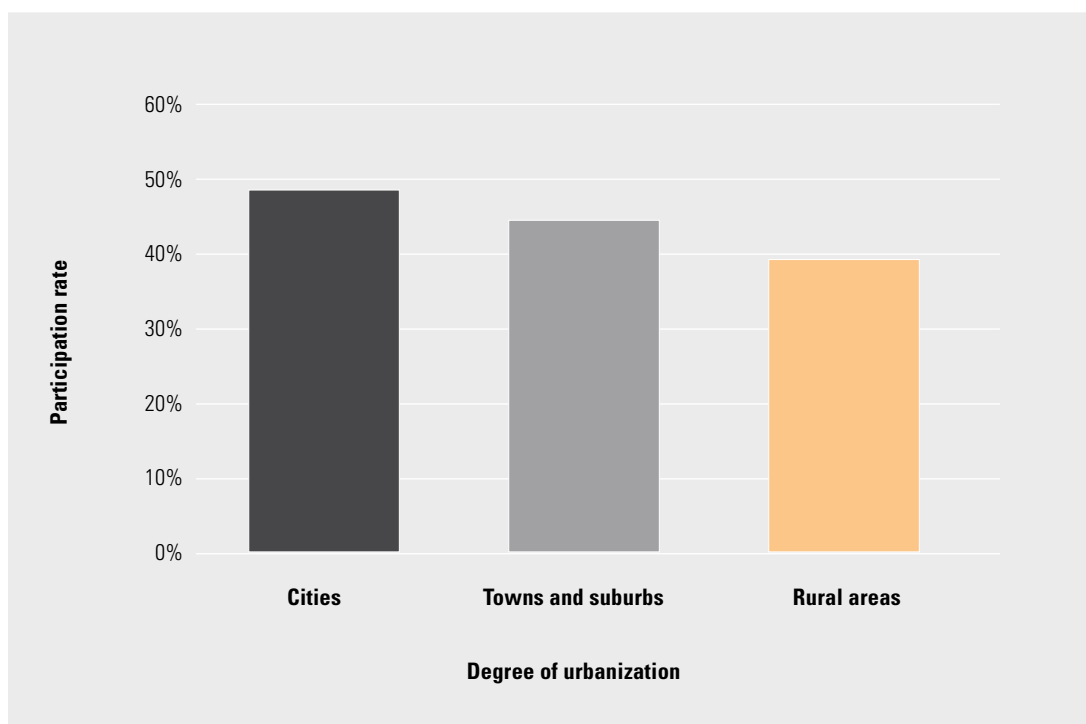
#### BOX 2.6

#### Learning and Earning in Cairo's Garbage City (Egypt)

Learning and Earning in Cairo's Garbage City was developed by an Egyptian non-governmental organization to offer children and young people working in particularly hazardous conditions alternative and safe work environments related to their skills and experience through programmes, projects and activities focused on the environmental and educational aspects of maintaining a business and increasing income. The programme is designed to be flexible, to adapt to the special circumstances in which young boys in Cairo's traditional garbage-collecting communities, the Zabaleen, find themselves. There is no standard duration for the classes, which are, instead, adapted to the learner's progress and ability to attend classes. The school curriculum is built around the recycling of plastic shampoo bottles manufactured by multinationals. The students collect empty bottles, count them and fill out forms to indicate how many they have retrieved, and how much they are being paid for each bottle recorded. The students convert the bottles into plastic powder which is then sold to local recycling companies. The school curriculum combines this activity with basic education, computer literacy, practical work experience, and the study of environmental protection and workplace safety.

Source: UIL, LitBase

**FIGURE 2.20**  
**Participation rate in ALE during a 12-month period, by degree of urbanization, EU-28**



Source: Eurostat, 2019e

While, the average participation rate in EU-28 was about 10 percentage points higher in cities than in rural areas, this is to a large extent a consequence of demographic and work differences, with younger people tending to move and work in larger cities that host more knowledge-intensive industries.

#### 10.1.2.2

##### **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that a lack of literacy capability and exclusion from learning opportunities throughout life constitute the reality for a large share of the rural population experiencing acute multidimensional deprivations. It is important to note that the precarious situation of people in rural areas is a key driver of the growing phenomenon of urban slums, another major challenge for the realization of the sustainability agenda.

The enduring inequalities in the world cannot be effectively addressed unless particular attention is given to the situation of the rural population (UIL, 2017b, p. 7). A major challenge to improving the situation in these

regions is a lack of adequate provision of ALE in rural areas, where distance can make it impossible to attend even the few learning opportunities that are offered (FAO, 2009). This has been the case, for example, in Nepal where the review of the national literacy campaigns concluded that progress has been hampered by a lack of accessible classes for working people in rural areas (Government of Nepal Ministry of Education Non-Formal Education Centre, 2017).

While distance education and the use of the new learning technologies is one way to overcome some of the barriers, a lack of infrastructure can be a hindrance. Not only are there fewer fixed network subscribers in rural areas, but rural areas in some developing countries are still not adequately covered by a mobile-cellular signal. In addition, many inhabitants of rural areas have a low income, which is likely to reduce take-up and usage. These challenges need to be addressed if inclusive information societies are to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (ITU, 2017).

## 10.1.3

**MIGRANTS, DISPLACED PERSONS AND REFUGEES**

Following the principle of inclusion, as laid down in the Belém Framework of Action, one of the most urgent tasks for ALE is to contribute to the integration and support of the hundreds of millions of people around the globe who have been forced, or felt compelled, to leave their homes. Most are people displaced within their own country, but more than 22.5 million people have fled their homeland and become refugees. A great number of them live in countries neighbouring conflicts. Hence, countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt have to care for millions of refugees, most of them living in camps. In total, low- and middle-income countries host 89% of refugees (International Organization for Migration, 2018). Approximately 47% of migrant workers are found in two regions, North America and Northern, Southern and Western Europe, followed by the Arab States with 14% (ILO, 2018b). Addressing labour migration and displaced populations calls for a broad, coordinated approach that promotes coherence among employment, education, training and migration policies (ibid., p. 7).

When considering the role of adult learning and education in safeguarding the inclusion of migrants and displaced persons, it is essential to remember that migrant populations are highly heterogeneous, both across and within countries (OECD, 2018b; UNESCO, 2018), and different groups have very different needs. While the majority of the global migrant population consists of skilled and highly skilled persons (ILO, 2018b), there are also large segments with very low skills, particularly among refugee groups (OECD, 2018b; UNESCO, 2018a).

## 10.1.3.1

**Skills challenges**

A lack of adequate skills makes it hard for migrants and refugees to compete for employment. It is estimated that around 60% of Syrian refugees aged 16 years or older have not completed basic schooling and only 15% have finished secondary education. In comparison, 42% of Jordanians in the same age range have a secondary education (ILO, 2018c). Moreover, as large groups of Syrian refugees have lived in camps in neighbouring

countries and been unemployed for a number of years, they are under serious risk of skill deterioration. If training was made available to these groups, it is highly likely that many would embrace their opportunities. Thus, a survey conducted in one of the largest camps in Jordan found a strong interest among the refugees in the camp in attending skills training, with just over half of the women and three-quarters of the men indicating that, if offered, they would enrol and then seek a job outside the camp (UNHCR, 2017).

Refugees living in the EU face a similar situation to those in Jordan and neighbouring countries. The proportion of non-EU-born immigrants aged 25–54 with a low educational attainment (ICED level of 0–2) is twice as high as for those living in the EU country in which they were born (Eurostat, 2017). Further, the rate of young people (age 15–29) not employed and not enrolled in education or training is almost twice as high among those born outside the EU compared to the native population.

The skills challenges facing migrants, particularly those with a short formal education, are highlighted in an in-depth analysis of the situation in OECD countries, which host a large segment of the world's migrant population. The OECD study (OECD, 2018b) found that, on average, migrants were less proficient in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving than native-born adults. However, there were also many highly skilled migrants, and skill levels tended to vary more among migrants than natives. Differences between natives and migrants were particularly high in countries that take a lot of refugees on humanitarian grounds. The findings underscore the urgency of giving access to ALE to low-skilled refugees, as well as to other similar migrants.

## 10.1.3.2

**Migrants and refugees' participation in ALE**

The data on participation in adult learning and education by migrants and refugees in the *GRALE 4* survey are sketchy at best, as reported in Part 1, Section 6.4. According to the survey, many countries do not have the information needed to assess the extent to which migrants are being included in adult learning or education. Of the 159 countries that responded to *GRALE 4*, almost half either did not answer the question regarding migrant participation or stated that they did not know.

The responses from those countries that did provide information reveal, not surprisingly, that regions where participation among migrants was most often reported to have increased were North America and Western Europe, where 12 out of 19 countries reported an increase (63%), and in the Arab countries, with 9 out of 16 countries (56%). These are also the regions that have seen the largest increases in numbers of migrants. The *GRALE 4* survey does not provide any data on actual participation rates, only whether or not countries had experienced a change in participation among refugees.

The PIAAC survey offers some insights into participation in ALE for migrants in OECD countries (OECD, 2018b). Three findings stand out from the survey. First, migrants reported a lower participation rate than natives, but to a considerable extent this can be explained by differences in individual characteristics. Taking the latter factors into consideration, the migrants had on average a four percentage point lower likelihood of having participated in any kind of adult learning and education. The difference was most pronounced when it came to employer-sponsored activities. Second, migrants living in countries with high participation among adults in adult learning and education reported higher rates than migrants in countries with low overall participation rates. This suggests that countries' institutional characteristics matter much more than individual's migrant background (*ibid.*, p. 101). Third, while PIAAC does not directly assess informal learning, it is important to note that migrants tended to have fewer opportunities to read at work than natives (*ibid.*), the reason being that they more often found themselves in manual or routine jobs. As a consequence, they miss valuable opportunities to practise their language skills. This is a particular worry for those with low literacy as they are the group least likely to participate in language courses (UNESCO, 2018a).

An additional problem is that relatively few of the migrants who took initial language courses, which in some countries can be mandatory for new migrants, seem to have continued their studies and moved on to more substantial formal education or training programmes (Eurostat, 2017). In an effort to respond to the demand for various forms of ALE, several Member States are developing new learning initiatives.

### 10.1.3.3

#### **ALE activities to support migrants and refugees**

Recognizing that many refugees living in the camps risk losing their literacy skills, the Ministry of Social Affairs in Lebanon launched a national adult post-literacy programme (PLP) in the social service centres in one of the country's most densely populated cities, Bourj Hammoud. The programme targets neo-literate women and girls, aiming to help them retain their literacy skills and so avoid relapsing into illiteracy. The experiments have revealed the significance of the post-literacy phase in improving the living conditions of neo-literates. The centres offer a wide range of programmes, seminars and activities about health, nutrition and cooking. Similarly, during 2017–2018, INSAN, a non-governmental organization, offered literacy and adult education programmes to enhance the literacy skills of displaced Syrians and members of Lebanese society of both genders. The organization also provided pre-vocational training to the same target group to equip them with computer, English and life skills. The training enabled the participants to enter the labour market and equipped the Syrians with aptitudes to rebuild their societies and communities when they return to their home country.

In neighbouring Jordan, the training needs of refugees and migrants – as well as the exploitation they face – are addressed by Better Work Jordan (BWJ) (ILO, 2018b). BWJ is a partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) that brings together stakeholders from all levels of Jordan's garment-manufacturing industry to improve working conditions and respect for labour rights and provide training. Since 2009, the programme has reached 65,000 workers in 73 factories.

Meanwhile, in Yemen, the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, established ALE programmes for refugees living in Sana'a, the country's largest city (**Box 2.7**).

As GEM 2019 (UNESCO, 2018a) rightly points out, an important role for adult learning and education with respect to migrants and refugees is to address integration competences within the host country and to build cross-cultural exchanges. This can

### BOX 2.7 ALE for women in Yemen

In Sana'a, Yemen, UNHCR supports a literacy and adult education programme for refugees, in particular women (96%). This national programme, implemented through the Literacy and Adult Education Department of the Ministry of Education (MoE), works with over 170 centres in Sana'a alone. The primary school curriculum is taught in a condensed way, requiring one calendar year to complete the equivalent of two years of regular primary school. Students complete the equivalent of six years of primary schooling in three years, and receive a certificate from the MoE. The opportunity to increase the number of refugees attending this literacy programme has huge potential and could afford a unique opportunity for promoting education for young girls and women. One of the challenges identified is the reluctance of children to attend literacy classes together with adults.

Source: Hanemann, 2018, p. 32

### BOX 2.8 Kirikhan Community Centre

The Kirikhan Community Centre in Turkey is a project sponsored by YUVA, a Turkish non-governmental adult learning organization, and DVV International, which tries to bring together Syrian refugees and the local population. The idea is that the two communities should get to know each other, communicate and study together. Childcare services are provided so as to offer a comfortable space for mothers. A range of psycho-social activities is offered, as well as a broad range of courses covering, for instance, language training, ICT, life skills and hobby-oriented courses, in addition to vocational training. Regardless of programme, awareness-raising about legal rights is part of the course. The centre has managed to recruit a mixed group of staff and instructors and mobilized the resources of the community.

Source: Vardar, 2014

take many forms: sports clubs organizing social media campaigns, engaging migrants and natives in joint activities, awareness campaigns, joint art shows and film festivals, courses, and so on (ibid., p. 92). One successful programme is offered by the Kirikhan Community Centre in Turkey, a country with one of the world's largest refugee populations (see **Box 2.8**).

In its recommendation on how to improve skills for migration and employment, ILO (2018b) also stresses the need for the development of bilateral or multilateral recognition of qualifications and skills. Such a system would enable migrants to provide potential employers nationally or internationally with trusted documentation of their skills. To assist countries in identifying and documenting competencies and prior learning of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has developed a coherent RVA (recognition, validation and accreditation)

framework that can be aligned with national procedures and tools such as national qualifications frameworks (Singh, 2018).

Other interesting recent activities to support migrants and refugees were highlighted by some of the countries that responded to the *GRALE 4* survey. Germany has initiated numerous programmes and initiatives to support the integration of the newly arrived, mainly through the provision of integration and language courses. There have also been many initiatives to harness digital media for the purpose of making learning and information offers more effective and accessible. Cameroon reports having opened literacy centres in refugee camps in the far north and east of the country. The Islamic Republic of Iran has removed all barriers to delivering formal and non-formal educational services for Afghan refugees. A Norwegian policy paper aims to prevent exclusion from the labour market (Norwegian Government, 2016).

## 10.1.3.4

**Conclusion**

This review of the literature and the findings of the *GRALE 4* survey have identified several shortcomings with regard to the integration of migrants and refugees in ALE. First, many countries lack the appropriate data to develop policies on ALE directed towards this target group. Second, with language being the greatest barrier to employment among many refugees, there is an acute need to address the challenge to reach the most vulnerable groups with adequate language training. Sadly, as Hanemann (2018) notes in her comprehensive review of language and literacy programmes for migrants and refugees, the most striking barrier is an absence in many countries of adequate language and literacy programmes. As she points out, a major challenge for the host countries is the diversity of learning needs among migrants and refugees. An obvious hindrance is a lack of attention to adults 25 years and older, because international aid organizations often concentrate their efforts on children's educational needs. However, as noted by many international organizations, it is crucial that adults living in refugee camps are equipped with skills that allow them to find gainful employment outside the camps (ILO, 2018b). Furthermore, while there have been some positive developments in assessing the skills that refugees and migrants possess, the practices need to be more fully developed, and the full range of learning identified in the RALE typology needs to be in place. Addressing literacy and basic education and vocational training is not enough; both the newcomers and people in the host society can benefit from what liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills) has to offer, particularly in respect of active and informed citizenship. In general, it is believed that the actions recommended here will benefit countries' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

## 10.1.4

**OLDER ADULTS**

A rapidly ageing population poses major challenges to governments faced with increased health costs and a shrinking and ageing labour pool. From their different vantage points, both WHO and ILO advance the role ALE can play in meeting these challenges, in both preventative and adaptive modes, and advise countries to include the learning aspect in their health and labour market strategies (WHO, 2015; ILO, 2018d). Unfortunately, most surveys on participation in ALE are developed on an outdated understanding of the changes that are occurring in people's life courses. The traditional notion of a three-stage life course, children/youth, adults and older adults (65 and older), is no longer appropriate. Instead, as proposed by Schuller and Watson (2009), it would be more productive to look at ALE in the context of a fourfold category of stages in the adult life course (18–25, 25–50, 51–75, 76+). The age groups have to be seen as approximate, with clear overlap between the two later stages. A major task, although not exclusively for ALE for those 51–75, is to prepare an ageing workforce for full participation in the economy. The focus among the 76+ group is primarily on the role ALE can play in enabling them to live a full and rich life where they maintain control over their circumstances for as long as possible (see **Box 2.9**).

## 10.1.4.1

**An ageing workforce**

As a result of rising life expectancy and declining birth rates, the natural growth of the labour force will not be able to make up for the number of expected retirees, which creates a need to keep older workers in the labour force. Globally, in 2017, there were 3.5 persons aged 65 and over for every 10 persons in the labour force, a figure estimated to rise to five by 2030 (ILO, 2018d). The challenges will be strongest in regions of Europe, Northern America and Eastern Asia. Pressure will be felt in key emerging markets such as China and Russia, while regions such as Africa and Southern Asia will still have a large young population entering the labour market (*ibid.*, p. 46).

**BOX 2.9****Education for the elderly in China**

With a rapidly ageing society, China wants to strengthen the education of its elderly people and promote their learning, health and well-being. In 1996, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly was promulgated, stipulating that 'the elderly have the right to continue to receive education'. In 2000, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Strengthening the Work on Ageing, requiring that 'all regions should attach importance to the development of the elderly education'. By the time the National Plan for the Development of Elderly Education (2016–2020) was introduced in 2016, all provinces and municipalities in mainland China had issued corresponding policies demonstrating consensus on the importance of elderly education in the wider education system. These plans and policies have facilitated a comprehensive development of elderly education in China.

Universities and schools for the elderly have been established at provincial, municipal and county (district) levels, and rapid progress in the development of community elderly education has been achieved. Meanwhile, learning opportunities for the elderly increasingly benefit from information technologies, and inter-generational learning is more and more valued. The combined development of elderly nursing and education is progressing rapidly as well. At present, China has established an integrated operation mechanism characterized by governmental leadership, multidepartment collaboration and social participation; it has also adopted a strategy for promoting elderly education through pilot tests followed by a wider rollout, which has been supported by existing institutional systems.

Source: Ma and Ye, 2018

The changing demographic raises concerns about competencies within an ageing workforce. Findings from PIAAC partly support these concerns. The data show major differences in literacy proficiency across age groups, with adults aged 55 to 65 scoring some 30 points fewer than adults aged 25 to 34 (Paccagnella, 2016). The disparity between the two age groups is as large as the one between those with a tertiary education as those with less than a secondary education. While these differences are partly a result of cohort effects, older people having had less education in most countries, there remain major differences after controlling for factors such as education (ibid.). There were also major differences between countries, with some, for example the United States, registering a discrepancy of around 13 points, whereas the gap in Finland reached almost 50 points. It should be noted that, despite lower literacy proficiency, older workers seem to be as productive as their younger counterparts (ibid.). However, while older workers may have been able to compensate

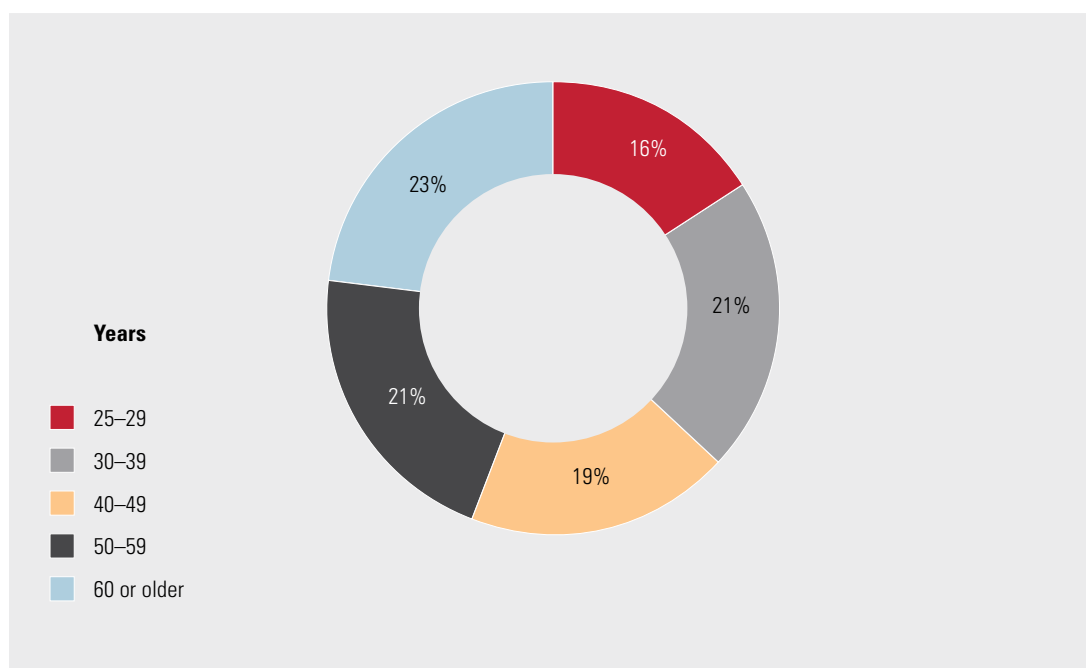
for lower proficiency in information-processing skills, changing production processes put a premium on the ability to learn (OECD and ILO, 2018) and may make it more challenging. As a consequence of the increased demands on the future workforce,

**BOX 2.10****Singapore: Addressing the exclusion of older workers**

As part of the Singapore Government's goal of integrating older workers of all socio-economic strata and genders into workplaces, the new initiative, SkillsFuture, strives to reach older, less-educated workers, a group not well represented in the training course. Early indications show that the programme has been very successful.

Source: ILO, 2018e, p. 105

**FIGURE 2.21**  
Distribution of SkillsFuture credit utilization, by age group, 2016



Source: SkillsFuture, 2017

an existing bias against older workers could be reinforced (*ibid.*). These developments point to the importance of ALE for an ageing workforce.

In the changing labour market, employers will have to pay more attention to the training needs of older workers (OECD and ILO, 2018). Unfortunately, there is little information on adults over 65 years of age. However, recognizing this limitation, there are some positive trends within the EU sphere. Using three AES surveys, 2007, 2011 and 2016, **Figure 2.22** reports on the EU average changes in participation in total job-related non-formal ALE and employer-supported ALE for the 25–64 and the 55–64 age groups. It shows that the increase in participation by older workers (55–64) far surpassed the average increase. The EU average rate for non-formal job-related ALE in the 25–64 age span rose by 37%, but in the 55–64-year-old group, the increase was as high as 71%. These differences are almost exclusively a consequence of better access to employer-supported ALE, especially for older workers.

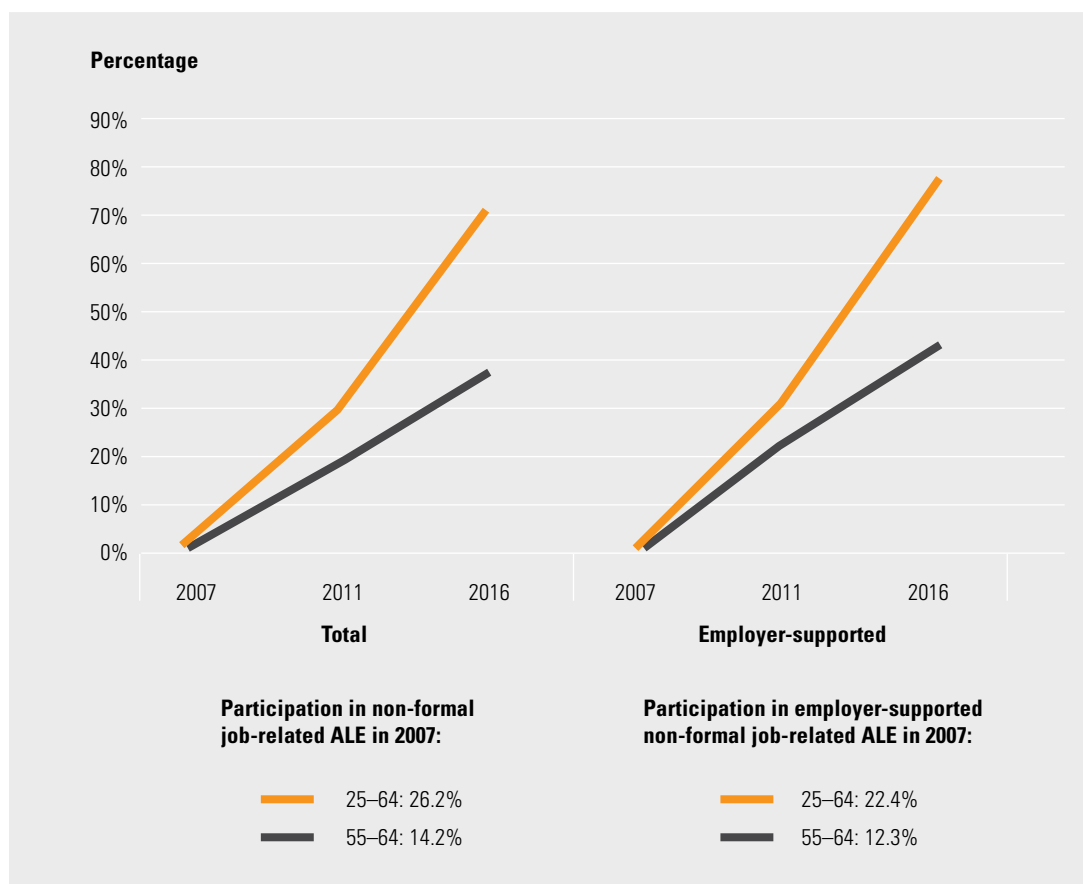
These positive developments in all countries should not obscure the fact that the actual participation rates in job-related ALE in many EU countries remain at a low level.

The situation is particularly precarious for older people in work that offers sparse opportunities for learning on the job. The OECD average for participation in job-related employer-supported adult learning and education among late-career workers who were among the bottom 40% most frequent readers at work was only half of that of those among the top 40% of readers at work (Desjardins, 2019). From a 'use it or lose it' perspective on skills, it is clear that, to a large extent, the former group will have to rely on out-of-work possibilities to engage in organized as well as informal learning activities.

For many older adults, ALE may be of greater importance for their general well-being than for staying in the job market, and, in their case, access to the third RALE category of liberal, community and popular education is likely to be particularly important.

FIGURE 2.22

**Increase in participation from 2007–2016 in non-formal job-related and employer-supported ALE in the EU**



SOURCE: Eurostat, 2019e

#### 10.1.4.2

##### Older adults and their well-being

In its *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO (2015) states that older adults not only have lower literacy scores but that their level of 'health literacy' is also lower than other sections of the population. Thus, a considerable proportion of older adults may not be able to obtain, interpret and understand basic health information and services. The review notes that health literacy is a more meaningful predictive factor than educational level for older people's use of preventive services. Another strong reason for addressing the exclusion of older adults from ALE is that older people who are engaged in ALE have been shown to be more involved in the community, tend to be less dependent on family and social services and report better health and well-being (ibid.).

#### BOX 2.11

##### WHO on older adults' abilities to learn, grow and make decisions

The abilities to learn, grow and make decisions include efforts to continue to learn and apply knowledge, engage in problem-solving, continue personal development and be able to make choices. Continuing to learn enables older people to have the knowledge and skills to manage their health, to keep abreast of developments in information and technology, to participate (for example, by working or volunteering), to adjust to ageing (for example, to retirement, widowhood or becoming a caregiver), to maintain their identity and to stay interested in life.

Source: WHO, 2015, p. 174

Examples of good practices in the field of ALE for adults can be seen in the Finnish *folkbildning* system, with its low-barrier courses that have a demonstrable impact on older adults' health and well-being (see Bell Project, 2019). Other initiatives include the University of the Third Age, active in several countries.

In view of WHO's strong argument for countries to seriously engage with appropriate ALE initiatives for older adults, it is worrying to learn that, according to the 2015 *GRALE 3* survey, only 9% of countries identified senior citizens/retired people as an important target group for ALE initiatives (UIL, 2016). This is especially concerning in light of the role that older adults could play in civic education or in initiatives addressing

certain health and well-being concerns, such as loneliness. Of the 13 countries that identified older adults as one of their target groups, five are in Asia (China, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand), which reflects how seriously these countries view the challenges of an ageing society.

Faced with a future shortage of working population, Slovenia has implemented a project specifically targeting older employees and companies with ageing workforces. The project focuses primarily on overcoming stereotypes about older employees and helping employers better manage their ageing workforce.

The Republic of Korea is in a similar situation, and by investing in an ALE infrastructure that caters also to those not looking for job-related and or formal ALE, the country has successfully managed to engage older adults in ALE (see **Table 2.7**). The participation rate in non-formal ALE among the oldest group (65–79 years of age) was as high as 32.6%. While this is substantially lower than participation rates recorded for younger adults, the figure is nonetheless impressive. More importantly, looking closer at the sub-categories under non-formal ALE, it becomes evident that the age discrepancy is exclusively caused by a drop off in vocationally oriented non-formal ALE. In fact, the oldest group reported the highest participation in the category of culture, art and sports, and attended liberal arts classes to the same extent as younger adults.

#### 10.1.4.3

#### Digital divide

In a time of increased reliance on digital devices to manage everyday life, and also because of these devices' crucial role as a platform for learning, it is important to recognize that older adults face a digital divide, which can make it difficult for them to access various services online, including informal learning. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2017) reports that young people are vastly more likely to be online than older adults. The proportion of people aged between 15 and 24 who are online was estimated to be more than 70% worldwide, compared to below 10% among those 75 and over. The age divide was particularly noticeable in developing countries. Once more, this is a particularly

#### BOX 2.12

#### Senior Active Learning Centres in Thailand

Following on from the 2006 White Paper, *Towards the Aged Society: Policies for Older Adults*, Thailand launched 104 Senior Active Learning Centres (SALCs) in 2008. There are presently 368 centres. Schools, colleges, civic groups or municipal governments were invited to manage the SALCs, and each one needs to offer three types of course:

- Policy-related lectures, for instance issues of an ageing society, gender equality, drug-abuse and suicide prevention, family violence prevention;
- Self-organized interest courses, for instance healthy diet, exercise, singing, painting and handicrafts;
- Contribution and service activities, for instance volunteer and service delivery in schools or communities.

For self-organized courses, each SALC can start programmes that meet seniors' needs. Based on national surveys, it is estimated that the percentage of older people participating in non-formal learning increased from 11% in 2008 to 22% in 2014.

Source: Kearns and Reghenzani-Kearns, 2018, pp. 27–28

**TABLE 2.7**  
**2018 participation in the Republic of Korea in non-formal learning, by sub-learning areas and age**

| CATEGORIES |       | Total non-formal | Areas                   |                              |            |                   |                          |                     |
|------------|-------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
|            |       |                  | Supplementary education | Basic education and literacy | Vocational | Liberal education | Culture, arts and sports | Civic participation |
| TOTAL      |       | 40.4%            | 0.1%                    | 0.1%                         | 19.8%      | 7.7%              | 17.0%                    | 0.8%                |
| Ages       | 25–34 | 48.3%            | 0.5%                    | -                            | 29.5%      | 8.8%              | 15.7%                    | 0.2%                |
|            | 35–44 | 43.8%            | 0.1%                    | -                            | 25.6%      | 7.6%              | 16.2%                    | 0.6%                |
|            | 45–54 | 41.5%            | -                       | -                            | 22.0%      | 7.2%              | 16.9%                    | 1.0%                |
|            | 55–64 | 34.6%            | -                       | -                            | 13.8%      | 6.3%              | 16.4%                    | 0.9%                |
|            | 65–79 | 32.6%            | -                       | 0.4%                         | 5.4%       | 8.8%              | 20.4%                    | 1.4%                |

Source: Korean Lifelong Learning Survey (Republic of Korea Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute, 2018)

pressing concern in the context of the wider move towards open education; fortunately, there is growing evidence of effective strategies in promoting and developing older adults' digital literacy (e.g. Martínez-Alcalá et al., 2018; Barrantes Cáceres et al., 2019).

#### 10.1.4.4

#### Conclusion

Although a lack of information on older adults and ALE makes it difficult to draw far-reaching conclusions, there is limited evidence to suggest that senior citizens/retired people have emerged as an important target group for ALE initiatives. Older people's own learning initiatives have flourished in some countries, for example through the self-teaching models of Universities of the Third Age, and some popular, liberal and community education providers have successfully developed programmes for older learners, as have some universities. But such initiatives often have a tendency to reach the already well-educated, and are very unevenly distributed (Hachem and Vuopala, 2016). Overall, the situation is more encouraging when it comes to access to training for older workers, who have started to catch up with their younger co-workers.

#### BOX 2.13 AdulTICoProgram (Colombia)

The AdulTICoProgram works to provide better online services to reduce the digital gap among the residents of the city of Armenia. The programme includes the teaching of basic computing skills, literacy, the use of social networks and the appropriate use of mobile devices. The learners participate in interactive training through seminar-workshops that are based on a 'learning-by-doing' approach. Besides being taught digital skills, the learners are also introduced to the opportunities that the internet provides. This increases their ability to use consultation, information and networking services. This skillset positively increases the independence and autonomy of the older people and broadens their perspectives and knowledge. When traditional paperwork started to be digitized, there was a growing need not only to provide tablets to older adults but also to deliver the necessary literacy and skills training to use e-services efficiently. This prompted a serious and structured digital literacy project that has been in existence for four years and that has enabled seniors to advance in their technological independence. In 2016, more than 2,275 learners aged between 54 and 80 benefited from the AdulTICoProgram.

Source: UIL, LitBase

## 10.1.5

**ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Across the world, adults with disabilities constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in society, particularly in less-advantaged communities. They have poorer health outcomes, lower educational achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities (WHO, 2011). They experience barriers in accessing services that most take for granted, including health, education, employment and transport, as well as information. Although evidence for this particular group of adult learners is being presented, it has been difficult to find detailed sources of specific types of disabilities that adults are coping with.

As a consequence of limited possibilities to attend school as children, disabled adults, particularly in developing countries, suffer from low literacy capacity. Examining the situation in Uganda, Nuwagaba and Rule (2016) report that while the net enrolment in primary education was 81%, only 15% of disabled children had access to education. A lack of ALE opportunities for disabled adults further hindered this group. The authors followed a group of visually impaired adults and found that their disability, in combination with very few possibilities for participating in ALE, meant that they had great difficulties in accessing microfinancing that could have helped them secure an income.

The situation regarding access to ALE in most other parts of the world is similar, and despite policy documents stating the need to reach adults with disabilities, the situation is disappointing. A review on how to improve adult learning for people with disabilities on the European Commission's Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), concluded that, in terms of inclusive strategies to reach this group, it seems there are very few examples of national strategies that would encompass adult learning (Ebner, 2017). While the EPALE survey is far from being scientifically conducted, the results are not encouraging. The European Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (European Commission, 2010) as well as WHO's *World Report on Disability* (WHO, 2011) reflect a serious lack of attention to the role of ALE.

The *GRALE* surveys provide a slightly more optimistic message. In 2015, 17% of countries had identified adults living with disabilities as one of their target groups for their ALE policies (UIL, 2017). Further, as noted in Part 1, Chapter 6, 36% of countries reported that participation for disabled adults had increased between 2015 and 2018. Many of these countries provided interesting examples of new initiatives aimed at reaching the disabled population.

## 10.1.5.1

**Initiatives to reach persons with disabilities**

Countries are in different stages of progress – these range from conducting research; to understanding the barriers to adult and lifelong education for people with disabilities; to the development of new strategies, policies and laws and/or the revision of existing ones; to implementation; and to the expansion of existing programmes and services. The following is an overview of trends among these countries and where they are at in terms of their progress in promoting accessibility to and participation in adult and lifelong education for people with disabilities.

Ireland and Uruguay have investigated barriers faced by people with disabilities and ways of addressing them. In its annual Further Education and Training 2018 service planning, Ireland undertook to include new initiatives to address these barriers so that people with disabilities are able to access further education and training. Similarly, Uruguay recently produced a report in a collaborative effort among several concerned agencies with regard to education, including continuing education for persons with disabilities. A number of agreements were reached among participating organizations, including government agencies, NGOs and other civil society organizations.

On policy/strategy formulation, Colombia has recently developed and published a number of guidelines using a rights-based approach to ensure that young people and adults in the country have access to affordable and quality education so that they are able to improve their lives and those of their families. The guidelines also stress the importance of paying appropriate attention to adults with disabilities. Guyana revised its Education Bill and included provisions on persons with disabilities or with special needs and their

access to distance and continuing education. Furthermore, the revised Education Bill emphasized the decentralization of the education system, the establishment of boards of governors, distance and continuing learning, and financing.

Similarly, Montenegro has made impressive progress in terms of developing strategic policy documents that aim to better the situations of vulnerable groups in society. One of the documents adopted there, the Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities 2016–2020, focuses on improving the situation of vulnerable groups through adult education. The Adult Education Law was amended in 2017 to introduce a new article on equality and the Employment Agency of Montenegro has a Fund for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, with programmes aimed at ensuring that persons with disabilities are employed and live independent and dignified lives.

At the stage of programme/service development and implementation for the benefit of people with disabilities, a number of countries report impressive progress in *GRALE 4*. Cyprus, Malaysia and the United States have focused on similar aspects of fostering more collaboration and coordination among concerned institutions to provide improved programmes and services to people with disabilities. More specifically, Cyprus is working on improving the governance of the education sector as a whole. In terms of programmes for people with disabilities, more collaboration between various concerned institutions—public, community, non-profit—are important for successful implementation of programmes for adults with disabilities. These include sports programmes, as well as other new programmes in rural areas of the country.

For Malaysia, programmes that require inter-ministerial collaboration are implemented to promote lifelong learning for people on low incomes and people with disabilities. Similarly, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the US Department of Labor is working to improve the coordination of services, education and training for vulnerable groups. Under the Act, six core programmes were established, one of which is the vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities.

Emphasis is placed on promoting access to education and workforce services for individuals with significant barriers to employment, such as people with disabilities, veterans and out-of-school youth.

Meanwhile, countries such as Georgia, Malta and Slovenia are working on improving their existing programmes or developing new ones to address their country-specific challenges. In Malta, actions taken to implement the Lifelong Learning Strategy include one that focuses on the evaluation of inclusive practices in the provision of lifelong learning courses for people with special needs and disabilities. The main focus is on how people with disabilities and special needs are supported, not only at the stage when they apply to take a course but also throughout their learning journey. Georgia is focusing mainly on short-term training programmes for job seekers to promote their competitiveness and employability prospects. These state-funded short-term training courses and internship programmes are designed for all citizens of Georgia over 16 years of age, but priority is given to vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities.

Germany, Japan and the Republic of Korea seem to have made particular progress in terms of promoting access to adult and lifelong education for people with disabilities. Germany has made many efforts to improve its ALE policy and legal frameworks, and has introduced a new law on educational leave and several other legislative frameworks at the state and federal level to ensure more funds and programmes/services are accessible to more groups of people who wish to access ALE. But, importantly, digitization has recently been considered an important means of increasing access to vocational education and training for persons with disabilities.

For Japan, recent enactment of new laws and policies, including revamping the Lifelong Learning Act, and the development and implementation of new funding and programme initiatives in the past couple of years, will be of great benefit to people with disabilities. The establishment in 2017 of the Office for Promoting Support of Learning of the People with Disability in the Ministry of Education, which comes with funding and measures to promote access and participation of people with disabilities, also includes

funding for practical research programmes related to supporting the learning of this target group after graduation. In addition, the introduction of lifelong education vouchers in 2018 will ease the financial burden for people with disabilities and those on low incomes, for whom access to education is limited. Moreover, the expansion of online ecosystems of lifelong education will broaden access for people with disabilities.

The Republic of Korea has also made much progress in recent years in terms of increasing support for people with disabilities. The country has recently increased its budget for the National Centre for Lifelong Education Promotion for the Disabled, and the recent adoption of the fifth Five-Year Plan for the Advancement of Special Education (2018–2022) promises to ensure better social integration of recipients of special education. Literacy and credit accreditation programmes for people with disabilities will be developed for different types of disabilities, and a strengthening of the Korean Massive Open Online Course (K-MOOC) will promote access to lifelong education for people with disabilities. Like Japan, the country has introduced lifelong education vouchers to assist low-income earners and people with disabilities to participate in lifelong education programmes.

In summary, despite some positive developments, adults with disabilities continue to have low visibility in ALE. While policy documents worldwide speak to the importance of providing people with disabilities the same opportunities to fulfil their aspirations as those without disabilities, they continue to face major barriers in accessing ALE. And although digitization and mobile technologies are being adopted to promote open education, the resulting resources are not always accessible to people with disabilities (Marengo et al., 2018). The sheer scale of the challenges facing learners with disabilities represents an important challenge to the Sustainable Development Goals that strive to assure high-quality lives for all.

#### 10.1.6

### ADULTS WITH LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The Matthew Effect is a well-known principle when it comes to participation in ALE: without intervention, those who have acquired more education get more, and those that have not get little or nothing.

#### 10.1.6.1

### Low participation in ALE among adults with limited education

Ever since Johnston and Rivera's seminal study of participation was published in 1965, a person's educational attainment has generally been found to be the strongest single predictor of likelihood of taking part in adult learning and education. This relationship reveals a process that starts with the literacy culture of the family and continues through education and later life. Initial socialization impacts on the schooling and educational attainment that further fosters the readiness to engage in learning later in life. Through socialization within the family and later in the school, some people develop a positive disposition towards adult learning and education while others do not (see, for example, Boeren, 2016 and Desjardins, 2017).

The pattern can be seen in **Table 2.8**, which presents the likelihood of participating in ALE by educational attainment for countries that have taken part in PIAAC. Regardless of income, educational attainment was a very strong predictor of participation in ALE in all countries. The OECD average participation rate among those with less than a completed secondary education (< ISCED<sup>8</sup> 3) was 9% as compared to 69% among the group who had completed an academically oriented degree (ISCED 5A/6). Even countries such as Denmark and Sweden, known to be relatively inclusive societies, saw vast discrepancies,

8 The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is the framework used to compare statistics on the education systems of countries worldwide. It is an important tool used to facilitate international comparisons and to benchmark and monitor progress on international education goals. It is used to produce comparable data and indicators that reflect today's education priorities and policies. ISCED covers all formal and non-formal education programmes offered at any stage of life. ISCED was first developed by UNESCO in 1976. The classification was updated in 1997, 2011 and 2013 (see <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/international-standard-classification-education-isced>).

**TABLE 2.8**  
**Participation in ALE during a 12-month period, by educational attainment,**  
**adjusted percentages**

| Countries             | ISCED 5A/6 | ISCED 4/58 | ISCED 3 | < ISCED 3 |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|---------|-----------|
| Australia             | 76%        | 53%        | 24%     | 13%       |
| Austria               | 70%        | 62%        | 30%     | 12%       |
| Canada                | 72%        | 53%        | 30%     | 13%       |
| Chile                 | 78%        | 44%        | 22%     | 6%        |
| Cyprus                | 62%        | 28%        | 16%     | 2%        |
| Czechia               | 67%        | 58%        | 31%     | 7%        |
| Denmark               | 81%        | 75%        | 43%     | 23%       |
| England (UK)          | 72%        | 57%        | 0%      | 13%       |
| Estonia               | 74%        | 46%        | 19%     | 9%        |
| Finland               | 84%        | 60%        | 38%     | 11%       |
| Flanders              | 70%        | 61%        | 22%     | 6%        |
| France                | 56%        | 45%        | 20%     | 7%        |
| Germany               | 72%        | 59%        | 31%     | 10%       |
| Greece                | 39%        | 20%        | 7%      | 2%        |
| Ireland               | 75%        | 38%        | 23%     | 10%       |
| Israel                | 67%        | 47%        | 22%     | 4%        |
| Italy                 | 53%        | 15%        | 13%     | 3%        |
| Japan                 | 63%        | 36%        | 16%     | 8%        |
| Lithuania             | 65%        | 14%        | 5%      | 1%        |
| Netherlands           | 79%        | 75%        | 48%     | 20%       |
| New Zealand           | 78%        | 59%        | 47%     | 29%       |
| Northern Ireland (UK) | 68%        | 79%        | 44%     | 10%       |
| Norway                | 76%        | 60%        | 49%     | 23%       |
| Poland                | 61%        | 31%        | 9%      | 6%        |
| Republic of Korea     | 74%        | 55%        | 21%     | 5%        |
| Singapore             | 78%        | 54%        | 21%     | 10%       |
| Slovakia              | 56%        | 22%        | 17%     | 1%        |
| Slovenia              | 77%        | 65%        | 26%     | 6%        |
| Spain                 | 72%        | 45%        | 27%     | 9%        |
| Sweden                | 81%        | 65%        | 45%     | 20%       |
| Turkey                | 48%        | 40%        | 15%     | 3%        |
| United States         | 77%        | 59%        | 27%     | 10%       |
| OECD average          | 69%        | 52%        | 27%     | 9%        |

Source: OECD, 2019a

despite a comparatively high participation rate (around 20%) in the low attainment group. Educational attainment and literacy capability are closely intertwined and work together to exclude educationally disadvantaged people from ALE.

## 10.1.6.2

**Low literacy proficiency is a barrier to participation in ALE**

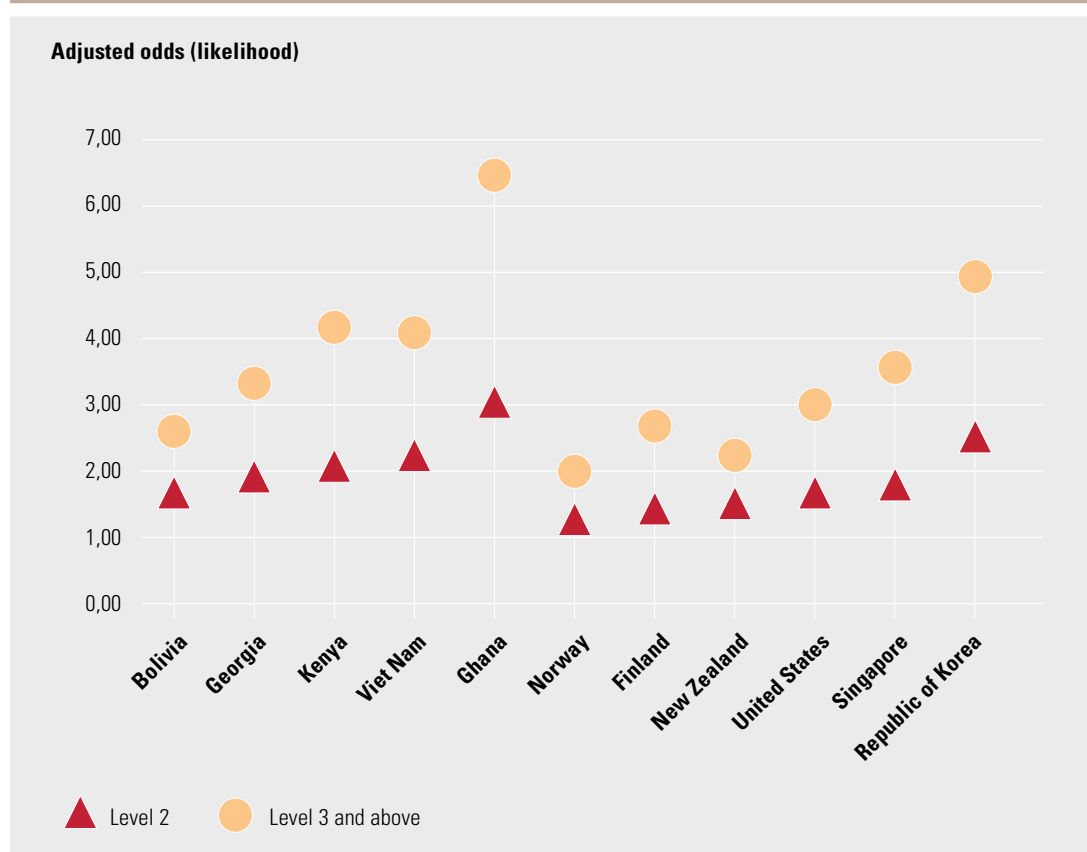
Not only does early socialization impact on educational attainment, but a lack of stimulation may result in some not reaching the level of literacy that is critical for citizens to function in the society and economy in which they live. With employer-supported ALE playing an ever-increasing role in participation, particularly in high-income countries, a person's literacy capacity is of vital importance. Thus, an employers' readiness to invest in an employees' learning tends to be even more impacted by the person's literacy capacity than educational attainment, although they are closely related (Desjardins, 2019). The strong link between participating in employer-supported ALE and literacy is illustrated in **Figure 2.23**, a report on the likelihood of participating in employer-

supported ALE of a duration of at least five days in selected PIAAC and STEP countries. The likelihood is expressed in an adjusted odds ratio, adjusted for age, as literacy capacity has been shown to vary between different age groups.

In all the included countries, those with the highest literacy levels (Level 3 or above) were much more likely to have participated in some form of employer-supported ALE. The differences were particularly stark in Ghana and the Republic of Korea, where those in the highest literacy group were about 6.5 and 5 times, respectively, more likely to have participated in employer-supported ALE than those at Level 1. The discrepancy can sometimes be smaller—as in the case of Norway, where those with the highest literacy scores were twice as likely to have participated.

FIGURE 2.23

**Likelihood of participating in employer-supported ALE for five days or longer by literacy level. Adjusted odds quote for selected countries. The adjusted odds quote for those with the lowest literacy level (1) is set to 1**



Source: OECD, 2019a; World Bank, 2019

Literacy capacity is a key distinguishing characteristic among those with low participation in ALE, even among adults within particularly vulnerable groups (low educational attainment, low income, unemployed). Thus, adults within specific vulnerable groups who have medium to high literacy skills are substantially more likely to participate in adult education and training than adults in the same group who instead have low literacy skills (Rubenson et al., 2007). Low literacy skills form the hub of a multiple set of disadvantages that heightens exclusion from ALE. Similarly, in developing countries, the effects of low educational attainment and restricted literacy capacity are compounded by poverty (UIL, 2017a, b, c).

The distressing fact about the effect of low educational attainment and literacy capacity is that it not only impacts on the person, but also often forms a cycle of intergenerational disadvantage where the children of parents who have no or little interest in education transmit this disposition to their children. The power of this is so strong that there is convincing evidence that, in most countries, even after controlling for the effects of family on education and career, parents' educational attainment still shows a direct effect on an adult's inclination to attend some form of ALE (see, for example, Boeren, 2016; Desjardins, 2019).

#### 10.1.6.3

##### **Some progress in addressing the learning needs of adults with low levels of education and skills**

According to the *GRALE 4* survey, 87% of countries were able to report on changes in ALE participation among adults disadvantaged due to lack of education and skills. Moreover, half of the countries reported that this group had increased its enrolment in ALE since 2015. Twelve of the countries gave examples of notable progress to improve access to and participation in ALE for adults disadvantaged due to lack of education and skills. Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, the Netherlands, Palau, Saudi Arabia, El Salvador, the Syrian Arab Republic and South Sudan described educational initiatives which aim to create more opportunities through social equity.

#### **BOX 2.14**

##### **Clare Family Learning (Ireland)**

Funded by the Department of Education, the programme aims to improve the literacy and numeracy of both parents and their children by working with parents to develop their interests, abilities and knowledge in order to help them better support and encourage their children's educational attainment. Using English as the language of instruction, the programme employs a variety of teaching methodologies, including small-group and paired work, and interactive sessions involving visuals, audios, clips and DVDs. Learning methods used include presentations, discussions, walking debates, hands-on activities and role-playing. Everyday materials are used as resources for learning activities. ICT is embedded in every class. In addition, laptops and smartphones play an important role in class.

Target participants of the programme are single-parent families, teenage/young parents, refugees, migrant workers and carers and foster parents. After taking part in the programme, parents can progress to accredited courses to obtain certificates at various qualification levels. The programme has made a substantial impact at local, national and international levels.

Source: UIL, LitBase

In Mali, thousands of unschooled and out-of-school adolescents aged 9 to 15 participate in non-formal education programmes. There are more programmes for youth in Côte d'Ivoire as a result of there being more actors in the field of adult education. The Netherlands has a comprehensive programme implemented to reach out to adults lacking basic skills (literacy, digital skills and numeracy).

Palau mandates formal education for ages 6 to 17—if a person does not receive a high school diploma, they will be eligible at age 18 to sit the HiSet equivalency test. Additionally, adult education programmes are available for adults unsuccessful in the HiSet programme.

Saudi Arabia launched a lifelong education initiative, called Istadama, to support adults ages 15 and above to become more literate, to provide them with essential life skills and to promote lifelong education. The initiative further seeks to enable people of both sexes, ages 15 to 50, who are outside the scope of formal education and have poor educational qualifications (secondary school and below), to access a range of education and training opportunities.

El Salvador defines specific plans each year to advance the literacy effort in municipalities, improving access by integrating more people. Other options have also opened up for young people and adults outside the system, with efforts to make education more flexible. Similarly, education centres for internally displaced peoples (IDPs) in South Sudan have established mobile centres that target various settlement groups in villages, markets and primary schools as part of the Alternative Education System. The number of learners who participate in adult education programmes to obtain a ninth-grade level certificate has gone up as a result.

In Brazil, Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA) classes target people who did not have access or opportunity to study in primary and secondary education at the typical age, while, in Estonia, new programmes have been developed to provide schooling for learners without basic or secondary education.

Finally, according to a new policy in New Zealand, adults who previously studied for less than half of a full year of tertiary education or industry training will qualify for one year of free provider-based learning. The changes, introduced in 2018, were the first step in the government's efforts to provide a full programme of three years of tertiary education and training without fees for New Zealanders by 2024.

#### 10.1.6.4

#### **Conclusion**

All data confirm that not even countries that are generally seen to be leaders in reaching those with limited schooling have had much success in recruiting adults with a short formal education. In view of the documented impacts of literacy not only on economic outcomes but also social, political, psychological, health and family outcomes

(St Clair, 2010, p. 37), the findings are worrying. To address the intergenerational link and its effect on exclusion from learning, it is not enough to pay lip service to lifelong learning and the need to develop policies with a lifecycle perspective. While early intervention is important, it is crucial to realize the importance of assisting parents to become literate and thereby be in a position to help their children embrace a literate culture.

#### 10.1.7

#### **REACHING THE TARGET GROUPS: AN UNFINISHED AGENDA**

The Introduction to Part 2 noted that while ALE can constitute an essential resource in efforts to achieve the sustainability agenda, it can only do so if countries find ways to encourage all citizens to participate in learning activities. It was pointed out that it is of particular importance to better serve the key target groups identified in the Belém Framework for Action.

The review of the learning situation of the target groups is made difficult by a lack of adequate global data on participation, as discussed in Chapter 8, but, nonetheless, it is evident that the most vulnerable are being excluded from benefitting from ALE. The patterns of exclusion and the degree vary across regions and countries, but the challenge remains.

In some parts of the world, girls and women still have no access to education and, with many of them illiterate, they have few employment opportunities or possibilities to become full participants in the society they live in. The situation for women in the developed world is quite different and their active participation in education, including ALE, is one of the success stories of recent decades. However, they still face some barriers in gaining equal access to employer-supported learning.

The rural population in parts of the developing world, especially women, face multiple deprivations, including in terms of learning opportunities. This has left many of them illiterate and without the possibility of employment. There are some interesting new ALE initiatives, but often this group has no access to quality learning opportunities. Their

desperate situation is contributing to the increase in migration, and many of those that leave end up in urban slums facing even more limited access to education, including ALE.

Migrants and refugees are facing hard competition for employment and, unfortunately, those with limited literacy proficiency often tend not to participate in the language courses that have been made available to them by their new home countries. They also suffer from difficulties in getting access to employer-supported learning. An issue for the adult population living in camps in Jordan and other neighbouring countries is that the international aid organizations mostly focus on the education of children, neglecting the needs of parents.

Adult education for people with disabilities continues to be given little attention by most countries. Nevertheless, we have been able to point to examples of good practice in low- and medium-income countries as well as high-income countries such as Ireland.

The importance of reaching older adults, even those that have left the labour market, is often also neglected. There are some recent initiatives, particularly in Asian countries, that warrant closer examination.

Finally, adults with limited initial education continue to have relatively low participation in ALE. Even in countries that have given more attention to this matter, this target group continues to be excluded overall.

The review presented here has pointed to some factors that help explain the exclusion of the target groups from participation in ALE. The next chapter will analyse these barriers in more depth. This information is essential as it will give countries further insight as to how more equal access can be achieved—a critical demand if we are to make progress against the Sustainable Development Goals.



## CHAPTER 11

# WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS PREVENTING PARTICIPATION IN ALE?

Barriers can be thought of as obstacles that hinder certain individuals and groups from participating in ALE. These barriers need to be broken down as much as possible as they make the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals both more challenging and less likely. It is important that we begin to tackle them, and that we do so with some urgency.

As in *GRALE 1* and *GRALE 2* (UIL, 2009, 2013), Cross's classification of barriers hindering participation (Cross, 1981) will be used to organize the discussion. The three categories of barrier are:

- 1) situational barriers (those arising from one's situation in life);
- 2) institutional barriers (practices and procedures that hinders participation);
- 3) dispositional barriers (attitudes and dispositions towards learning).

In what follows, the available empirical evidence on barriers preventing participation in ALE is critically discussed.

## 11.1

## SITUATIONAL BARRIERS

While there are vast differences to the barriers people face in different regions of the world, there are also some similarities, although not necessarily in terms of intensity. Noticing the impact of inequalities, ALE scholars are increasingly pointing to the role macro-level structural conditions play in creating circumstances that encourage some and discourage others to participate (Boeren, 2016; Desjardins, 2017; Lee, 2018; Rubenson and Desjardins, 2009). At the centre of these discussions are the impact of the political structures, rules and norms that regulate government in a state, the level of inequalities, and the state's capacity to

implement policies and structure, including in the area of ALE, that benefit vulnerable groups.

The CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review regional report for Latin America and the Caribbean (UIL, 2017a, p. 5) notes that low levels of education and literacy in the region reflect the complex relationship between educational and social contexts. The report points to the impact of rampant social and economic inequalities, the predominant economic model of development in LAC countries, the political culture in the region and broader historical processes. Similarly, when discussing the precarious literacy situation in the South Asian sub-region, the regional report for Asia and the Pacific (UIL, 2017b) emphasizes the impact of the devastating inequities caused by poverty.

Inequities and an inability to deliver a fairer wealth distribution across different sub-populations is not only an issue in the developing world but also in rich countries. The Nobel prizewinner in economics, Joseph Stiglitz, found that the situation in the United States, which has long had some of the highest levels of inequality in the world, is getting worse (Stiglitz, 2018). This has resulted in reduced equality of opportunity as the less well-off are increasingly finding it difficult to access social services, including ALE. These findings thus go strongly against the direction set by the 2030 Agenda.

Poverty and economic inequalities are not the only macro-oriented factors driving exclusion in ALE. National or regional culture and traditions can also work to reduce the learning opportunities for some groups. As discussed above, this is the reason why young girls and women are actively being prevented from accessing education in some countries.

Commonly, surveys on participation, such as PIAAC and AES, ask respondents to indicate what has prevented them from participating in some form of ALE they had considered pursuing. These surveys do not directly shed light on how the broader cultural, social and economic context impacts on participation; however, they say something about how people experience their everyday life acting as a barrier to participation. Unfortunately, this information is almost exclusively available for high-income countries only, a problematic issue discussed in Chapter 9.

Findings may vary between surveys because of differences in methodology, target group, list of barriers and so on, but, nonetheless, some types of barrier are consistently found to be of crucial importance. Looking across various surveys from high-income countries, situational barriers related to a lack of time are almost always the most frequently given reason for not wanting to attend, or having been unable to commence, studies that the respondent had wanted to take. In Kenya, being too busy was offered much less often (11%) as the reason for not enrolling in a literacy programme. However, it was a somewhat a more common reason for dropping out of programme, 18%, as shown in **Table 2.9**.

In high-income countries, being too busy at work is by far the most common cause of lack of time. However, there were major differences between countries in the importance different barriers played depending on national cultures, the lifelong learning system and the existence of social and economic support structures. For example, being prevented by work was particularly prevalent in the Republic of Korea, Italy and Japan. There were major gender differences, with men more often than women referring to this as a significant obstacle (OECD, 2015b). As the barrier 'busy at work' is related to being gainfully employed, it was rarely mentioned by women in countries with a low female labour force participation rate.

Family obligations, another situational barrier, also stood out as a major deterrent, but to a somewhat lesser degree than work obligations. Not surprisingly, women, and particularly those with young children, are more prone to refer to family responsibilities than men (see, for example, Massing and Gauly, 2017). The situation is particularly precarious for a single woman with children living on a low income (Flynn, Brown, Johnson and Rodger, 2011). In all but four of the 30 countries, 10% or less of men saw childcare as a hindrance, while in just over half of the countries, 20% or more of women identified family obligations as a barrier.

**TABLE 2.9**  
**Barriers to participating in and completing literacy programmes in Kenya**

| Barrier            | Reason for not participating | Reason for leaving programme |
|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Literate/complete  | 41%                          | N/A                          |
| No centre nearby   | 30%                          | 18%                          |
| Lack of teachers   | 1%                           | 28%                          |
| Not interested     | 6%                           | 5%                           |
| Costly             | 1%                           | 2%                           |
| Too old to attend  | 2%                           | 3%                           |
| Busy               | 11%                          | 18%                          |
| Illness/disability | 1%                           | 5%                           |
| Other              | 8%                           | 13%                          |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>59%</b>                   | <b>92%</b>                   |

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2007

## 11.2 INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

A review of government representatives from 11 African countries and educational leaders who oversaw rural development programmes identified a lack of ready access to quality education and training for all age groups as the greatest challenge in serving rural populations (FAO, 2009). The costs in time and money required to travel to the closest learning site prevented participation. In rural areas, telecommunications that could be an option for delivering ALE programmes was commonly less developed than in urban areas.

The Kenya Literacy Survey tells the same story. A lack of centres nearby was cited as a major barrier in the country, where 30% of those that had not begun a programme and 18% of those that had dropped out mentioned it as the reason for their decision (see **Table 2.9**). This was by far the strongest barrier among the rural population; close to half of the respondents in Kenya's North Eastern province gave this as a reason for not attending a literacy programme.

Similarly, the administrative survey on adult education and literacy programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean (UIS, 2013), the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review of Asia and the Pacific (UIL, 2017b), as well as the Nepal literacy review (Government of Nepal Ministry of Education Non Formal Education Centre, 2017), all bear witness to how a lack of ALE infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, excludes large segments of the population from participating.

A lack of access to courses or programmes also surfaced in the PIAAC survey on barriers in high-income countries. While recognizing that not all courses and programmes are available through a quickly expanding distance education field it is interesting to note that inconvenient times and places continue to be major hindrances. This barrier was comparatively frequently mentioned in Japan (22%) and Finland (21%). Overall, the idea of hindering participation in ALE because of a lack of available programmes is disturbing and needs to be thought through by countries to further facilitate their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Another prevalent institutional hindrance that stood out in the PIAAC survey was not being able to afford to participate in ALE (too expensive/no money). Cost was a particularly strong deterrent in some countries, for instance Slovenia, where it was the most often mentioned hindrance, at 25%. In contrast it was only referred to by 7% of respondents in Finland. The differences between these two countries reflect the extent to which the individual has to bear the cost of ALE. In Finland, the figure was only 10%, while in Slovenia it was 37% (see UIL, 2017e, p. 2, which reports on funding by stakeholders in 2009). Although a little dated, it is worth noting that the Eurobarometer survey of public opinion on lifelong learning found that only between 12% and 21%, depending on purpose, were willing to pay all of the cost for studying, while close to 50% would pay none of the cost (Chisholm et al., 2004, p. 86). While this might be perceived as an individual decision, it is also important to underline that the ways in which countries and education and training institutions set their fees clearly contributes to the notion of institutional barriers.

Returning to the PIAAC survey, it is also worth noting that in another seven countries, 20% or more indicated cost as a hindrance. In some of the countries, cost was a relatively more important barrier among women than men, for whom the work situation tended to dominate as a barrier. Not surprisingly, but importantly, fewer people in upper-income brackets mentioned financial reasons. This interesting finding goes against the wish of the sustainability agenda to create more equal societies and to make sure that everyone in life gets optimal chances, independent of who they are or where they come from. This currently does not resonate with the observed inequalities in access to and participation in ALE.

Though not confirmed by information from household surveys, it is important to keep in mind that most documents on the situation of ALE in developing countries see the lack of funds as an absolutely fundamental barrier. The report on the outcome of the Nepal literacy campaign attributes the relative lack of success in the last couple of years to an inability to find sustainable financing of the local CLCs that are the backbone of the literacy strategy (Government of Nepal Ministry of Education Non Formal Education

Centre, 2017). This conclusion echoes the financial concerns raised in almost all of the examples from developing countries of exemplary literacy initiatives presented in the UIL literacy and numeracy practices database, LitBase (UIL, 2019b). Again, these observations demonstrate that many adults do not get access to ALE and, thus, miss the opportunity to profit from its many benefits, as highlighted in *GRALE 3*. This is problematic in light of Member States' commitment to implementing the sustainability agenda.

### 11.3 DISPOSITIONAL BARRIERS

There are two fundamentally different approaches in measuring barriers; the choice of approach has far-reaching implications on the information that is being gathered, and consequently on the opportunities for formulating policy recommendations. Surveys such as the Kenya Literacy Survey asked those that reported that they had not participated in ALE why they had not enrolled in a literacy programme during the previous 12 months. The same principle was used in several earlier European surveys (e.g. in the UK National Adult Learning Survey and in Norwegian and Swedish surveys). In these cases, as in the Kenyan survey, 'lack of interest' is treated as part of the cluster of barriers. In contrast, in PIAAC and AES, a lack of interest is not seen as a barrier: the logic is that barriers come into being only when an expressed wish to participate is not realized. The task is then to find out the impediment that prevented participation. Accordingly, it is irrelevant to raise the question of barriers with individuals who have no interest in participating. This dominant approach to collecting information on barriers leads to a serious underestimation, not to say neglect, of fundamental dispositional barriers.

In almost all countries with information on the barriers among non-interested respondents, reports show that a sizeable share of the population face dispositional barriers. In the 11 European countries that took part in the Eurobarometer survey on lifelong learning, the proportion raising these kinds of barriers varied from a low of 14% in Denmark to a high of 31% in the UK (Chisholm et al., 2004). Similarly, Livingstone (1999) reports that psychological factors have a major impact on Canadians' readiness to seek organized

learning activities. Some 35% stated that they did not need more education. A similar sentiment was expressed by the 41% of Kenyans that had not wanted to enrol because they considered themselves 'literate enough' (see **Table 2.9**).

Comparing participants with non-participants, several studies indicate that, for a sizeable segment of the population, dispositional barriers are by far the greatest deterring factor (Rubenson, 2007). A lack of interest often reflects a subjective rationality that is constructed around the person's cultural belonging, identity and life context, particularly as it relates to work (Rubenson, 2011). For a person who has a monotonous, menial or otherwise unengaging job or is without a job, and sees no opportunity for better employment, the decision to not engage in adult learning or education becomes a highly rational act (Paldanius, 2007). For this person to enrol in a course or programme, she/he must gain belief that studying will positively affect their work situation. Engaging in studies for reasons other than work is alien to this person's outlook and identity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, persons with low literacy skills in Nepal expressed the same sentiment (Government of Nepal Ministry of Education Non Formal Education Centre, 2017).

These findings on the role of dispositional barriers speak to Sen's (1999) concept of human capability and functioning, which stresses the importance not only of having internal resources (i.e. knowledge or skills such as literacy) or external resources (i.e. money) available—but also of knowing about the range of possibilities for the employment of these resources to realize things that matter to them. In this sense, dispositional barriers can be seen as factors that restrict a person's capability and, hence, freedom to participate. Consequently, it would be important to recognize that some citizens may not be able to even contemplate participation in ALE. This is a theme that can be found in the literature on women's rights to learning and literacy in the developing world. Reviewing the literature, Eldred and colleagues (2014, p. 659) argue: 'Gender roles, beliefs and cultures that discriminate against women can prevent them from believing that education is possible for them.' And, as Desjardins and Rubenson (2009) conclude, structural conditions can limit the

feasible alternatives to choose from. Similarly, Nussbaum (2002) points out, people living under difficult conditions tend to accept their fate because they cannot imagine any reasonable alternative. This is a problematic situation faced by millions of adults across the globe and needs urgently to be addressed by policy-makers. Too many people are missing out on ALE and the benefits it can generate, as demonstrated in *GRALE 3*.

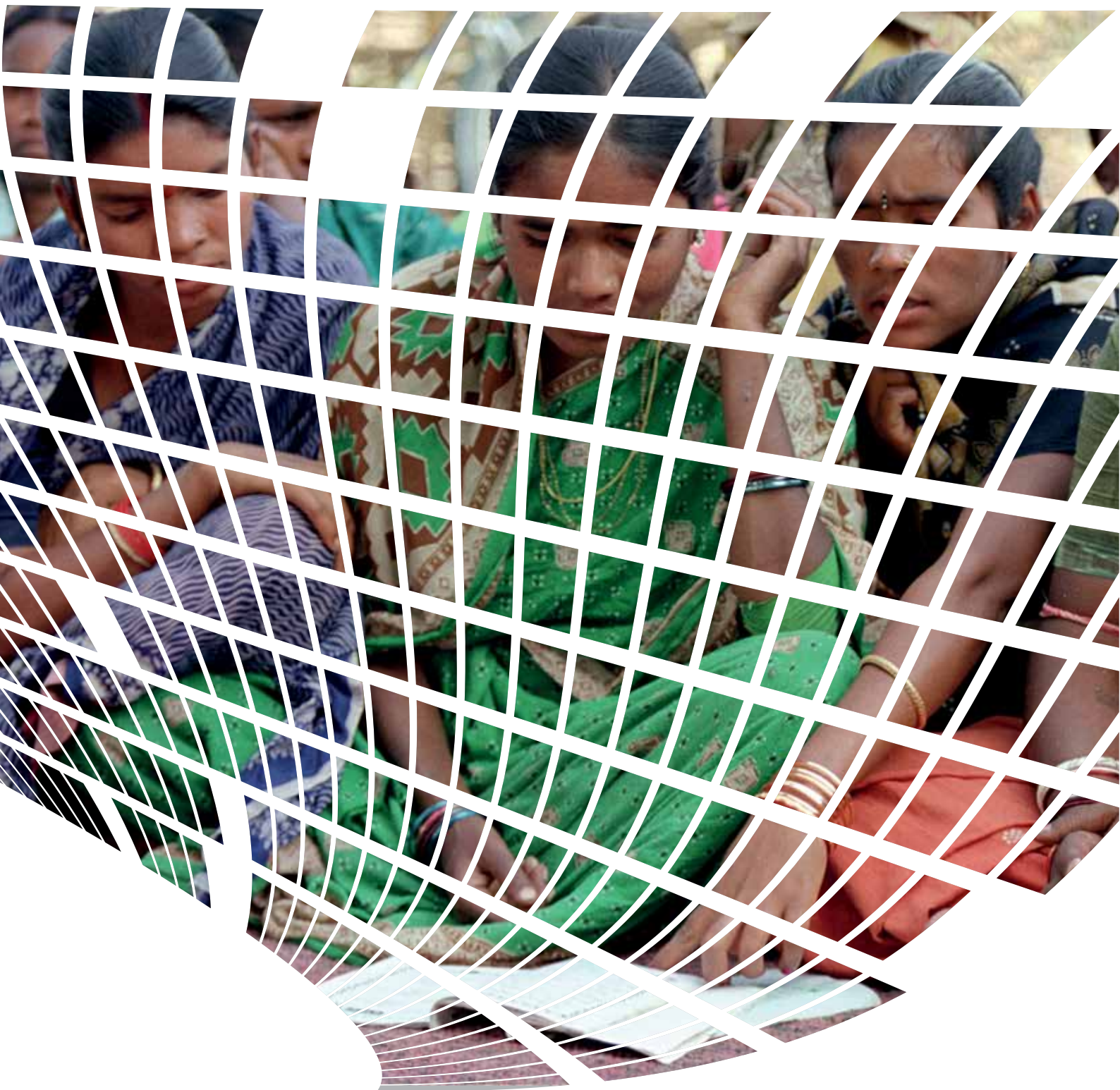
#### 11.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated that barriers to participation in ALE are widespread and are of high concern. The major barriers found in this review can be summarized as follows:

- Macro-level structural conditions, such as the political structures, rules and norms that regulate government in a state, inequality and the state's capacity to implement policies, are driving the process of exclusion from ALE, denying large groups in society the benefits that follow from participating in learning activities.
- Those that find themselves living in poverty or under other restraints such as monotonous or menial work may not be able to even contemplate participating in adult learning and education. This suggests that trying to recruit the hard-to-reach is less a matter of overcoming situational or institutional barriers, but rather overcoming their belief that they have nothing to gain by studying.

- The dominant surveys are constructed in a way that does not allow a closer analysis of the role of dispositional barriers. This has serious implications for their usefulness for the development of an evidence-based policy agenda.
- Sizeable groups in some countries face institutional barriers such as a lack of access to courses and programmes and/or high costs. It is important to note that the extent to which cost is seen as barrier is directly linked to the fees paid for participating in ALE.
- A lack of time because of work and, to a lesser extent, family obligations are mentioned by many as the reason they could not attend a course or programme they had wanted to take.

Chapter 12 will look more deeply at how these barriers can be addressed. As mentioned above, this is essential as too many adults are prevented by these barriers from fully enjoying the benefits of ALE, a fact with serious implications for national and international efforts to achieve the SDGs.



## CHAPTER 12

# ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Tackling inequities in ALE is a daunting task. Ultimately, as discussed in Chapter 10, the processes of exclusion are driven by rampant social and economic inequalities. Sadly, mainstream economic theory informing policy tends to focus on economic growth rather than 'on more equitably sharing its fruits' (Stilwell, 2016, p. 30). Addressing how resources are presently shared puts the state in the spotlight and calls for citizens' engagement with political and economic power (ibid.). While recognizing the centrality of the broader structural conditions, particularly poverty and economic inequalities, this chapter, informed by the findings on participation and barriers, will look somewhat more narrowly at how situational, institutional and dispositional barriers can be reduced, an essential precondition to enabling ALE to achieve its potential as contributor to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The discussion will focus on four key areas that are central to achieving more equal access:

- Creating awareness of ALE as a way to overcome dispositional barriers;
- Development of appropriate financial support mechanisms for vulnerable groups in order to reduce institutional and situational barriers;
- Addressing how work impacts on participation in ALE and can affect all three categories of barriers;
- Development of more appropriate provision to reduce situational and institutional barriers.

## 12.1

## CREATING AWARENESS OF ALE

The Belém Framework of Action speaks of the need to develop a broad culture of learning that can draw new groups into participating. International Adult Learners' Week is often referred to in this context as a way of displaying a broad spectrum of learning activities to a wider public and celebrating those who return to learning as adults. They also offer a way of connecting different providers and agencies and, in the process, develop a wider support structure for ALE in the community (UIL, 2003).

At its best, Adult Learners Week allows learners' voices to be heard and provides a channel for them to express their learning needs and aspirations. This aspect is important and, too often, not adhered to when reaching out to vulnerable groups, as demonstrated in the following citation: 'The present framework of literacy programme implementation is coloured by a 'top-down' approach, which may not suit the people living in adverse conditions, disadvantaged communities and people residing in remote rural areas' (Government of Nepal Ministry of Education Non-Formal Education Centre, 2017, p. 46).

The importance of anchoring an awareness campaign within the target group has proven an essential dimension of a successful outreach programme. This was one of the pillars in the Swedish reform of adult education in the 1970s. The overall aim was to reach those groups that had not seen ALE as something for them (Rubenson and Desjardins, 2009). State financing made it possible for local shop stewards to do outreach work during work time, and for immigrant organizations and other target groups (e.g. the disabled, older adults, etc.) to receive support for outreach within their communities.

While activities such as Adult Learners Week and literacy campaigns are important vehicles for raising the general awareness of ALE, ambitious and continuous outreach programmes need to tackle a wider range of barriers, including dispositional barriers and the need for long-term earmarked funding.

## 12.2

### PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

It is widely accepted that major resource allocation shifts will need to take place if significant progress is to be made in poverty reduction (FAO, 2009). SDG 1 on poverty reduction therefore speaks to the need of strengthening domestic resource mobilization and the role rich countries will have to play. Developed countries are urged to deliver on their commitment to provide 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) in official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries and 0.15%–0.20% to least-developed countries. According to OECD statistics, in 2018 only 4 out of 28 countries met the development assistance target of 0.7%. It is not only the lack of financial resources that hampers educational efforts in the most vulnerable regions. ALE programmes promoting access have not benefited from the same pace of financing and progress enjoyed by formal education (*ibid.*). This is not only the case in developing countries but also in developed countries, where ALE receives a very small share of total funding for education (UIL, 2013, 2016; Schuller and Watson, 2009).

Despite elaborate proclamations in national and international policy documents of the importance of lifelong learning to meet social and economic challenges, the conclusion drawn in *GRALE 2* (UIL, 2013, p. 77), that ‘adult education remains a low priority for investment for governments and international development assistance alike’, rings as true today as ever, demonstrated in earlier chapters of this report. For ALE to contribute fully to the realization of the SDG agenda, Member States need to rebalance the share of funding that goes to ALE.

Governments are not the only, and often not the main, funder of ALE; employers and individuals bear a large share of the costs and a fair and efficient cost-sharing scheme

has to be at the centre of a national strategy for lifelong learning. However, governments have a particular responsibility for ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable groups. There is no evidence to suggest that the market will somehow respond to the learning needs of the unemployed, educationally disadvantaged, older adults or any other vulnerable groups. On the contrary, a central role for governments is to address market failures in ALE (OECD, 2005). Governments also shape the legal and policy context in which non-public provision functions (this can be particularly important in avoiding fraud and corruption).

From this perspective, it is important to note that while all countries struggle to include vulnerable populations in ALE, some countries, as alluded to in Section 12.1, have constantly been referred to as good examples. Among this group are the Nordic countries, but lately also the Netherlands and, to some extent, New Zealand. In the complex web of structures, systems and policies that impacts on adult learning and education, a few factors appear to be of special significance: welfare spending, funding mechanisms, active labour market policies, industrial relations, provision of adult education, and recruitment strategies.

Desjardins (2017) found that there does not seem to be a simple relationship between overall welfare state expenditure and participation by the most disadvantaged. Nordic countries provide the highest level of welfare spending, but the Netherlands—which is among the most successful in extending ALE to the least educated—allocates less per head than Italy, which has a low level of success when it comes to reaching the most vulnerable. Continental European countries spend substantially more than Anglo-Saxon countries but cannot match the latter when it comes to reaching vulnerable groups. The explanation of what might seem to be a paradox is, according to Desjardins, that it is not the overall amount but, rather, how it is directed that determines a country’s ability to reach vulnerable groups. Certain welfare programmes are not as relevant for overcoming barriers to adult learning and education as others. For example, continental European countries spend generously on health and the elderly, which unlike spending on active labour market programmes, is somewhat distant

TABLE 2.10

Participation in ALE among the unemployed and those with low educational attainment, and distribution of funding between stakeholders

| Countries      | Participation 2015 |               | Funding mechanisms |       |                   |          |        |                 |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------|-------------------|----------|--------|-----------------|
|                | Unemployed         | Low-qualified | Individuals        | State | Employment agency | Employer | Others | Year of funding |
| Austria        | 16.6%              | 4.5%          | 24%                | 10%   | 26%               | 40%      | -      | 2009            |
| Denmark        | 28.9%              | 21.7%         | 17%                | 31%   | -                 | 53%      | -      | 2009            |
| Finland        | 19.1%              | 12.8%         | 10%                | 12%   | 35%               | 43%      | -      | 2009            |
| Germany        | 6.2%               | 3.4%          | 30%                | 15%   | 4%                | 51%      | -      | 2008            |
| Netherlands    | 18.3%              | 9.3%          | 16%                | 23%   | -                 | 61%      | -      | 2010            |
| Spain          | 11.2%              | 3.6%          | 33%                | 7%    | -                 | 55%      | 5%     | 2009            |
| Sweden         | 44.0%              | 20.0%         | 15%                | 41%   | -                 | 40%      | 3%     | 2009            |
| United Kingdom | 14.2%              | 6.8%          | 26%                | 17%   | -                 | 53%      | 5%     | 2008            |

Source: Fibs and Die, 2013; Eurostat, 2019b

from ALE. **Table 2.10**, which presents participation in ALE in 2015 for the unemployed and those with low educational attainment and funding mechanisms in selected countries, provides some support to this thesis.

In Denmark and Sweden, the countries that registered by far the highest participation rates among the unemployed and educationally disadvantaged, the state was responsible for a larger share of funding for ALE than in the other listed countries. The reason behind the positive outcomes in Denmark and Sweden is probably not only a generous public funding for ALE but also the way that this funding has been allocated.

Looking specifically at how public support for adult learning and education affects overall participation in ALE, Tuijnman and Hellström (2003) found no clear relationship between the two. However, the authors claim that public support seems to have a crucial effect on the participation of those least likely to enrol in adult education and training and conclude (*ibid.*, p. 9): 'Thus it may be the case, more generally, that public support for disadvantaged groups is the main, defining characteristic of Nordic approaches to adult education. For public spending to have a strong impact on reaching the most vulnerable groups, it has to be targeted to

these groups.' Returning to **Table 2.10**, the comparatively higher participation rates among unemployed and low-skilled adults in Denmark and Sweden is most likely a consequence of the funding mechanisms. According to Rubenson and Desjardins (2009), this is the reason that people in Nordic countries are more likely to overcome barriers that could make participating difficult.

Although there is no clear evidence that public funding of community learning centres (CLCs) is focused on vulnerable groups, one can make a strong argument that, with the main activities of CLCs in many developing countries being adult literacy courses, equivalency programmes and basic skills training for poverty, it is indeed a form of targeted funding focusing on vulnerable groups. And yet many CLCs do not sufficiently meet this group's needs since the services are rather designed to meet the demand of advantaged groups. This is a result of existing funding regimes not compensating for the increased costs involved in recruiting the underprivileged. In a time when government policies seek to increase efficiency through the adoption of a more market-oriented approach and outcomes-based funding, there is a growing likelihood that the organization will go after those easiest to recruit and more likely to succeed (Rubenson, 2006).

Instead, what is required is earmarked funding for targeted strategies aimed at reaching vulnerable groups. In some countries, this has taken the form of individual learning or training accounts (ILAs) designed to stimulate demand for ALE, which are then targeted at particular disadvantaged groups. While some view the early results as promising (OECD, 2019b, pp. 94–97), such schemes have yet to show whether they offer a sustainable long-term means of supporting the most vulnerable.

### 12.3

#### ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF WORK ON EXCLUSION FROM ALE

Roosmaa and Saar (2012, p. 48) argue that inequality in participation in non-formal learning in European countries is mainly a result of a person's position at work. This is not to deny a strong link between other individual characteristics and participation, but it highlights the importance of looking at work both as an enabler and a barrier to learning. This is especially relevant to the RALE domain of continuing education and professional development (vocational skills).

The Human Development Report 2015, *Work for Human Development* (UNDP, 2015), reminds us that a very large number of people around the globe find themselves in situations where they are denied a dignified life and also excluded from the world of learning. The report makes a strong case that women are disadvantaged in both paid and unpaid work, which affects their access to adult learning and education. The report further notes that, in a time of skills-biased technical change driven by the technological revolution, 'there has never been a worse time to be a worker with only ordinary skills' (ibid., p. 10).

A similar message emerges from a jointly released report by the OECD and ILO, *Global Skills Trends, Training Needs and Lifelong Learning Strategies for the Future of Work* (OECD and ILO, 2018), which forecasts that the world of work will continue to undergo rapid changes caused by technological development, demographics and globalization. This is expected to lead to further polarization, with growth in high-skill jobs and, at least in the short term, also in low-skill jobs, and with a decrease in

medium-level skill jobs, resulting in increased insecurity for low-skilled workers. The latter are deemed to lack the appropriate skills, particularly a readiness to learn, that more and more new jobs will demand.

While one has to be somewhat cautious about predictions of these kinds, there is ample evidence showing that readiness to learn is already of crucial importance in employers' decisions as to who to train. Desjardins (2019) concludes that while labour supply characteristics (gender, age, educational attainment, competencies) play an important role in who receives employer support, demand characteristics (firm size, industry, writing practices at work, etc.) are better predictors of who gets to participate in employer-supported learning and education (see Boeren, 2016; Desjardins, 2017; Livingstone, 2010; Markowitsch and Hefler, 2008). However, as he notes, employees with favourable supply characteristics as well as favourable demand characteristics benefit the most. These findings are important in the light of the SDG focus on decent work for all (SDG 8). People's occupational status and the chances they get to participate in ALE are clearly linked.

According to the ILO's Global Commission on the Future of Work, adequately addressing the challenges of the future of work requires dedicated action on the part of social partners such as governments and employers' and workers' organizations. The commission calls for a reinvigorated social contract that 'gives working people a just share of economic progress, respect for their rights and protection against risk in return for their continuing contribution to the economy' (ILO, 2019, p. 10). The right to skills and lifelong learning is a cornerstone in the new social contract. This includes the right to paid educational leave.

An example of what governments can do to minimize exclusion from the labour market and assist those at risk in finding secure and satisfying work is the Danish 'flexicurity' scheme (Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment, 2018), described in

#### **Box 2.16.**

One aspect that seems to be absent, or only vaguely hinted at, in the *Global Commission on the Future of Work: Work for a Brighter Future* report (ILO, 2019) is the necessity

### BOX 2.15 Investing in people's capabilities

*A universal entitlement to lifelong learning that enables people to acquire skills and to reskill and upskill.*

Lifelong learning encompasses formal and informal learning from early childhood, and basic education through to adult learning. Governments, workers and employers, as well as educational institutions, have complementary responsibilities in building an effective and appropriately financed lifelong learning ecosystem.

Source: ILO, 2019, p. 11

### BOX 2.16 The Danish flexicurity scheme

The principal aim of flexicurity is to promote employment security over job security, meaning protection focuses on workers rather than their jobs. Consequently, employers benefit from all the advantages of a flexible labour force, while employees can take comfort in a robust social safety net applied with active labour market policies, including adult education and learning.

Source: Andersen and Mailand, 2005; BNP Paribas, 2017

of striving towards economic democracy. While this might seem a lofty, utopian idea, we should not lose sight of the fact that the links between economic democracy, co-determination at work (workers having the power to influence the decisions of their employers) and lifelong learning were highlighted in the 1970s discussions of the role that lifelong learning could play for a more inclusive society (see Dave, 1976). In this perspective, adult education and training for work is not only a question of developing the broader skills to be able to perform the job, but also an issue of fostering a readiness to address work conditions and employee participation in co-determination.

## 12.4 INADEQUATE PROVISION OF ALE

Inadequate provision can result not only in institutional and dispositional barriers but will also affect broader situational barriers.

### 12.4.1 OVERCOMING LACK OF ACCESS

New information and communication technologies (ICTs) are hailed for their ability to level the field of opportunity for learners, although adequate familiarity with online formats is necessary. They offer access to quality education to people in remote areas and to those in urban areas looking for flexible learning arrangements. ICTs are expected not only to provide greater access, but also to support quality learning and improve mechanisms for quality assurance and recognition of learning (UNESCO, 2017c). Countries are reporting that access to digital learning in the form of MOOCs and open educational resources (OER) has resulted in higher educational attainment (see EDUCAUSE and New Media Consortium, 2018). Furthermore, ICTs have played an important role in making TVET available to both urban and rural areas (UNESCO, 2018b).

In order for ICTs to realize their full potential, however, the digital divide, and especially rural challenges, needs to be overcome. For example, while the internet penetration in urban India was 65% in 2017 it was only 20% in rural India (Madangopal and Madangopal, 2018). Providing high-speed internet to rural areas must be a priority. However, digital equity also concerns tool implementation and an understanding of how to use them, which will require continuing education of pedagogical staff (see EDUCAUSE and New Media Consortium, 2018).

Member States' discussions on how to successfully implement ICTs tend to focus primarily on their use in formal education and, to a lesser extent, in ALE including TVET (see, for example, UNESCO, 2017c). This is not to deny, as has been evident by the illustrations of good practice provided throughout Part 2 of this report, that there are many successful examples to build on. However, lacking a cohesive strategy from national governments, it will be important for the international community to provide the necessary support for a wide use of ICTs in ALE.

Access to appropriate learning opportunities is not only an issue for the proper use of ICTs but also a question of how to overcome the separation between literacy, on the one hand, and basic and continuing education and vocational training, on the other—two of the separate domains of RALE. There is increasing understanding that to reach some of the target groups and to provide a learning experience that can be economically, socially and personally beneficial, there are advantages in integrating the two. For example, agricultural provision for the rural population needs to be broadened to offer a range of vocational and life skills related to both on- and off-farm employment (FAO, 2009). A narrow skills base can limit the rural population's employment options and reduce their livelihood alternatives. Another reason for arguing for an integration of basic education and vocational training is that this offers a better chance of recruiting men with a limited education, who often do see the usefulness of general basic education. In this respect, integrating basic skills into vocational training can be a way to address one of the key dispositional barriers.

#### 12.4.2

#### **SITUATIONAL BARRIERS: ADDRESSING THE BROADER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXTS IN RELATION TO RALE**

What stands out from the review of how data on participation generally are being collected and the overview of ALE globally is the absence of the third RALE domain of liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills). However, for ALE to be able to meet contemporary educational, cultural, political, social and economic challenges, it is not enough merely to pay close attention to the first two categories and set the third aside. Being concerned about liberal, popular and community education in no way implies that the other two are not of crucial importance. What should be questioned is the balance in countries' ALE strategy, and whether there exists an appropriate institutional structure to support the full RALE typology, discussed in more detail in Section 9.1.1.

Chapter 11 addressed the central role that work has come to play in ALE and raised the necessity of implementing more inclusive strategies for skills development

and returning to the idea that work-related ALE also needs to be seen as a mechanism to strengthen workers' control over their working life. Similarly, literacy and basic education programmes need to be funded and designed in ways that result in the inclusion of the illiterate, the rural population, those living in urban slums, women, etc. Looking more specifically at formal education opportunities for adults in high-income countries, it is important to reflect on the appropriateness of the national educational system (see OECD, 2019, for an in-depth analysis of the role of the adult learning system). Several authors have pointed to the way in which the degree of flexibility of the formal education system to serve the adult population affects vulnerable groups' chances of improving on their formal qualifications (Boeren, 2016; Desjardins, 2017). However, while far from being resolved, the issues relating to the first two RALE categories, illiteracy and basic education and continuing education and professional development (vocational skills), are on the radar both in the developing and developed world. This is not the case for the third, and thus discussion here will focus on ALE in relation to liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills).

The importance of paying attention to liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills) is driven by two aspirations fundamental to RALE. The first is linked to relevance, as presented in the first *GRALE* (UIL, 2009), which saw it as one of the four dimensions of quality. *GRALE 1* stated that provision should be aligned with the needs of all stakeholders, so as to achieve personal, sociocultural, economic and educational goals. The second and more utopian aspiration has its roots in a long tradition in adult education that sees ALE as an instrument for individual and collective empowerment and as a way to address the democratic deficit (Laginder et al., 2013).

The urgency of addressing the imbalance in ALE is stressed in the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review reports for Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as for Asia and the Pacific. The reports note that the overwhelming emphasis in the region is on vocational-oriented ALE related to income generation, a message also repeated earlier in this report. While human rights and civic education are often recognized, very few

countries seem to be concerned with ALE for personal, cultural and artistic growth (UIL, 2017a, p. 18). After examining the nature of official dialogues and discourses, policies and programmes of adult education, the report for Asia and the Pacific (UIL, 2017b) concludes that the empowerment perspective has been replaced by a more utilitarian vision of adult education (*ibid.*, p. 73). Gradually, ALE has essentially become a complement to the established formal system of education and an instrument for adjusting to the dominant paradigm of economic development. The reports from sub-Saharan Africa (UIL, 2017c), the Arab States (UIL, 2017d) and Europe and North America (UIL, 2017e) provide clear evidence of imbalances in ALE. The first two regions' reports focus primarily on the first RALE category, literacy and basic education, while the Europe and North America report squarely situates ALE in the skills agenda. In neither case is attention given to liberal, popular and community education.

In the discussions of appropriate institutional infrastructure, particularly for developing countries and their rural population, a system of community learning centres (CLCs) is increasingly seen as a solution. As documented in *GRALE 2* (UIL, 2013), *GRALE 3* (UIL, 2016b) and the 2017 CONFITEA VI Mid-Term Review reports (see, particularly, UIL, 2017b), the number of CLCs has been rapidly growing all over Asia and the Pacific, as well as in the Arab States and Latin America. Behind the expansion across regions is a vibrant South–South cooperation. While the CLCs may look somewhat different across countries and regions, their success is a result of the active involvement by the community, whose members act as learners, instructors and managers, and the community has ownership of the site. CLCs offer programmes and courses covering the full range of the RALE typology. A six-country review of CLCs concluded that the institutions are more than just cultural, education or training centres and contribute to building community bonds that help address the problems and needs of sustainable development (NILE, 2017). They also assemble and distribute information and resources related to the local area and act as a catalyst in the development of a future vision for the community. The report suggests that the success of CLCs lies in their ability to help the individual grow, but, more broadly, in their collective impacts on

families, neighbourhoods and communities. However, as noted in the reviews, in order to draw conclusions about the CLCs' economic and wider benefits, there need to be more focused research efforts. One such way is to seek to understand under what conditions CLCs contribute to empowerment and democracy.

While CLCs have been in the foreground of the discussions on institutional infrastructure, little attention has been given to traditional popular/liberal adult education institutions, which played a central role in the first part of the twentieth century in Europe and later in the democratic struggles in Latin America (Tøsse, 2011). While state or local authorities in several European countries have fully ceased or drastically cut their contribution to these institutions, they still form a fundamental part of the ALE infrastructure in Nordic countries (Crowther, 2013), where they fulfil the RALE aspirations of individual and collective empowerment. The distinctive character of Nordic popular/liberal adult education stems from its location within social movements and the relationship it has to the state. This contract between popular/liberal education and the state dictates that it shall be free, voluntary and self-governing. However, the freedom is not absolute: it is set within the parameters given by the parliament. In the case of Sweden, for example, the parliament insists that the state's grants to popular/liberal education should be to support activities that contribute to:

- strengthening and developing democracy;
- making it possible for people to influence their life situation and creating participative involvement in societal development;
- reducing educational gaps and raising the level of education and cultural awareness in society;
- creating interest and broadening participation in cultural life.

Evaluations have shown that popular/liberal adult education in the form of study circles contributes to democracy indirectly by affording the participants the abilities and skills that enable active participation in society (Andersson and Laginder, 2013).

The authors found that some circles are closely connected to groups that act in society at local levels and that the purpose was to train members in how to take action and influence decisions. Study circles have at times been used in connection with crucial national referendums, for instance on the future of nuclear reactors, joining the EU, etc. Similarly, study circles have been organized to prepare for referenda on issues such as cooperation between a trade union and an employer. These kinds of circles have been a way to assist the individual to better understand different social, cultural and political positions and to arrive at an informed decision. Ideally, these forms of ALE should improve citizens' capability to formulate convincing claims and start public discussions about crucial concerns. As such, participation in popular/liberal ALE is important to stimulate wider social benefits that go beyond the dominant economic rationale.

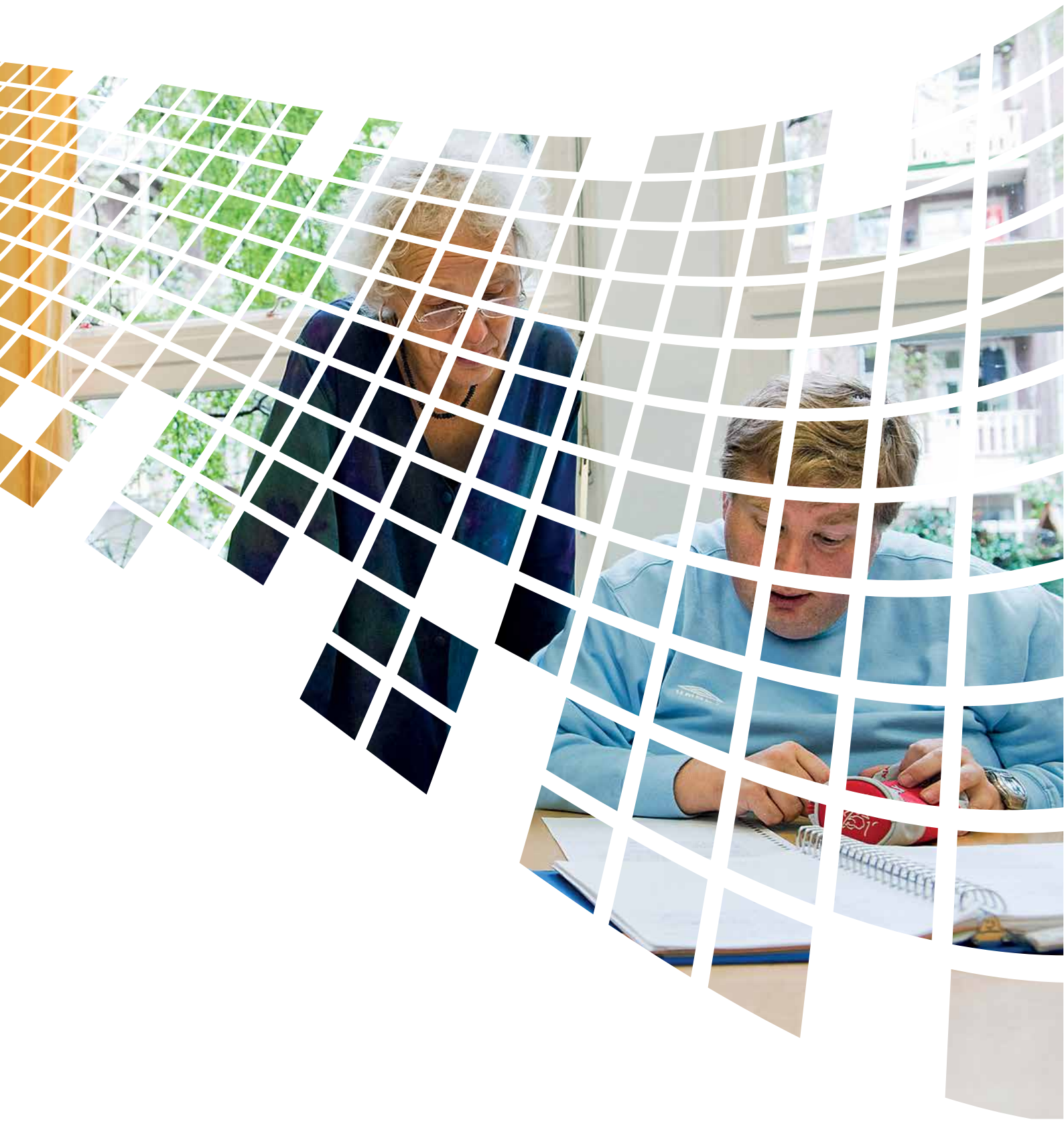
For ALE to function as an instrument for the promotion of democracy and in the struggle against inequality, two conditions have to be fulfilled: first, the state has to be ready to provide public funding to popular/liberal adult education institutions; and, second, while the state may set the overall purposes for funding popular/liberal adult institutions, they are given freedom in how to reach their goals.

## 12.5 CONCLUSION

Addressing the situational, institutional and dispositional barriers that result in the exclusion of many citizens from ALE is a complex and challenging task. This chapter has drawn attention to four key areas of action that policy-makers need to focus on.

First among these is the need to foster awareness among the citizens of the role ALE can play in bettering their personnel life and the lives of others. Second is implementation of proper financial resources and structures, which requires donor countries to live up to their international responsibility and contribute at least 0.7% of their GNI in aid to developing countries. Further, policy-makers must foster an understanding of how the structure of the public support system for ALE impacts on the participation of vulnerable groups in their countries. Third, together with the social partners, the impact of work on exclusion from ALE will have to be revisited, and policies to improve the situation developed. Finally, several steps to improve the provision of ALE as a way of reducing and overcoming the various barriers have been highlighted. Among these are a better use of ICTs, which would have to include resources for infrastructure, and finding ways to integrate basic and vocational education. More attention has to be given to liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills), and the role this category of learning can play for tackling the broader social conditions that governs participation in ALE. By breaking down these barriers, it is hoped that more adults will receive opportunities to benefit from ALE and that this will have a positive influence on fulfilling the aims of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainability.





## CHAPTER 13

## LESSONS LEARNED

This chapter presents an overview of lessons that can be learned from the review of participation presented in Part 2.

## 13.1

**MEMBER STATES' ACTIONS  
NEED TO BE DRIVEN BY A NEW  
UNDERSTANDING OF ALE**

In accordance with the principles put forward in RALE, ALE should be thought of as consisting of three core learning domains: literacy and basic skills, continuing education and professional development (vocational skills), and liberal and popular and community education (active citizenship skills). All three learning fields have an important role to play in the realization of the sustainability agenda, and Member States can no longer afford to neglect the too-often invisible field of liberal and popular and community education (active citizenship skills). Information and communication technologies can be developed in ways that make the most of their potential to improve access to learning. Strengthened international cooperation is stressed and seen as necessary for globally addressing exclusion of large groups from ALE.

## 13.2

**THERE IS A LACK OF GLOBAL  
AND COUNTRY-LEVEL DATA ON  
PARTICIPATION IN ALE**

The ability to monitor SDG 4 and the learning dimension of the other SDGs rests on the availability of sound and globally readily available data. While there has been considerable progress over the last decade, the global situation is still far from satisfactory. Many Member States lack the necessary administrative capacity and economic resources to put in place an adequate infrastructure for monitoring.

High-income countries that take part in the AES and/or PIAAC surveys are in a much better situation. However, even these surveys lack more detailed information on participation covering all three fields of learning. The review suggests that ALE continues to be a neglected area, including when it comes to monitoring, and little effort is going into developing indicators that fairly weigh the importance of ALE, not only in connection to SDG 4, but, perhaps even more importantly, for many of the other SDGs. The *GRALE* survey, which is the only truly global survey on participation in ALE, provides a broad-brush indication of how Member States engage with participation, but does not allow, in its current form, a direct monitoring of participation in ALE.

## 13.3

**PARTICIPATION IS INCREASING BUT  
THERE ARE SUBSTANTIAL REGIONAL  
AND NATIONAL VARIATIONS**

Half of the countries surveyed experienced increased overall participation rates between 2015 and 2018. It was encouraging to note that increased rates seemed to coincide with improvements in areas of action. *GRALE*, like all other surveys, clearly reveals vast national differences in participation. Labour market structure and technological sophistication can explain many of the differences, but not all. The review suggests that national policies also play a role.

## 13.4

**EMPLOYER-SUPPORTED ALE IS  
REDEFINING THE ALE LANDSCAPE**

Most high-income countries have seen a dramatic increase in participation in ALE. This has been driven overwhelmingly by a surge in employer-supported ALE. The development should send a strong message to policy-

makers who will have to realize that in order to address inequalities in participation in ALE a cohesive strategy has also to include employer-sponsored learning in the equation.

### 13.5 **REACHING KEY TARGET GROUPS REMAINS A FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE**

The situation for women living in poverty in rural areas remains dismal, and they have little or no opportunity to engage in ALE. This is also often true for men living in rural areas, particularly indigenous populations. Refugees living in camps in countries neighbouring conflict zones are poorly served. While it is very positive that international aid organizations are trying to address the schooling situation of children, they have to give more consideration to the learning needs of the adult population. The situation is better in Europe, but more attention should be given to the development of appropriate language courses and a more easily administered procedure for recognition of refugees' qualifications and skills. The data on adults with limited formal education and low literacy proficiency point to an important role for family learning initiatives. Another finding that stands out is the way in which adults with disabilities are often overlooked in ALE.

### 13.6 **STRUCTURAL FACTORS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES ARE MAJOR BARRIERS**

The highest and most difficult barriers that adults face, in developing as well as developed countries, are a consequence of the macro structural conditions under which they live and are linked to rampant social and economic inequalities. Many people live under difficult conditions that prevent them from even being able to contemplate ALE.

In high-income countries, time restrictions, particularly being busy at work and, to some extent, family obligations, are often given as reasons for not being able to pursue some form of ALE that one had considered taking. Institutional barriers, such as a lack of available courses and high cost, are also frequently mentioned in developing as well as developed countries. Dispositional barriers seldom show up in the dominant surveys.

This is not because they are not there but because of the way in which the surveys are constructed. Individuals who indicate they have never considered participating are not asked about what prevents them from thinking about participating. Consequently, a dispositional barrier like 'I see no use in participating' is not considered a barrier. This reduces the value of the information on barriers and adversely affects the development of an evidence-based strategy.

### 13.7 **WE MUST RAISE AWARENESS OF ALE AND INCREASE RESOURCES, ENSURING NO ONE IS EXCLUDED**

The review of the literature suggests a number of core areas of action. First, it is critical that measures are taken to increase awareness among the public of the benefits and opportunities of ALE. Second, public resources for ALE need to be increased. This includes more solidarity from developed countries and an increased readiness to transfer funds to developing countries. There is also, nationally, a need for a realignment of funds going to youth and ALE, with the latter receiving a somewhat larger share than presently is the case. Further, financing models have to be adjusted so as to better protect the resources going to the recruitment of target groups. As job type is one of the determining factors when it comes to access to ALE, an agenda for reducing inequalities will have to be informed by analysis of the future of work and consider a new social contract that sees the right to lifelong learning as a cornerstone. The lack of appropriate provision is another major barrier that needs to be addressed.

The rise of open education, whether through large-scale initiatives such as MOOCs or smaller and more manageable open education resources, clearly offers one means of expanding participation. At present, though, policy-makers in many countries have still to tackle the challenges of infrastructure, sustainability and capability that prevent participation by the least educated (Wagner, 2018). The new learning technologies can fulfil their potential only if steps are taken to overcome the digital divide, both between nations and within them.

Further, existing ALE provision has not been developed consistently. Policy documents, as well as available statistics on participation, reveal that two of the learning fields identified in RALE—literacy and basic education and continuing education and vocational skills—are very much on Member States’ radar. The third, liberal, popular and community education (active citizenship skills), is mostly absent. This form of ALE has an important role to play when it comes to the realization of the sustainability agenda; Member States cannot afford to fail to provide appropriate resources for it.

### 13.8

#### **ENHANCING ALE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IS ESSENTIAL**

While there is plenty of evidence supporting individual and government investment in ALE for economic reasons, its potential to contribute to democracy and citizenship is less well understood. The economic position that is driving much of the investment in ALE globally is rooted in a long, and, among most policy-makers, highly respected, tradition of economic theory. The democratic justification for ALE, as expressed in the RALE ambitions, is supported by a recent and still developing knowledge

base. This knowledge base must be further developed in order to exploit the potential of ALE to engage citizens so that they are well placed to contribute to the fundamental challenges facing all regions, such as rising inequalities, democratic deficits, poverty and climate change. It is, therefore, not enough for international organizations to fund sophisticated programmes on skills strategies: resources should also be allocated to bring about a better understanding of the role of ALE in combating these challenges.

### 13.9

#### **A FINAL WORD**

Part 2 began with a rationale of why participation in ALE matters. It made explicit the link between participation in ALE and achieving the 17 SDGs. The evidence reported in *GRALE 3* demonstrated that ALE can fundamentally affect the health, well-being, economy and social life of a community. However, the impact ALE could have to better the lives of individuals and society is greatly reduced when large segments of the population are excluded. The promotion of equitable learning opportunities and the consequent possibility of enabling all to participate is the key that can unlock the full potential of ALE.





## CONCLUSION ACHIEVING THE POTENTIAL OF ALE FOR ALL

# CONCLUSION

## ACHIEVING THE POTENTIAL OF ALE FOR ALL

*GRALE 4* appears in a crucial moment, as we enter the decade leading up to 2030. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the accompanying *Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4* set out a plan for action to build on the Millennium Development Goals, and to intensify efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. This concluding chapter sets out where ALE currently sits within these ambitious goals, and how its potential contribution can be harnessed more effectively.

The chapter starts by considering the role of ALE within the 2030 Agenda and the Education 2030 Framework. It then identifies key shifts in international discourse and changes in policies, concepts and practices in ALE, and points to our findings on what works—and what does not work—in widening participation in ALE. Finally, it indicates why, across all areas of ALE, more effort is needed if the SDGs are to be achieved.

### **ALE AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Education 2030 Framework for Action identify the role of ALE in contributing to progress. The Education 2030 Incheon Declaration is subtitled ‘Towards inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning for all’, in words that largely echo those used in SDG 4, recognizing that education and learning continue throughout (and across) the life course.

As we noted in the introduction, the role of ALE touches on and has the potential to support many of the SDGs. It is especially relevant to SDG 4, which calls on countries to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’. ALE features directly in five of the targets associated with SDG 4; and while the two remaining targets address the needs of children, these also should be understood in a lifelong learning context by various actors, including policy-makers and practitioners, where parental learning promotes the knowledge and skills of children, and where children are prepared for a life of continuous learning.

Judging by responses to the *GRALE 4* survey, progress in ALE against the targets is varied. The survey confirms that most countries have made progress in relation to SDG target 4.3, by improving access to vocational and technical education; however, progress is by no means universal, and inequalities of access remain. Similarly, the survey provides evidence of positive, if uneven, progress against SDG target 4.4, on providing the skills for people to find decent work. Progress towards gender equity (SDG target 4.5) is also marked, with almost 60% of countries responding that women’s participation had improved since *GRALE 3*; however, progress for other vulnerable groups appears to be less than required for the 2030 targets to be achieved. The *GRALE 4* survey responses also suggest continued improvements in literacy and numeracy (SDG target 4.6). Only in respect of SDG target 4.7, concerning access to education for sustainable development, human rights, gender equity, peace and global citizenship does the survey provide little or no sign of progress in ALE. Given the different pace of positive changes made in different regions, careful policy planning is recommended to set the right priorities.

Throughout the preceding chapters this report has repeatedly shown that inequalities in ALE participation are deep-rooted, persistent and multidimensional. This is not news; the broad outline of unequal access to ALE has been known and debated for decades. What we have shown is just how pervasive these inequalities are at a global level, and how, in some cases (notably that of women), they have begun to change. We have also drawn attention to inequalities that seem to have been relatively neglected (rurality, disability) or that are of growing significance (older adults, refugees). We have demonstrated why these inequalities matter, and why they merit greater investment in ALE, including continuing attention to improving quality. And we have provided case studies and discussions of interventions that have proven effective in tackling these inequalities.

We have also looked at what it is that people are able to participate in. When considered through the three broad categories of ALE identified in RALE—literacy, continuing training and professional development and active citizenship—we see a pattern of uneven progress. In the first two areas, however uneven and modest the progress, most countries are moving in the right direction. In contrast, the survey provides little evidence of progress in developing active citizenship, but rather indicates a degree of stagnation. Inevitably, then, ALE is yet to be placed in a position where it can support people in making informed choices about the decisions that will govern their lives and those of their communities. We encourage policy-makers to pay more attention to this area of ALE in the design of their policies.

Of course, these overall trends need to be qualified. While they provide some grounds for optimism, the trends are uneven, and even in those areas where the survey indicates progress, in many countries the contribution of ALE is being held back, as pointed out in the conclusions of Part 2. In some areas—for example, the validation of prior learning and skills—relatively few countries reported making progress. And many countries lack adequate data on which to address the needs of adult learners, or are unable to monitor progress with any accuracy—a point we expand on below.

Further, there are some areas where the *GRALE 4* survey provided limited information, for the simple reason that they are still in a preliminary stage of development. The growth of open educational practices, from massive open online courses (MOOCs) to open educational resources (OERs), presents enormous opportunities for increasing participation in ALE. There is also potential for widening participation, as in the case of Nigeria, where the National Open University has experienced both a marked growth in student numbers and has used targeted support to increase participation by such under-represented groups as women, people with disabilities and prisoners (Olakulehin, 2017). So, the use of digital technologies and mobile devices to open up educational resources has quite considerable potential.

Yet, at the same time, digitization and the rise of open educational practices threaten to superimpose a digital divide upon existing inequalities. Partly this is a matter of who is best equipped to access digital technologies and thus to participate in the revolution in open education. This is not solely a question of investing in the connectivity infrastructure, but also of helping people develop their capabilities. Globally, there are pronounced inequalities; the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimated that, despite steady improvements, in 2017 only 17.5% of the population in the least developed countries was using the internet. By far the greatest barrier, according to the ITU, was not coverage or affordability but skills (ITU, 2017). Partly, though, as *GRALE 3* showed for ALE in general, it is also a matter of who benefits most as a result of participating. The risk is that if matters are left to take their own course, those who benefit most from digitization will be those who are already well-placed, and those who benefit least will be those who are already the most vulnerable (van Deursen and Helsper, 2015).

As the UN recognized, these challenges will be particularly acute in the least developed countries, which are also least well placed to benefit from the wider opportunities presented by digitization (UN, 2017). It is hard to envisage real progress in respect of SDG target 9c, which aims to ‘Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to

the Internet in least developed countries by 2020', without ensuring a broad range of ALE to develop the necessary underpinning skills. As pointed out in Chapter 13 on the lessons learned from Part 2 of this report, reaching out to under-represented groups should be an important priority. This topic deserves to form the basis for further, detailed discussion, at CONFINTEA VII and beyond.

All this said, this report is full of examples of policies and interventions that have helped to widen participation and ensure that ALE is accessible to all. On the supply side, it is clear that a strong, universal ALE system is linked to relatively high levels of equality in participation. Within this, there is abundant scope for targeted initiatives that are designed to reach out to under-represented groups and reduce institutional barriers to participation. We have identified areas of progress in improving quality, as well as flagging up some areas where progress has been modest and further attention is required. We have also produced cases of intervention on the demand side, where policies and interventions, such as learning accounts, have been shown to support disadvantaged learners and reduce dispositional barriers to learning. Potentially, the report serves as a toolbox that policy-makers may delve into in order to strengthen their ALE system and stimulate demand among the least advantaged of their citizens.

## **STRENGTHENING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE**

Monitoring and data analysis play an increasingly important role in assessing progress towards the SDGs. The Incheon Declaration called for strong global and regional 'monitoring of the implementation of the education agenda based on data collection, analysis and reporting at the country level'. Yet, while more timely and country-level data are available for much education, across much of the world the 'data revolution' has still to reach ALE, a dominant theme that emerged in both the monitoring and thematic parts of this report. As the 2019 *Global Education Monitoring Report* noted, and as the introduction to this report reiterates, 'lifelong learning opportunities represent half of the SDG 4 formulation, but receive only a fraction of global attention' (UNESCO, 2018a, p. 266).

In the *GRALE 4* survey, only two-thirds of countries stated that they collect or have access to figures for measuring participation in ALE. When it came to specific groups such as ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees, 37% of countries reported not knowing the ALE participation rates. Similar challenges face us in monitoring the position of women in ALE and progress in literacy and numeracy. Although robust measures exist for monitoring participation in ALE and assessing adults' competences (e.g. PIAAC, STEP and LAMP), at present they are financially and operationally challenging for lower middle income and low-income countries; national-level assessments such as those discussed in Chapter 9 for Kenya and Bangladesh are certainly valuable, but they are developed and implemented in ways which affect the comparability of the findings (UIL, 2018a).

Even in high-income countries, there remains much that we do not know about participation in ALE. While large-scale surveys such as PIAAC or the European Adult Skills Survey provide valuable information for developing policy and practice, they are limited in scope (for example, they do not cover adults aged over 65) and they face multiple technical challenges, particularly when taking measurement of participation beyond simply counting enrolments, or when seeking to engage with people's informal learning. Much ALE is voluntary in character, it takes place in diverse ways across different locations, and its complexity often frustrates attempts to find clear and simple indicators. Nevertheless, the current monitoring architecture for ALE is deficient, and its weakness is hindering efforts to monitor progress and identify a reliable evidence basis for taking action. It is a clear recommendation arising from this report that higher levels of investment need to be made in the collection and monitoring of data with the aim of designing ALE policies based on stronger evidence that promote inclusive participation for all.

## TOWARDS CONFINTEA VII

Adult learning and education is pivotal to the full range of SDGs, but this comprehensive contribution has yet to be acknowledged fully in SDG 4. CONFINTEA VII will build on previous CONFINTEAs in evaluating progress towards the 2030 Agenda, while taking stock of the existing monitoring information, including the analyses presented in this report.

CONFINTEA VI, held in Brazil in 2009, closed with the adoption of the Belém Framework for Action, which recorded the commitments of Member States and presented a strategic guide for the global development of adult learning and education from a lifelong learning perspective. *GRALE 3* reported on the progress made by countries in fulfilling the commitments to the BFA as well as to the SDGs more generally. While noting some barriers to progress, *GRALE 3* found considerable grounds for optimism, with most countries reporting increased spending on ALE, and the vast majority acknowledging the role of ALE in promoting health and well-being, supporting active community participation, and fostering employability and economic resilience.

This broadly positive outlook was further confirmed during the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review, held in Suwon, Republic of Korea, in October 2017. The review enabled Member States to take stock of the status of adult learning and education and its capacity to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UIL, 2019a). Like *GRALE 3*, the review concluded that while challenges remain, including gaps in monitoring and deficits in data collection, there are signs of progress in many areas, and indeed the CONFINTEA follow-up process itself has helped reinforce the place of ALE in countries' educational agendas.

Nevertheless, the CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review concluded that although ALE is critical for the achievement of the SDGs, it 'is not sufficiently articulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is the least-supported link in the lifelong learning chain'. It called for the incorporation of the BFA and RALE within both the implementation process and architecture of SDG 4, alongside further efforts to promote greater awareness of the potential contribution of ALE among all relevant stakeholders.

CONFINTEA VII will meet in 2022. *GRALE 4* is designed to provide a rich resource of information and analysis for the 2022 discussions, focusing particularly on the topic of who participates in which types of ALE, and who does not. This, in turn, builds on the findings of *GRALE 3*, which examined the economic, social, health and well-being benefits of learning. In order to access those benefits, people have to be able to participate in ALE in the first place. This report offers both an analysis of existing patterns of participation, and a series of examples of what works (and what does not work) in expanding overall levels of ALE participation, and in particular in reaching out to the most vulnerable and excluded, to develop ALE for all.

This involves placing lifelong learning at the heart of SDG 4. There is, increasingly, a readiness to see the concept of lifelong learning as providing the overarching framework for quality education. For example, Member States committed in the 2030 Incheon Declaration to 'focus our efforts on access, equity and inclusion, quality and learning outcomes, within a lifelong learning approach'. In the Education 2030 Declaration, Member States committed themselves 'to promoting quality lifelong learning opportunities for all, in all settings and at all levels of education'.

UNESCO's ambition, as summarized in the BFA, is to harness 'the power and potential of adult learning and education for a viable future for all' (UNESCO, 2010, p. 5). This report has argued that a focus on participation in ALE is key to achieving the SDGs. This must mean reviewing policies in the light of the evidence on participation, and investing in sustainable provision that is accessible to learners from all backgrounds, as well as systematically supporting demand among those who have been the most excluded in the past. This will enable ALE to play its full, and wholly essential, part in achieving the SDGs.

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## ANNEX

## LIST OF COUNTRIES

| Region               | Country                        | Narrative report<br>for GRALE |         | Participation in<br>GRALE survey |         |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|---------|
|                      |                                | GRALE 1                       | GRALE 2 | GRALE 3                          | GRALE 4 |
| Arab States          | Algeria                        | yes                           | no      | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Bahrain                        | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Djibouti                       | no                            | no      | no                               | yes     |
|                      | Egypt                          | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Iraq                           | yes                           | no      | no                               | yes     |
|                      | Jordan                         | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Kuwait                         | yes                           | no      | no                               | yes     |
|                      | Lebanon                        | yes                           | no      | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Libya                          | yes                           | no      | no                               | no      |
|                      | Mauritania                     | yes                           | no      | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Morocco                        | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Oman                           | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Palestinian Territory          | yes                           | yes     | no                               | yes     |
|                      | Qatar                          | yes                           | no      | no                               | yes     |
|                      | Saudi Arabia                   | yes                           | no      | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Sudan                          | yes                           | no      | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Syrian Arab Republic           | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Tunisia                        | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | United Arab Emirates           | yes                           | no      | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Yemen                          | yes                           | yes     | no                               | no      |
| Asia and the Pacific | Afghanistan                    | yes                           | yes     | no                               | yes     |
|                      | Armenia                        | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Australia                      | yes                           | no      | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Azerbaijan                     | no                            | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Bangladesh                     | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Bhutan                         | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Brunei Darussalam              | yes                           | no      | no                               | yes     |
|                      | Cambodia                       | yes                           | yes     | no                               | yes     |
|                      | China                          | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Cook Islands                   | no                            | no      | no                               | yes     |
|                      | Fiji                           | yes                           | no      | no                               | no      |
|                      | Georgia                        | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | India                          | yes                           | no      | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Indonesia                      | no                            | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Iran                           | yes                           | no      | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Japan                          | yes                           | yes     | yes                              | yes     |
|                      | Kazakhstan                     | yes                           | no      | no                               | no      |
|                      | Kiribati                       | no                            | no      | no                               | yes     |
|                      | Korea, People's<br>Republic of | yes                           | no      | no                               | no      |

| Region                      | Country                   | GRALE 1 | GRALE 2 | GRALE 3 | GRALE 4 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                             | Korea, Republic of        | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Kyrgyzstan                | yes     | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Lao PDR                   | yes     | yes     | no      | yes     |
|                             | Malaysia                  | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Maldives                  | no      | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Marshall Islands          | no      | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Micronesia                | no      | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Mongolia                  | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Myanmar                   | no      | yes     | no      | yes     |
|                             | Nauru                     | no      | yes     | no      | no      |
|                             | Nepal                     | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | New Zealand               | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Niue                      | no      | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Pakistan                  | yes     | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Palau                     | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Papua New Guinea          | yes     | yes     | no      | yes     |
|                             | Philippines               | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Samoa                     | no      | no      | no      | no      |
|                             | Singapore                 | no      | no      | no      | no      |
|                             | Solomon Islands           | yes     | yes     | no      | no      |
|                             | Sri Lanka                 | no      | yes     | yes     | no      |
|                             | Tajikistan                | yes     | no      | no      | no      |
|                             | Thailand                  | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Timor-Leste               | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
|                             | Tokelau                   | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
|                             | Tonga                     | no      | no      | no      | no      |
|                             | Turkmenistan              | no      | no      | no      | no      |
|                             | Tuvalu                    | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
|                             | Uzbekistan                | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Vanuatu                   | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
|                             | Viet Nam                  | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
| Europe<br>and North America | Albania                   | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
|                             | Andorra                   | no      | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Austria                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Belarus                   | no      | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Belgium                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | no      |
|                             | Bosnia and<br>Herzegovina | no      | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Bulgaria                  | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Canada                    | yes     | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Croatia                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Cyprus                    | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Czech Republic            | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Denmark                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Estonia                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Faroe Islands             | no      | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Finland                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | France                    | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Germany                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Greece                    | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Hungary                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                             | Iceland                   | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
|                             | Ireland                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |

| Region                                 | Country                                | GRALE 1 | GRALE 2 | GRALE 3 | GRALE 4 |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                                        | Israel                                 | yes     | yes     | yes     | no      |
|                                        | Italy                                  | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
|                                        | Latvia                                 | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Lithuania                              | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Luxembourg                             | no      | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Macedonia, Former Yugoslav Republic of | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Malta                                  | no      | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Moldova                                | yes     | no      | no      | yes     |
|                                        | Monaco                                 | no      | no      | no      | no      |
|                                        | Montenegro                             | yes     | yes     | no      | yes     |
|                                        | Netherlands                            | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Norway                                 | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Poland                                 | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Portugal                               | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Romania                                | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Russian Federation                     | yes     | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | San Marino                             | no      | no      | yes     | no      |
|                                        | Serbia                                 | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Slovakia                               | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Slovenia                               | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Spain                                  | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Sweden                                 | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Switzerland                            | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Turkey                                 | yes     | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Ukraine                                | no      | no      | yes     | no      |
|                                        | United Kingdom                         | yes     | yes     | no      | no      |
|                                        | United States of America               | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
| <b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b> | Antigua and Barbuda                    | no      | no      | no      | no      |
|                                        | Argentina                              | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Bahamas                                | no      | yes     | no      | no      |
|                                        | Barbados                               | no      | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Belize                                 | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Bolivia                                | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Brazil                                 | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Chile                                  | yes     | yes     | no      | yes     |
|                                        | Colombia                               | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Costa Rica                             | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Cuba                                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Curacao                                | no      | no      | yes     | no      |
|                                        | Dominica                               | no      | no      | no      | no      |
|                                        | Dominican Republic                     | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Ecuador                                | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | El Salvador                            | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Grenada                                | no      | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Guatemala                              | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Guyana                                 | no      | yes     | no      | yes     |
|                                        | Haiti                                  | yes     | no      | no      | yes     |
|                                        | Honduras                               | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Jamaica                                | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Mexico                                 | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                                        | Nicaragua                              | yes     | no      | yes     | no      |

| Region             | Country                         | GRALE 1 | GRALE 2 | GRALE 3 | GRALE 4 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                    | Panama                          | yes     | yes     | no      | yes     |
|                    | Paraguay                        | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Peru                            | yes     | yes     | yes     | no      |
|                    | Saint Kitts and Nevis           | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
|                    | Saint Lucia                     | yes     | no      | no      | yes     |
|                    | Saint Vincent and Grenadines    | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Suriname                        | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Trinidad and Tobago             | no      | yes     | no      | yes     |
|                    | Uruguay                         | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic) | yes     | no      | yes     | no      |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | Angola                          | yes     | yes     | no      | no      |
|                    | Benin                           | yes     | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Botswana                        | yes     | yes     | no      | yes     |
|                    | Burkina Faso                    | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Burundi                         | yes     | no      | no      | no      |
|                    | Cameroon                        | yes     | yes     | no      | yes     |
|                    | Cape Verde                      | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Central African Republic        | yes     | no      | no      | no      |
|                    | Chad                            | yes     | yes     | yes     | no      |
|                    | Comoros                         | yes     | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Congo                           | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Congo (Brazzaville)             | no      | no      | no      | no      |
|                    | Côte d'Ivoire                   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Equatorial Guinea               | yes     | no      | no      | yes     |
|                    | Eritrea                         | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Ethiopia                        | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Gabon                           | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Gambia                          | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Ghana                           | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Guinea                          | yes     | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Guinea-Bissau                   | yes     | no      | yes     | no      |
|                    | Kenya                           | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Lesotho                         | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Liberia                         | yes     | no      | no      | yes     |
|                    | Madagascar                      | yes     | yes     | yes     | no      |
|                    | Malawi                          | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Mali                            | yes     | no      | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Mauritius                       | yes     | yes     | yes     | no      |
|                    | Mozambique                      | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Namibia                         | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Niger                           | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Nigeria                         | yes     | yes     | yes     | no      |
|                    | Rwanda                          | yes     | yes     | no      | no      |
|                    | Sao Tome and Principe           | yes     | no      | yes     | no      |
|                    | Senegal                         | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | Seychelles                      | yes     | no      | no      | yes     |
|                    | Sierra Leone                    | yes     | yes     | no      | no      |
|                    | Somalia                         | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
|                    | South Africa                    | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|                    | South Sudan                     | no      | no      | no      | yes     |
|                    | Swaziland                       | yes     | yes     | yes     | no      |

| Region | Country  | GRALE 1 | GRALE 2 | GRALE 3 | GRALE 4 |
|--------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|        | Tanzania | yes     | no      | yes     | yes     |
|        | Togo     | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|        | Uganda   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|        | Zambia   | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
|        | Zimbabwe | yes     | yes     | yes     | yes     |
| Total  |          | 154     | 126     | 139     | 159     |



