



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



## confintea VI

living and learning for a viable future:  
the power of adult learning  
sixth international conference on adult education  
Belém, Pará, Brazil, 19 – 22 may 2009



## BRAZIL HOSTS CONFINTEA VI

For the very first time in its history, CONFINTEA is taking place in the southern hemisphere, and it is to Belém, in northern Brazil, that delegations from all over the world will be travelling in May. Located near the mouth of the Amazon River basin, in one of the world's most environmentally-significant areas, Belém is the capital of the state of Pará. With a population of over a million people, it is situated in a predominantly rural area, and is a melting-pot for many ethnic and linguistic groups and cultures. It has a strong interest in promoting access for all its people to education for sustainability, not only in ecological terms but also for human development.

The city is an example of one of the greatest global challenges – how to promote human development based on the paradigms of sustainability. Like many other Brazilian cities, Belém also faces the challenge of ensuring quality education for all its diverse population.

### Adult Education: A Key Issue

“Adult education denotes the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society. Adult learning encompasses both formal and continuing education, non-formal learning and the spectrum of informal and incidental learning available in a multicultural learning society.” (From the *Hamburg Declaration*, CONFINTEA V, 1997)

The previous CONFINTEA also declared that the objectives of youth and adult education, viewed as a lifelong process, are to develop the autonomy and the sense of responsibility of people and communities, to reinforce the capacity to deal with economic, cultural and social changes, and to promote coexistence, tolerance and the informed and creative participation of citizens in their communities. Adult education is a powerful concept for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice.

### Alfabetizando com saúde - Winner of the UNESCO International Reading Association Literacy Prize 2008

The Curitiba City Council's *Alfabetizando com saúde* (“Learning to read and write in good health”) is a programme committed to the idea that mastery of reading and writing is essential to improving the quality of life and health of the whole population.

The programme effectively promotes literacy as a prerequisite for health education and disease control. It is innovative in its teaching of literacy to caregivers (mothers and grandparents) and adults (including the elderly) in order to reduce infant mortality and improve general health.

The programme stands out for the genuine - and remarkably harmonious - collaboration with and between the Municipal Health Department of the City of Curitiba and the Agency for the Education of Youths and Adults (EJA) which won recognition for reducing illiteracy to less than 4% in recent years. The programme is further commendable for its flexibility and its ability to engage the participation of other local organizations. Sustainability is assured through the involvement of local communities in more than 55 centres. “Alfabetizando com Saúde” is spreading to Africa where it was launched in 2006 in Cabo Delgado in Mozambique. Thanks to the partnership with Brazil, 30 teachers and 1200 literacy agents were trained.

## Greeting – Brazilian Ministry of Education

By holding the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education in Brazil, the Ministry of Education hopes to learn about public policies and actions which, in different countries, represent concrete steps towards lifelong learning and to share the efforts of Brazilian institutions to achieve the goals of CONFINTEA V.

Brazil has achieved relevant results in this field including the important step of developing and implementing a policy of adult and youth education. After the launching of the Education Development Plan (PDE) in April 2007, adult and youth education, as well as other modalities, types and levels of education received a systemic treatment, giving a clear signal to the systems of education that the offer of adult and youth education for this segment of society is a right and that investing in adult education is investing in the quality of basic education.

Financial resources for adult and youth education in Brazil are guaranteed by the Fund for the Maintenance of Basic Education (FUNDEB) with the same rules which apply to the financing of all public education in Brazil. Adult and

youth education is not an appendix to educational policy but is an integral part of government actions for all education. The school networks which offer adult and youth education at primary, secondary and vocational levels will benefit from Fundeb to the tune of R\$ 5 billion reais in 2009.

As Paulo Freire, the great Brazilian educator, said, “Nobody is completely ignorant. Nobody knows everything. All of us lack knowledge of something. That is why we continue to need to learn”.

It is in this spirit of the principle of lifelong learning that Brazil invites all countries to participate in CONFINTEA VI. We will receive with open arms in Belém everyone who is engaged in guaranteeing the right to education and who wants to contribute to the elaboration of those guidelines which will direct our work during the next decade.

Fernando Haddad  
Minister of Education of Brazil

## Greeting – UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

**CONFINTEA** (from the French “CONFérence INTernationale sur l’Education des Adultes”, which translates as “International Conference on Adult Education”) is the only truly global event focusing on adult education, making it a landmark event for UNESCO and the world community alike. CONFINTEA VI is to be held in Belém, Brazil from 19 to 22 May, 2009. It will be hosted by the Government of Brazil, and will unite around 2,000 participants, including several Heads of State, more than 50 ministers, experts, representatives of civil society organizations, private providers and practitioners from around the world.

The outcomes of five regional preparatory meetings will contribute to the debates to be held during the conference. Furthermore, UNESCO Member States have prepared 149 national reports on the development and current state of adult learning and education, the contents of which have been summarised in five Regional Synthesis Reports. CONFINTEA VI will see the launch of a *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE) that draws on these national and regional syntheses, as well as on the results of international research studies, to pinpoint educational

trends, issues and effective practices, and highlight the perspectives of the different stakeholders involved. This will be the sixth CONFINTEA conference since 1949. Each conference in the series has offered the international community both an insight into the most pressing educational issues of the day and a range of innovative and creative ways of addressing them, resulting in the development of strategies to anticipate and master emerging challenges. Today more than ever before, it is our belief that adult learning and education offer citizens, societies and nations a fundamental, vital and viable means of facing major issues, confronting new challenges and participating actively and fully in political, economic, social and cultural life. This newsletter will help to spread the message to the international adult education community in the run-up to CONFINTEA VI.

Adama Ouane  
Director, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning  
Secretary-General of CONFINTEA VI

### Facts and figures: Latin America and the Caribbean

In the context of 'developing regions', Latin America and the Caribbean have relatively high adult literacy rates.

	1985-1994	2000-2006	Projections to 2015
Latin America and the Caribbean	87%	91%	93%
Latin America	87%	91%	94%
The Caribbean	66%	74%	78%
Developing countries	68%	79%	84%
World	76%	84%	87%

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009

Out of 561 million people in the Latin America region, around 40 million are from the 400 or so indigenous groups. Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Ecuador and Peru have the highest numbers of indigenous people. Latin America has the greatest disparity in the world between rich and poor. The region has the highest number of those with over 30 million dollars in cash. By comparison, in 2007 some 34.1% of the population (184 million) lived in poverty (CEPAL, 2008).

### Facts and figures: Brazil

Brazil, the largest country in the region and the 6<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world, has a total population of 189.6 million people, of whom roughly 14.1 million, over 15 years, are unable to read or write. There is little difference between male (10.2%) and female (9.81%) illiteracy.

66.9 million Brazilians over 15 years have not completed initial compulsory education (2007 data), representing 47.3% of the total youth and adult population. 9.5 million youth aged 15-24 have not concluded primary education and 750.160 are illiterate.

Brazil's illiteracy rate, 10% of the adult population, is very unequally distributed: 20% in the North-east and 5.4% in the South. 94% of illiterate people (youth and adult) are over 25 years of age.

Source: World Bank and PNAD-IBGE 2007 (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics).

### Towards CONFINTEA VI: Series of Preparatory Regional Conferences Concluded

Between September 2008 and January 2009 five conferences were organized in all world regions to provide regional perspectives on the state and further development of adult learning and education (ALE). Each of the conferences was attended by national delegations from the vast majority of Member States of the region, including significant numbers of Ministers, Vice-Ministers or Secretaries of State in charge of Adult Education. Deliberations focused on the preparation of an outcome document that summarizes the specific regional context issues to be addressed by adult education and presents a series of recommendations on the further development of ALE, including necessary policy support on the national, regional and international levels. These regional outcome documents, as well as short reports on the different conferences, will soon be available at the CONFINTEA website (<http://www.unesco.org/en/confintea>).

For each of the conferences a regional report was prepared on the basis of National Reports that were prepared between December 2007 and July 2008. An astonishing total number of 149 Member States have submitted their reports, especially high was the return rate in sub-Saharan Africa (42 countries out of 47 submitted their report) and the Arab Region (18 of 22), in no region was the return rate below 70 per cent. This shows a remarkable progress in comparison with CONFINTEA V in 1997 when only 70 Member States produced a report. It allows the conclusion that both public interest and political sensitivity for ALE is growing – which gives an optimistic perspective for the success of the International Conference in Belém. For the outcome documents of the regional meetings please consult the CONFINTEA Website.

### Not to be missed

Belém offers an array of excursions and tourist events:

- Ver-o-Peso Market: it is a 380-year old open riverside market and it is the biggest in Latin America;
- Estação das Docas: a leisure center by the Guajara Bay made of 3 warehouses and one dock with restaurants, art galleries, a small brewery and typical food kiosks;
- Teatro da Paz, with around 130 years of history, it is the most luxurious for its age;

- Saint Alexandre Museum: exhibition of sacred art collection;
- Saint Pedro Nolasco Fort (also called Castle Fort): it is a military facility dating back to 1665, with a wonderful view to the river and part of the city;
- Polo Joalheiro: this building was initially a penitentiary. Now it has been refurbished and houses a Gems Museum, Jewellery Workshop and a Craftsman House;
- Mangal das Garças - a large park in the city center where local plants and animals can be seen  
(more: [www.paraturismo.pa.gov.br/para/index.asp](http://www.paraturismo.pa.gov.br/para/index.asp)).