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Key Development Challenges in Africa

Despite Africa's considerable progress over the last decade, the continent continues to face major development challenges, including a high incidence of poverty, illiteracy, poor health conditions, conflicts in some regions, and the relentless surge of HIV/AIDS at a time when a number of regions in the developing world are benefiting greatly from economic opportunities resulting from globalization. The situation is

so serious that it is now generally acknowledged that our continent, more than any other region of the world, faces the danger of regressing and being irreversibly left behind as a consequence of the rapid changes being brought about by the forces of globalization. A few facts will convincingly illustrate this argument. The African Development Bank (ADB) has estimated that

"between 40 and 45 per cent of the African continent's 793 million people live in poverty, with about 30 per cent classified as extremely poor, that is living on less than \$1 per day."

(O. Kabbaj, 2003, pp. 3-4)

Even more appalling is that

"among all developing regions, Africa has the largest proportion of people living in absolute poverty, and that proportion has remained virtually unchanged for a decade."

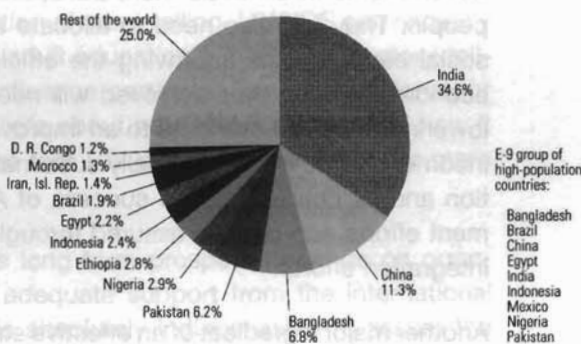
(idem)

The UNDP Human Development Report 2005 confirmed AfDB's assessment of poverty in Africa by revealing that *"in 1990 the average American was 38 times richer than the average Tanzanian. Today the average American is 61 times richer."* The situation becomes even more unacceptable when it is borne in mind that while a sub-Saharan African lives on \$1 a day, a cow in Europe or Japan receives \$2 or nearly \$4 a day respectively. But poverty in Africa does not express itself in economic terms only. It also has a social dimension.

The report of the Commission for Africa reminds us of the fact that, although growth and globalization have brought higher living standards to billions of men and women, in Africa, millions of children are hungry, their bodies stunted and deformed by malnutrition, they are needlessly ill, they cannot read or write. Furthermore, Africa is home for 62 per cent of the world's 15-24 year-olds who live with HIV, with some 25 million people who have died so far. About 61 per cent of people in sub-Saharan Africa are literate against an average of 76 per cent for developing countries. It is also reported that on current trends

it will take sub-Saharan Africa until 2115 to achieve the MDG target, putting it off track by a century. The target of achieving universal primary education in 2015 will be missed by at least a decade, leading to 47 million children out of school in 2015, 19 million of them in sub-Saharan Africa. This gloomy picture of Africa's socio-economic situation has led H.E. Benjamin Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania to come to the conclusion that

Figure 3.1: Distribution of global adult illiterate population, 2000–2004



Source: UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006. *Literacy for life*. p. 20

"Africa is not only the greatest loser in a globalizing world, it is also structurally and institutionally positioned to continue being the greatest loser unless African leaders and their citizens think again of the realities of our world, and how to break away from the systemic injustice and procedural unfairness that characterizes our engagement with the outside world." (Mkapa, 2005, p. 4)

Given the disadvantaged position that Africa holds in today's globalized world, President Mkapa urges Africans and their development partners to be sufficiently agitated to design new initiatives and work for a better future for Africa and its future generations.

No matter which new strategy should be adopted, there seems to be a consensus on the necessity for most African countries to double current economic growth rates and make major investments in upgrading social services if they are to come close to meeting the MDGs. To achieve this, they will have to implement prudent macro-

economic policies, and deepen governance reforms aimed at making governments at all levels more transparent and accountable to the people. They will also need to allocate additional resources to the social sectors while improving the efficiency of their delivery. The economic growth thus achieved will need to be pro-poor, result in lowering poverty, contribute to an improvement in the distribution of income, and be environmentally sustainable. In the era of globalization and its challenges, the success of African countries' development efforts can only be assured through regional cooperation and integration efforts.

Another major ingredient of an effective strategy for African economic development and social progress is peace and stability. Although a number of longstanding conflicts came to an end and the prospects of ending others are promising, many of the affected countries have got to launch effective reconstruction and rehabilitation programs. Others also continue to face political instability and civil strife, resulting in a contraction of their economies. The international community clearly needs to bolster its efforts to find peaceful solutions for countries in conflict and to provide the much-needed assistance to post-conflict countries.

No matter how sound their development policies are and how great their efforts, African countries will not be able to achieve sustainable progress unless they successfully fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The high prevalence rate of the pandemic continues to reduce the capacity of some of the most productive members of society, thus affecting both employment and growth. In many countries, it has reversed some of the hard-won social and economic gains of the past decades. Many countries, supported by the international community, have devoted considerable resources to tackling the scourge of the disease. But they need to give high priority to combating the pandemic by designing and implementing short and long term appropriate programs. UNAIDS Report *"AIDS in Africa: Three scenarios to 2025"* clearly shows the role of adult education in effectively combat-

ing the pandemic through the diffusion of new knowledge – and new ways of applying existing knowledge – about the virus by resorting to the African age-old tradition of story-telling. UNAIDS convincingly argues that the non-formal adult education constituted by story-telling is a powerful way to influence particular secular, traditional, or religious system-based beliefs about how HIV is spread and how it can be prevented to ensure that HIV and AIDS are seen in a more positive light.

Last but not least, Africa's long term prospect depends on quantitatively and qualitatively adequate support from the international community. This support is absolutely indispensable to assure the continued economic and social development required for poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs. More specifically, the donor community should support Africa's development by

- increasing ODA to meet the resource requirements of low income countries
- harmonizing their policies and procedures
- reducing the external debt of poor countries to sustainable levels, and
- improving access for Africa's exports to their markets

In summary, Africa faces the challenges of achieving rapid and sustainable socio-economic development within national and regional frameworks, achieving the MDGs, eradicating poverty, fighting against HIV/AIDS, preventing and resolving conflicts, and integrating smoothly into the mainstream of the world economy in order to benefit from the opportunities of globalization. These are daunting challenges. Significant efforts are required on the part of African countries and its development partners to address these challenges. Some of the measures include: consolidating democracy, promoting good governance, formulating and implementing effective economic and social policies, and mobilizing domestic and external resources.

Adult Education and Development

The role of adult education in development is multidimensional. Indeed, as one of the building blocks of human development, and not just a basic right, education, including adult education, is a foundation for progress in areas such as human capital, health, nutrition and the development of institutions and democracy. Therefore, the role of adult education in development can be apprehended through the complex relationships existing between all its forms and the economic, political, social and cultural determinant factors of African development. The economic role of adult education in development is apparent in its contribution to human capital formation. It is now well established that, alongside health care, sanitation, and nutrition that improve people's standard of living and productivity by reducing sickness and mortality rates and by increasing life expectancy, adult basic education, by equipping recipients with essential literacy and numeracy skills, yields high rates on investment, thereby enhancing labor productivity. An educated population also provides a more attractive investment climate. Thus, investment in the development of human capital, through adult education, is crucial for developing a labor force and managerial know-how, able to compete in today's global economy. Formal education alone is not sufficient for playing this role as even those categories of the population who have had formal education and training might need to be updated and re-skilled through adult education, mainly because today's knowledge society tends to render previously acquired knowledge and skills inappropriate and obsolete. Adult education is also instrumental in familiarizing the active population of Africa with Information Communication Technology (ICT), a decisive tool for the smooth integration of African economies in the global economy. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized as the world is rapidly moving towards knowledge-based economic structures and information societies that comprise networks of individuals, firms, and countries linked electronically in interdependent and interactive relationships.

Adult education also plays a major role in social development. It is now widely admitted that growth will not reduce poverty unless poor

people are able to actively participate in it. Such participation can become effective to a large extent through adult education. Indeed, the African population will need some kind of formal and non-formal education and training to be able to benefit from basic health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, the development of new medicines, and thus be in a position to free itself from diseases that devastate poor people, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria and other parasites. Adult education will also be needed to enable the African poor to really take advantage of programs aimed at protecting orphans and vulnerable children or drastically reducing the number of people without access to safe water and basic sanitation in the framework of the Africa Water Vision and the G8 Water Action Plan. Adult education geared towards women is another powerful means to contribute to socio-economic development. As the Report of the Commission for Africa pointed out,

“Africa’s challenges will not be effectively addressed unless the exclusion faced by women is tackled across the board. Women must be included and the full power of their development skills unleashed.”

This is so because, the Report argues,

“women are the backbone of Africa’s rural economy, accounting for 70 per cent of food production, most of the selling of the family produce and half of the animal husbandry in addition to food preparation, gathering firewood, fetching water, childcare and the care of the sick and the elderly.”

Yet, it is widely recognized that women are largely excluded from educational provision in Africa, especially when it comes to adult education.

Findings of a recent study commissioned by the African Union corroborate this assertion, as follows: (i) fewer women (than men) are enrolled in literacy classes and a smaller proportion of those enrolled

ever achieve functional literacy; (ii) a smaller proportion of Africa's female population (two-thirds of Africa's illiterate population is made up of women) is literate; and (iii) fewer women are engaged in the acquisition of life-skills, among out-of-school youth (Commission of the African Union, Quality Education For Africa's Sustainable Development, April 2005, pp. 7–8). Drawing the grave consequences of such a state of affairs, the Commission of the African Union in its *“Strategic Framework For Deadline 2015”* states that

“since women and girls have systemically and systematically been denied the opportunity of acquiring knowledge and skills, they are severely under-represented in the commanding height of the social, political and economic life of a large majority of the countries of Africa. This situation is also impacting negatively on the future generations of Africans, as it is well known that enlightened, well informed, educated, skilled and socially/economically/politically empowered women do exert a strong influence on the education and survival of the young.”

(Commission of the African Union, April 2005, p. 16)

In its contribution to an inclusive social development process, adult education ensures that no-one is excluded from the sources of development assistance made available by governments, the civil society and the international community.

The role of adult education in development is not limited only to the economic and social spheres. It also has a political dimension. There is a strong link between adult learning and democracy. This is so because, as acknowledged at the UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg in 1997, *“substantive democracy and a culture of peace are not given; they need to be constructed”* (UNESCO, 1997). For democracy to be achieved, adult education is needed to educate citizens on the democratic culture as well as to inform them of their rights and responsibilities as democracy also requires people to actively participate at local, national and global levels. It is today admitted that the lack of recognition of the



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need to involve civil society, especially grassroots organizations, by giving them a voice in decision-making and the means to participate effectively in society is one of the major causes of development failure in many African countries. Abuse of human rights and social injustice leading to the exclusion of important segments of society, have also constituted stumbling blocks to economic and social progress on the continent and paved the way to violent conflicts. Given the demographic and socio-economic importance of women in society, substantive democracy cannot be achieved without practicing gender democracy, a cross-cutting issue. The fact, nevertheless, is that the situation of women in Africa has not improved. In some cases, it has even worsened compared to what it used to be a few decades ago.

Adult education may prove to be a powerful tool for favoring inclusive development through democracy, thereby ensuring peace and stability, as a number of studies have shown that prevention (through adult education) is much more effective than intervention. Prevention of political disorders and civil unrest can be made possible through various adult education strategies. A number of adult education policies to promote democracy and peace have been proposed during the Fifth

International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg in 1997. They intend to attain their objectives through various strategies that promote an active civil society, reinforce gender democracy and help solve conflicts between different countries and groups. To the extent that the world at large is experiencing the effects of multi-faceted globalization with varying degrees of impact on peoples, cultures, societies and persons, the role of adult education in democracy and peace cannot be checked exclusively within national boundaries. It also needs to be examined at the global level. The guiding assumption in this exercise is provided by the conclusions of the Copenhagen seminars for social progress, which took place between 1996 and 1999, which

“pointed at a new form of global democracy, economies serving equitably needs and aspirations, a compassionate political culture, social forces pursuing the general interest, and institutions responsible for protecting the common good.”

(Bekemans, March 2002, p. 158)

It was agreed that

“peace and cooperation will only prevail over conflicts and wars through shared values of greater scope and depth. In this globalized, yet fragmented and conflictual world, only strong moral/common values (i.e. human dignity, solidarity, tolerance, etc.) can provide a sound basis for global management. It is believed that progress in shared values will be achieved only through patient and rigorous dialogue requiring research and open debates involving a maximum of actors.”

(idem)

It is clear that for African countries to cope with these new challenges of globalization solidarity, they will need informed and literate populations capable of articulating their views and defending their interests.

It is apparent from the foregoing that adult education is an indispensable vector for social, economic and political progress in any society,

and in particular in Africa, the least developed part of the world. The developmental potential of adult education has been well summarized by UNESCO as follows:

"Despite challenges and constraints, (adult) basic education empowers individuals because it opens avenues of communication that would otherwise be closed, expands personal choice and controls over one's environment, and is necessary for the acquisition of many other skills. It gives people access to information through both print and electronic media, equips them to cope better with work and family responsibilities and changes the images they have of themselves. It strengthens their self-confidence to participate in community affairs and influence political issues. Basic education is the key with which individuals can unlock the full range of their talents and realize their creative potentials. It gives disadvantaged people the tools they need to move from exclusion to full participation in their society. Basic education also empowers entire nations because educated citizens and workers have the skills to make democratic institutions function effectively to meet the demands for a more sophisticated work force for a cleaner environment, and to meet their obligations as parents and citizens."

(UNESCO, 1997:17)

Lessons Learned from Practical Experiences of Adult Education Policies in Africa

After establishing the positive relationships between adult education and development, as shown by various studies, it is important to examine the extent to which this mode of education has actually been solicited to foster social, economic and political progress in African countries. To be more specific, an attempt is made in the following to assess the contribution of adult education in promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, consolidating democracy, and harnessing the opportunities provided by globalization in Africa, as apparent from national development strategies and development assistance programs of international cooperation agencies.

An historical analysis of adult education in developing countries in general and in Africa in particular reveals that this mode of learning has experienced ups and downs in development policies and strategies. Adult education was a highly dynamic sub-sector in the post-independence era when it was quasi exclusively reduced to literacy. Governments and aid agencies resorted to this form of education to enhance reading, writing and numeracy skills among the vast majority of African masses. The momentum was kept until the 70s when adult education became even more popular, being associated with innovativeness, and seen as having a great development import. Adult education enjoyed its "*lettre de noblesse*" during that period thanks to the works of Paulo Freire, in Latin America (with his famous book "*The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*"), and other important thinkers and pedagogues in other parts of the world. Promoting essentially consciousness-raising or "*conscientization*", liberation, identity restoration, the voice of the poor, critical thinking, etc., "*adult basic education*", as Torres pointed out,

"helped spread a number of pedagogical principles still considered valid not only for adult basic education but for education as a whole: respect for the learner, dialogue, participatory approaches, active learning, cooperation and solidarity in the teaching-learning relationship." (Torres, 2003, p. 63)

The popularity of adult education in Africa started eroding in the early 80s, concomitantly with the rise of formal basic education. The education of children, especially the poor ones, was perceived by national governments as more important than the education of their parents. Consequently, a harsh competition, in terms of resources, was engaged between adult education and primary education. Torres explains the erosion of the interest in adult education by the

"overall erosion of the nation/State and of the role of the State/government, of the development paradigm and, in the education arena, of mass education and public and free schooling." (idem)

The ensuing stagnation and even regression in many cases of adult education is still continuing today, despite a timid revitalization process that has started since the Jomtien Conference in 1990. Although the Jomtien Conference and, ten years later, the Dakar Conference are often associated with the revival of adult basic education, it is interesting to note that out of the six Jomtien goals, only three are directly related to adults in the framework of literacy programs. In the same vein, only two of the six Dakar goals specifically deal with adults. The more recent development initiatives taken at the global level have not brought the support expected for adult education either. The universally acclaimed MDGs for instance pay very small attention to this sub-sector. To illustrate, out of the 8 goals, only 2 have a direct bearing on adult education, formal education in general and especially primary education receiving most of the focus.

The same bias is observed in the recommendations made in the Report of the Commission for Africa to ensure that educational opportunities are available to all. Indeed, in the five proposals that the Commission made in order to leave no-one out, none addresses the concerns of adults. The call of the Commission to the international community to provide an additional USD 7–8 billion per year in order to achieve education for all in Africa relates exclusively to formal education. The African Union is one of the rare organizations that have proposed a well balanced comprehensive education strategy which pays proper attention to the issue of adult education. The AU's Education Strategic Framework For Deadline 2015 commits the pan-African organization to take the necessary measures for obtaining

“full commitment by African governments to the execution of internationally agreed education covenants: Education for All, secondary education, technical and vocational education, higher education, and adult and continuing education, the United Nations Literacy Decade, the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development – in the overall context of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.”

(Commission of the African Union, April 2005, p. 5)

The fact that formal schooling is an unquestionable priority in the education sector, does not justify adult education being left out. To make children compete with their parents in the education process is dangerous as it may create a break between two entities that are mutually dependent. A child's schooling performance is largely determined by the level of education of his or her parents. Therefore, trying to achieve primary education at the expense of adult education defeats its own purpose. Besides, it is contradictory to declare war against poverty, which affects more adults (the population of age 15 and above) than children, and disproportionately to concentrate all efforts on the education of the latter. The education challenge in the impoverished world regions like Africa is not to set priority targets between youth and adults, but to reconcile the interests of both categories in an integrated education process that ensures human development for the attainment of the MDGs and the end of poverty. In the same vein, Jeffrey Sachs suggests that

"with some planning, villages around the world could be helped to engage in continuing adult education on issues of pressing, life-and-death concern, such as, for example, how AIDS is contracted and spread, how malaria can be controlled, the role of hygiene in food preparation, the use of fertilizers, and so forth. Such relevant knowledge, if suitably presented, could inform rural societies on a massive scale."

(2005, p. 258)

Even if the resurgence of adult education in the development programs of African countries for the last fifteen years is still weak, the phenomenon cannot be disregarded, as it is supposed to be instrumental in improving the socio-economic and political situation facing the continent. Torres confirms this view when she explains that

"in the case of developing countries, the scenario for revitalization of adult basic education is the continued expansion – rather than the reduction – of poverty, unemployment, marginalization, delinquency, migration and social despair and social revolt."

(Torres, 2002, p. 76)

As long as poverty remains a distinctive feature of Africa, adult education will impose itself as an unavoidable ingredient of development processes. This is why the vast majority of African countries have elaborated adult education policies as parts of national development strategies even though non-formal education and literacy programs rarely receive more than 5% of national education budgets. Ethiopia is a good case where the potential of adult education is recognized. Thus, the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP) assigns to adult education an important responsibility, in principle, in the process of economic growth and poverty reduction. This is foreseen through a functional adult literacy program for youth and adults aged 15 and above, aimed at enhancing community participation in development. Another action consists of offering basic skill training to youth and adults in Community Skills Training Centers. Past experience shows, however, that, in reality, the implementation of the related policy is achieved with little enthusiasm and commitment. It may be that the low performance of public adult education in the country is the consequence of the lack of adequate support received from the donor community. To illustrate, adult education programs represent only 3.68% of the total budget pledged for external support to the education sector in Ethiopia, for the 2004/05–2009/10 forecast.

African Development Bank and Adult Education

The African Development Bank also recognizes adult education as an important tool for economic development and poverty reduction, specifically in promoting health, agriculture and rural development, water management, gender; and in fighting HIV/AIDS. As stated in its 2000 Education Sector Policy, one of the priority areas of the ADB assistance to education is quality basic education, understood as going beyond formal primary education and the first cycle of secondary education to involve also learning processes in non-formal contexts such as literacy and other programs for youth and adults.

Although the ADB has included adult education in its education strategy since 1985, its actions on the ground relating to this sub-sector have been somewhat limited. Up to 1990, priority was given to secondary education, including general and vocational education, technical education and teacher training. This accounted for 48.8% of the total value of all education projects between 1985 and 1990. Between 1991 and 1998, however, 52.8% of the total support to education was to basic education, with 39.7% to primary level and 13.1% to non-formal education. This shift over the years towards basic education is in line with the recommendations of the Bank's 1986 Education Sector Policy Paper and the 1990 Jomtien Conference on Basic Education for All. Since then, the Bank has been progressively supporting adult education programs in many countries, especially within the framework of the *Education For All-Fast Track Initiative* (EFA-FTI). Good examples of such programs are found in countries such as Gambia, Mauritania, Morocco, Egypt, Malawi, Djibouti, Niger, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Mali, and Niger. These interventions have usually included functional literacy, skills training, entrepreneurship and leadership development, and income generating activities involving both men and women. The ADB has also supported adult education activities in other sectors such as agriculture and rural development through extension work. Nevertheless, adult education's share in the cumulative total amount of about USD 3.3 billion allocated to the education sector in 2004, for instance, remains weak, although if it is difficult to estimate it precisely as adult education activities have been so far financed merely as components of various projects, but not as stand-alone projects.

One of the main lessons learned from the ADfB's experience in assisting adult education in Africa is that its investments in this area were too thinly spread over many operations instead of being concentrated on a few critical issues. This lack of selectivity, while available resources were not substantial, has not helped ensure the kind of effectiveness on the ground that is required to decisively face the requirements of human capital development on a large scale. Another

shortcoming of the AfDB's past experience in adult education resides in the fact that its interventions in this sub-sector were undertaken on an *ad hoc* basis, depending on the requests received from RMCs. No coherent approach defined within a strategic framework existed. Consequently it has not always been easy to address the issues at hand systematically. Finally, but not least, the Bank was faced with an internal institutional capacity problem. Adult education has become a *sui generis* scientific discipline within the education sector, with its specific subject, methods and approaches (andragogy), distinct from formal schooling aimed at children through pedagogical methods. The Bank has not made the necessary arrangements for recruiting the expertise required for processing and managing adult education interventions.

The foregoing pitfalls need to be resolved if the ADB is to achieve any positive development impact through its adult education investments in its RMCs. This is what has prompted the Bank's management to formulate a specific assistance strategy in the area of adult education. The idea is to mainstream adult education in the Bank's vision and in its strategic plan for poverty reduction in Africa. The Bank's strategy for adult education, which is still in draft form and in the process of being approved by the Board, will adopt a holistic perspective whereby support to adult education will not target literacy programs only, but will encompass a wide range of adult learning opportunities, including non-formal education, literacy campaigns, functional literacy, sensitization activities, and alternative modes of knowledge transmission processes that aim at ensuring human development with a view to combating poverty. In this perspective, adult education will be considered as a cross-cutting issue to be integrated in any project and program of any relevant sector, and not be considered as exclusively "*belonging*" to the education sector. In other words, the upcoming strategy will make sure that adult education is involved in all ADB-supported development activities that contribute to the formation of human capital. The strategy will also address the issue of the internal institutional capacity of the Bank by foreseeing the building

up of a core of experts specializing in adult education. Last, but not least, the strategy emphasizes the need to earmark adequate financial resources for adult education investments. The financing of adult education will also be improved qualitatively by providing more grant funds than loans and by softening the Bank's rules and procedures attached to its development assistance financing in the light of the harmonization and alignment principles universally agreed upon.

Conclusions

It has been argued in this paper that adult education, referred to broadly as a transmission process of general, technical or vocational knowledge, as well as skills, values and attitudes meant for mature people, is a powerful tool for development, including poverty reduction and attainment of the MDGs. Yet, this mode of education has not historically received the attention that it deserves in African development efforts. Adult education has been often recognized, in theory, as necessary to enhance development, especially in an era of globalization, not only because it produces human capital, but also because it enables people to become well-informed citizens, capable of thinking critically and owning their destiny through active participation. Unfortunately, this recognition has not often been translated on the ground into substantial and relevant programs. The low amounts of budgetary resources devoted to adult education by African countries reflected the low priority given to this education sub-system by the donor community, despite its inclusion in the global development initiatives adopted since the 90s. If this trend continues, Africa will be deprived again of a significant part of its human resources so much needed to meet its development challenges. Such a scenario should not be allowed to happen, otherwise the ensuing social, economic and political consequences would be catastrophic for a continent that already represents the most impoverished part of the world. The time has come for adult education to be granted top priority in national and global efforts for reducing poverty and meeting the MDGs.

This cannot be done by merely proclaiming “*Decades*” or convening international forums on the issue.

The effective use of adult education for development and poverty reduction in Africa will require that three conditions be met. First, each country will have to define a coherent and comprehensive strategy for the sub-sector. Using a holistic approach, this strategy will provide sound orientations and action plans for preparing adults, as responsible and active national citizens, to fight for and cope with an enlightened globalization that addresses the needs of the poor, environmental concerns, and the spread of democracy. In addition to putting emphasis on human capital formation, this new strategy will promote gender justice, peace and democracy through reinforcing civil society and enhancing human rights. Second, African countries must show genuine commitment in the recognition and the actual implementation of adult education policies in their development efforts. They should not pay lip service to adult education and show no enthusiasm in its application on the ground. This will require appropriate reforms, capacity building efforts and adequate allocation of resources. Third, it will be indispensable for the international community to scale up its aid both quantitatively and qualitatively by increasing it and applying the harmonization and alignment principles.

With the passionate advocacy of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in favor of “*In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights For All*” at the recent World Summit in New York, and the positive developments observed since the 2002 Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development – which has culminated in the G8 Gleneagles Summit in July this year – showing the willingness of the donor community to actually honor their commitment to scale up international aid, prospects have never been brighter for making adult education a truly strategic development tool for changing Africa and ending poverty in our lifetime on this continent. The question, however is, will this historic opportunity be seized?

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