



## Context

The world has made steady progress in literacy in the past decades. Yet globally, 773 million adults and young people lack basic literacy skills<sup>1</sup>, and more than 617 million children and adolescents are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics<sup>2</sup>. The current COVID-19 crisis has been a magnifier of existing literacy challenges, deeply affecting schooling and lifelong learning opportunities including for youth and adults with no or low literacy skills.

During the initial phase of the pandemic, schools were closed down in more than 190 countries, disrupting the education of 62.3 per cent of the world's student population of 1.09 billion in 123 countries.<sup>3</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic also affected around 63 million primary and secondary teachers in 165 countries.<sup>4</sup> Governments have been rapidly deploying distance learning solutions on an unprecedented scale, particularly in formal education for children and young people. A range of solutions, such as virtual lessons, dissemination of materials, and learning provision through TV, radio or in open air spaces, have been adopted.

At the same time, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted in many places on the unpreparedness of infrastructure, education systems, programmes, and people, including policy-makers, educators and professionals, families, and learners themselves, for ensuring the continuity of teaching and learning in such circumstances. It has considerably affected some specific sub-sectors, including youth and adult literacy and education. In many countries, adult literacy and education were absent in initial education response plans, and numerous adult literacy programmes that did exist in the pre-COVID-19 crisis era have been suspended. This means that many youth and adults with no or low literacy skills, who tend to face multiple disadvantages, have had limited access to life-saving information and remote learning opportunities and/or are at higher risk of losing livelihoods. In terms of the digital divide, for instance, globally, nearly half of the world population (51.2 per cent), including many non-literate adults, did not have access to Internet in 2018<sup>5</sup>. Mobile phone subscription per 100 people was 67.5 in low human development countries, while the corresponding figure exceeds 90 per cent in high (113.6 per cent) and middle (91.9 per cent) human development countries.<sup>6</sup> As countries are moving out from the initial response phase, it is anticipated that the majority of non-literate youth and adults would be the hardest hit by educational, social and economic impacts of the pandemic. The crisis has been a stark reminder of the large gap between adult literacy policy discourse and the ground reality that already existed in the pre-COVID-19 era. Moving towards the recovery and resilience-building phase, it is important that literacy, including youth and adult literacy, be integrated into global and national COVID-19 response and recovery plans to ensure the continuity of learning, improved provision, and more inclusive national lifelong learning systems and capacities.

In this context, there is the emerging need to revisit literacy teaching and learning for youth and adults, as well as the role of educators<sup>7</sup>. How have literacy teaching and learning, as well as educators, been affected by the COVID-19 crisis? What are some effective teaching approaches that should be maintained or expanded? How can teaching and learning for youth and adult literacy be reimaged in times of COVID-19 and beyond? These are some of the questions that need to be answered to guide our collective reflection and action. Against this backdrop, the celebrations of International Literacy Day (ILD) on 8 September 2020 will be devoted to the theme of **'Literacy teaching and learning in the COVID-19 crisis and beyond'** with a particular focus on **the role of educators and changing pedagogies**.

1. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/literacy>

2. Fact Sheet No. 46 September 2017 UIS/FS/2017/ED/46.

3. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/globalcoalition>

4. <https://teachertaskforce.org/news/teacher-task-force-calls-support-63-million-teachers-touched-COVID-19-crisis>

5. <https://news.itu.int/itu-statistics-leaving-no-one-offline/>: the figure is slightly high at 54.7 per cent for developing countries.

6. [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/COVID-19\\_and\\_human\\_development.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/COVID-19_and_human_development.pdf)

7. The term 'Educator' here refers to all those who teach literacy to adults and includes teachers, facilitators, animators, monitors, mobilizers and tutors.

## Main issues to be addressed

The current COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the fragility of many youth and adult literacy educators, programmes and systems as represented by abrupt suspension of numerous programmes. Many educators who were on unstable contracts and/or in the non-formal sector, for instance, are at risk of losing livelihoods. Even if they continue their work, many of them would face multiple challenges in providing meaningful learning due to inappropriate teaching environments, inadequate materials, poor working conditions, and their lower status, to name a few. At the same time, during the initial response phase, policy-makers, practitioners, and development partners have learnt some important lessons, particularly in the context of formal education, such as the potential of distance learning offered by digital and other types of technologies, and the value of face-to-face interactions between educators and learners. Educators have an important role to play in learning lessons from the COVID-19 crisis and reimagining effective teaching and learning. The crisis has been also a reminder of the educators' catalytic role in generating the transformative power of literacy for people's empowerment, social transformation, and the betterment of humanity and the planet, within and beyond the SDG4 context.

Moving forward through the COVID-19 era and beyond, it is necessary to understand the state and a range of issues that prevented literacy teaching and learning, as well as educators, from being most effective. At the system level, a prominent challenge is the shortage and uneven distribution of educators, especially in non-formal settings and disadvantaged areas. Another serious challenge concerns the limited capacities of some educators. For instance, in many areas, a secondary level of education or an even lower level is considered to be a sufficient qualification for adult literacy educators. There are also programmes that rely on volunteers with insufficient teaching skills. In addition to the above challenges, there is a need to ensure a 'professional development continuum' that supports literacy educators through pre-service training, in-service training and continuous support, while ensuring coherence between these. Such a continuum can support educators in developing their identities as professionals and pursuing continued learning throughout their careers. This can empower them to adapt more easily to unforeseen demands and challenges as the world changes. The capacities and resilience to manage distance teaching during the COVID-19 crisis is a case in point. Furthermore, many educators are insufficiently remunerated and work in difficult conditions with limited career prospects, which in part explains the relatively high turnover of literacy educators. The Fourth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE IV)<sup>8</sup> shows how national investment in adult learning and education (ALE) curricula, learning materials, educators and teaching methodologies can enhance the quality of learning and education, be it investment in pre-service training, in-service training or employment conditions. In South Sudan, for instance, continuous educator training is offered, while in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the academic level of educators has increased, and Senegal has improved its training system for educators by means of 12 modules.

At the programme level, according to the GRALE IV, some 75 per cent of 107 countries who responded to the survey reported major improvements in the quality of adult learning and education (ALE) which include adult literacy since 2015. Despite the progress, however, the capacities of educators, their working conditions and teaching methodologies, still require reinforcement in a number of literacy programmes around the world. Further improvements in these areas would necessitate more information, awareness-raising, capacity development, resources and conducive policy environments. Regarding teaching methodologies and pedagogies, which is at the heart of successful programmes, there are diverse pedagogical models for youth and adult literacy, from which lessons can be learnt. For instance, the effectiveness of learner-centred pedagogical approaches that recognize the distinctive learning needs of adults, as exemplified by Malcolm Knowles' humanistic theory of andragogy, are widely recognized by policy-makers, practitioners and researchers. Future literacy programmes can also benefit from technological and scientific development, including digital technology-supported teaching and learning and adoption of the latest knowledge and insights generated in different fields such as cognitive science. However, due to persisting information and capacity gaps, educators are often

not adequately equipped with appropriate teaching methodologies and have limited awareness of the specific characteristics and needs of adult learners. Even if educators are well trained and qualified, achieving intended results through effective teaching may entail other challenges, such as lack of appropriate materials and access to learning spaces as well as insufficient human or financial resources.

International Literacy Day (ILD) 2020 is opportune to revisit different approaches to literacy teaching and learning, and the vital role that educators play in promoting quality literacy programmes with a particular focus on youth and adult literacy. Learning lessons from initial responses to the COVID-19 crisis and the wealth of knowledge accumulated across the world, ILD2020 will also explore the futures of literacy teaching and learning, as well as the educators' role in achieving the reimagined teaching and learning the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

## Key questions

- What has been the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on youth and adult literacy educators and teaching and learning? What are the lessons learnt from the crisis? How can we reimagine adult literacy teaching and learning? How can we position youth and adult literacy in the global and national responses and strategies in the recovery and resilience-building phase?
- What are the major innovative and effective pedagogies and teaching methodologies used in youth and adult literacy programmes? How can we take full advantage of technology and scientific research, including cognitive science? What is the role that educators can play in improving pedagogical models and approaches? What constitutes good practice, including that which is technology-based, and what can we learn from such programmes? How can those effective programmes be scaled up and be integrated into national strategies for sustainability?
- How can national education policies, systems, governance, and measures (e.g. national qualification framework, recognition, validation, accreditation, and certification of knowledge, skills and competencies) be improved to provide enhanced support for educators for youth and adult literacy? What are the policy measures required to strengthen pre- and in-service training and support for educators in a 'professional development continuum'? What mechanisms have been implemented to ensure quality and professionalization? How is technology being harnessed in professional development?

# 'Literacy teaching and learning in the

## COVID-19 crisis and beyond:

### the role of educators and changing pedagogies'

The global celebrations of International Literacy Day on 8 September 2020 will be composed of two virtual meetings: 1) Meeting on 'Literacy teaching and learning in the COVID-19 crisis and beyond: the role of educators and changing pedagogies' (13:30-15:30 in Paris time) and 2) Meeting on the Laureates of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes 2020 (16:00-17:00 in Paris time). Both meetings will be accessible through the following link: [https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_jzo2bOe-TjKdSShg6\\_M5CQ](https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_jzo2bOe-TjKdSShg6_M5CQ).

## Main objectives

- To enhance understandings about impact of the COVID-19 crisis on teaching and learning of youth and adult literacy, and educators, and to reflect on reimagined teaching approaches in times of the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.
- To increase awareness of the need to reinforce support for educators and their professionalization in promoting youth and adult literacy towards the achievement of the SDG4 in its totality.
- To generate and share new knowledge related to educators, including that pertaining both to their profile, pre- and in-service training and also to their pedagogies and teaching methodologies.

## Agenda

### Tuesday, 8 September 2020

13:30 - 13:45

#### Opening session

**Moderator:** Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, Education Sector, UNESCO

#### Opening remarks

- Ms Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education

#### Testimony

- **Impact of COVID-19 crisis on teaching and educators:** Ms Olfat Abdulatif Mohammed Al-Sorori, teacher, Yemen

<p>13:45 - 14:25</p>	<p><b>Session 1: A global landscape on literacy teaching and learning in the COVID-19 crisis and beyond</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr Hervé Huot-Marchand, Chief, Section of Youth, Literacy and Skills Development, Education sector, UNESCO</p> <p><b>Presenters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO</li> <li>• H.E. Mr Sardar Mohammad Rahimi, Deputy Minister of Education for Literacy, Afghanistan,</li> <li>• Ms Rita Bissoonauth, Head of Mission, International Centre for Girls and women’s Education in Africa, African Union</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b></p>
<p>14:25 - 15:25</p>	<p><b>Session 2: Reimagined literacy teaching and learning, and the role of educators</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr David Atchoarena, Director, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Educators and professional development continuum</b>, Mr Mafakha Touré, Consultant in education, Senegal</li> <li>• <b>Harnessing the potential of digital technologies for literacy teaching and learning with educators</b>, Ms Judy Kalman, Professor, Department of Educational Research of the Center for Research and Advanced Studies of the IPN, Mexico</li> <li>• <b>Educating the adult brain: How neuroscience of learning can improve literacy teaching and learning</b>, Mr Michael Thomas, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience, Birkbeck, University of London and Director of the Centre for Educational Neuroscience, U.K.</li> <li>• <b>Inclusive literacy teaching and learning</b>, Ms Anita Dighe, Expert in literacy and education, India</li> <li>• <b>Literacy teaching for empowerment and freedom: Reflecting on REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques) in the COVID-19 crisis and beyond</b>, Mr David Archer, Head of Participation and Public Services, ActionAid and Chair of the Strategy and Impact Committee of the Global Partnership for Education</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b></p>
<p>15:25 - 15:30</p>	<p><b>Closing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, Education Sector, UNESCO</li> </ul>

### Main objectives

- To present five outstanding literacy programmes which are awarded the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes 2020.
- To reflect on main factors that enable teaching and learning, as well as educators to be effective, and lessons learnt from the five programmes.

### Agenda

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

16:00 - 17:00

**Moderator:** Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, Education Sector, UNESCO

#### Opening remarks

- Ms Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education
- Ms Rana Dajani, Chair of the International Jury and Professor at Hashemite University, Jordan

#### Presentation of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize

- H.E. Mr Dong Gi Kim, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Korea to UNESCO
- Mr Krishna M. Gautam, Founder Chairperson, Ageing Nepal, Nepal
- Mr Tim Howarth, Chief Executive Officer, United World Schools, United Kingdom

#### Presentation of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy

- H.E. Mr Jin Yang, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the People's Republic of China to UNESCO
- Mr Janix Asare, President, Just Commit Foundation, Ghana
- Ms Mirta Isabel Figueroa Fernandez, Director, University Center for Social Participation, Meritorious Autonomous University of Puebla, Mexico
- Mr Abdulrahman M. Al-Aslami, Refugee education coordinator, General Literacy Office in Sanaa, Yemen

## Stefania Giannini

*Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO*



Ms Stefania Giannini was appointed UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education in May 2018, becoming the top UN official in the field. In this position, she provides strategic vision and leadership for UNESCO in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Education 2030 Agenda, encapsulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4. With an academic background in the Humanities, Ms Giannini has served as Rector of the University for Foreigners of Perugia (2004 – 2012), being one of the first and youngest women to hold this position in Italy. As Senator of the Republic of Italy (2013 – 2018) and Minister of Education, Universities and Research (2014 – 2016), she developed and implemented a structural reform of the Italian education system, centred on social inclusion and cultural awareness. She has also been closely involved in an advisory capacity with the European Commissioner for Research and Innovation.

## Borhene Chakroun

*Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, Education Sector, UNESCO*



Borhene Chakroun is an engineer, with a PhD in Education Sciences from Bourgogne University in France. Borhene worked during the 1990s as a trainer, chief trainer, and project manager. He has also worked as a short-term consultant for the EU, World Bank and other international organisations before coming to the European Training Foundation (ETF) in 2001. At the ETF, Borhene worked as a Senior Human Capital Development specialist. He is now Director of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems Division at UNESCO-HQ. Borhene has conducted a range of policy reviews and skills systems diagnosis in different contexts. He has authored and co-authored various articles and books in the field of skills development and lifelong learning. Much of his most recent work focuses on global trends in reforming education and training systems and global agenda for skills development in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

## Olfat Al-Sorori

*Bachelor degree of business administration – Literacy Instructor .*



Volunteer in Amideast Yemen – and other initiatives such as Read Initiative.

Founder of Ideas Initiative which concentrate on Teaching English and Administrative Skills. Researcher in different studies. Literacy Instructor at SDF within the ILO project. Students affairs in College of Health Emergency Sciences. Courses Coordinator in Safety and Security Center. Worked as an English teacher in many institutes and supervisor at some schools.

## Ms Rita Bissoonauth

*Head of Mission, International Centre for Girls and women's Education in Africa, African Union*



Dr. Rita Bissoonauth presently heads the African Union International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Before moving to Ouagadougou, she was a Senior Policy Officer in Education for five years at African Union Commission in Addis Ababa. She also worked as a Senior Lecturer at the Mauritius Institute of Education in Mauritius and the University of Quebec in Montreal, Canada teaching Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Science Education.

In 2020, Rita was honoured as one of the 100 Most Influential Women in Africa. She has worked to increasing the visibility of AU/CIEFFA, through advocacy campaigns, blogs and publications on girls and women's Education, such as Women in STEM; "Effects of corruption on education"; "Gender stereotyping in TVET".

She organizes regularly capacity-building workshops for young women and men in the 55 African countries in the areas of Women leadership and Entrepreneurship, STEM, TVET, financial and digital literacy and has trained over 200 African young women and men to date.

Rita holds a Master's degree in Biochemistry from the University of Lyon, France and a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Quebec in Montreal, Canada.

## Judy Kalman

*Professor, Department of Educational Research – Center for Research and Advanced Studies, IPN*



Judy Kalman is a professor at the Department of Educational Research of the Center for Research and Advanced Studies of the IPN since 1993 (University of California, 1993). Her research interests are center on the social construction of literacy and digital culture. In 2002, she was the recipient of the International Literacy Research Prize awarded by UNESCO and has been a member of the Mexican Academy of Science since 2004. In 2019 she received an Honorary Doctorate from the National University of Córdoba in Argentina for her work in literacy, adult education, and digital culture. She has published books, articles and chapters in Spanish, English, French and Portuguese about reading and writing in diverse contexts.

## David Atchoarena

*Director, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning*



Mr. Atchoarena was previously the Director of the Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems at UNESCO, with oversight of education policies, higher education, adult and vocational education and training, and ICT in education. Prior to working at UNESCO Headquarters, Mr. Atchoarena spent many years at the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) where he conducted research and technical cooperation programmes in the fields of educational planning, lifelong learning, technical and vocational education, and higher education. Before joining UNESCO, Mr. Atchoarena served as Chargé de Mission at the National Agency for Lifelong Education of the French Ministry of Education and as a project coordinator in the Ministry of Finance and Planning in Saint Lucia. Mr Atchoarena holds a Doctorate in Economics from the University of Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne.

## Mafakha Touré

*Consultant; Expert in Education and Public Policy*



Mafakha Touré is a consultant, an expert in education, and a specialist in public policy definition and evaluation, human resources management, and gender issues. He is the former Secretary General of the Ministry of National Education of Senegal, before which he was the ministry's Director of Human Resources and then its top technical advisor. He has also been a teacher and holds a DEA in History from the University of Dakar. He has received several additional professional training certifications abroad. Mafakha is also a researcher and has worked with many organizations at the national and international level in the framework of evaluation, policy development, and management tools. He is distinguished as an Officer in the Order of Merit, and Knight in the Order of the Lion in Senegal.

## Michael Thomas

*Professor of cognitive neuroscience, Birbeck, University of London*



In addition to being a professor in cognitive neuroscience, Michael Thomas has served as the Director of the University of London Centre for Educational Neuroscience (CEN) since 2010. The goal of this centre is to support a dialogue between researchers and educationalists to further translation of research into practise, in order to improve educational outcomes and well-being across the lifespan. Recent CEN projects include assessing the impact of technology use on adolescent health and cognition, linking findings on adult neuroscience to the efficacy of adult literacy programmes, and developing a new computer-based classroom activity to improve science and mathematics learning in primary age children. He recently edited a new volume entitled Educational Neuroscience: Development Across the Lifespan (2020, Routledge Books).

## Anita Dighe

*Former Director, Campus of Open Schooling, University of Delhi, Delhi.*



Dr Anita Dighe retired in 2005 as the Director at the Campus of Open Schooling at University of Delhi. Beside her work in communications research, she has worked in the areas of literacy, adult and non-formal education, continuing education, extended education, and the use of ICTs in literacy and related gender issues. She has had a longstanding association with national and international programs in adult learning and education.

## David Archer

*Head of Participation and Public Services, ActionAid*



David Archer is the Head of Participation and Public Services at ActionAid ([www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org)), after having been its Head of Education for many years. He leads ActionAid's work on civic participation, tax justice and gender responsive public services. In the 1980s, David worked on literacy programmes across Latin America inspired by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire ("Literacy and Power: the Latin American Battleground" Earthscan 1990). Joining ActionAid in 1990, he developed the Reflect approach to adult literacy and social change, which has been used in over 100 countries by 500 organisations, and has won 5 UN International Prizes since 2003.

David is a co-founder of Global Campaign for Education ([www.campaignforeducation.org](http://www.campaignforeducation.org)), and was until recently a board member as well. He managed a £15 million Commonwealth Education Fund from 2002-2009, reporting to the Governor of the Bank of England. He is now the Chair of the Board of the Right to Education Initiative ([www.right-to-education.org](http://www.right-to-education.org)) and chair of the Strategy and Impact Committee of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE - [www.globalpartnership.org](http://www.globalpartnership.org)). He is also a trustee of the UK Forum on International Education and Training.

## Rana Dajani

*Professor, Hashemite University; Ph.D. molecular cell biology*



Rana Dajani holds a Ph.D. molecular cell biology, and is a Harvard Radcliff fellow, a Fulbrighter, Eisenhower fellow, Professor and former center of studies director at Hashemite University in Jordan, and a visiting professor at the universities of Yale and Cambridge. She is a world renowned expert on genetics of Circassian and Chechen populations in Jordan, and has worked to establish stem cell research ethics law in Jordan. As an advocate for biological evolution and Islam, she has been a speaker at McGill University and MIT. She has also acted as Jordan's team leader in studying refugee youth with Yale University, as well as the epigenetics of trauma across

generations. She is a higher education reform expert, and a member of the UN women Jordan advisory council. She has written for the magazine *Science and Nature*, established a female mentor network, received a 2014 PEER award, and organized the first gender summit for the Arab world in 2017. As one of the most influential women scientists in Islamic World, she was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> among 100 most influential Arab women in 2015, was inducted to the Women in Science Hall of Fame in 2015, received the King Hussein Institute for Cancer and Biotechnology Award 2009 and 2016, and the Global Changemaker Award from IIE/Fulbright. Awarded the Jordan star of science by HM King Abdullah II, she is recognized as a higher education reform expert EU-TEMPUS in Jordan, a founder of the Service Learning Center at Hashemite University, and a speaker at TEDxDeadsea and TEDxSPUT, the World Islamic Economic Forum 2012, and the World Science Forum 2015. She has developed a community-based model "We love reading" to encourage children to read for pleasure, was designated among Synergos Arab World Social Innovators 2009, and received the WISE Award 2014, the King Hussein Medal of Honor 2014, the Star Award 2015, IDEO.org Best Refugee Education Program 2015, the UNESCO International Literacy Prize 2017, the World Literacy Council Award 2018 and the Jacobs Social Entrepreneurship Award 2018. Finally, she is the author of the book: *Five scarves, Doing the impossible: If we can reverse cell fate why can't we redefine success.*

## H.E. Mr Kim Dong-gi

*Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Korea to UNESCO*



Mr. Dong-gi has considerable experience in diplomatic missions, having worked for the Korean Embassies in Canada, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, and the United States. With a background in English language and literature as well as international law, Mr. Dong-gi was the Director-General for Cultural Affairs for the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs before being appointed Korea's Ambassador to UNESCO in July 2019.

## Krishna Murari Gautam

*Founder, Ageing Nepal*



Mr Krishna Murari Gautam founded Ageing Nepal, which is dedicated to the betterment of the ageing population. He has participated in numerous national and international courses and conferences, has guided research, and authored books on various issues pertaining to aged populations in Nepal. He has a master's degree in Economics, and began his professional career in 1978 as an assistant lecturer. He joined the Agriculture Projects Services Center in 1979 as an Agriculture Specialist, and rose up to the position of Senior Agriculture Economist by 1988. He then founded his own private consulting company and worked in many rural development projects in Nepal, China, and India. He has training and substantial experience in various subjects ranging from media to alternative energy technologies. He is also known in Nepal as a creative writer.

## Tim Howarth

*Chief Executive of United World Schools (UWS)*



UWS work in some of the world's poorest regions to give every child access to free education. UWS support local communities to establish and run primary (elementary) schools for out-of-school children in Myanmar, Nepal and Cambodia. Under Tim's leadership, and working with the committed and passionate UWS Team, UWS has reached over 36,000 previously out of school children through education with a network of over 220 UWS Community Schools and learning sites in remote regions of SE Asia. UWS is a 2019 WISE Award Winner for educational innovation, and a 2020 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize winner for ethnic minority literacy programmes. Tim is a trained teacher. Prior to his time at UWS, he has worked in a number of schools and educational organisations in the UK and Australia, responsible for staff performance, development and training. As an educational consultant, Tim has also worked with head teachers and school leaders to develop teaching and leadership capacity in UK schools. Since 2011 Tim has increasingly devoted his time to growing and scaling the work of UWS, a charity that his family founded in 2009. Tim was initially a UWS volunteer, then consultant, became Chief Operating Officer in 2012, and Chief Executive in 2015. Tim is a Fellow of the RSA and since 2019 has been listed on the UK Social Entrepreneur Index, which recognises the UK's most influential social entrepreneurs. Tim lives in London with his young family and, when time allows, is also a keen kite surfer, runner and skier.

## H.E. Mr Jin Yang

*Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the People's Republic of China to UNESCO*



Ambassador YANG Jin's work experience covers a variety of posts at home and abroad in government offices, research institutes, education institutions, international organization and foreign services. He entered the Chinese State Education Commission (presently the Chinese Ministry of Education) in 1983 and had progressive experience in managing policy-making in technical and vocational education and in adult education. During this period, he also worked as vice principal of a technical and vocational school in Hebei Province of China for one year. He was Deputy Director-General of the Department of Basic Education in Chinese Ministry of Education until 2008, when he was appointed as Senior Programme Specialist (P-5) and Manager of the Programme on Lifelong Learning Policies and strategies in UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). In 2014, he was appointed as Director-General of the Central Institute for Vocational and Technical Education of China. Before taking office at the Permanent Delegation of China to UNESCO, he served as Minister-Counsellor for Education in the Chinese Embassy in France for three years. Ambassador YANG Jin is a current member of the Governing Board of UNESCO UIL. From 2016-2019, he was a member of the National Education Inspectorate of China. He served as Vice-President of the Chinese Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Chinese Association of Adult Education. Ambassador Yang Jin holds professorship from the National Institute of Education Sciences of China and East China Normal University. He holds a Ph.D. in economics of education from the University of Manchester and Bolton Institute of Higher Education where he also studied for his M.Ed. in comparative education. His undergraduate studies were in mechanical engineering in Xi'an Jiaotong University of China.

## Janix Kwabena Asare

*President, Just Commit Foundation*



After obtaining his BSc. Environmental Science at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, Janix Asare has channeled his experience and passion for nature, literacy, and social entrepreneurship to create the Just Commit Foundation (JCF), a non-profit organization. As its president, he leads 'Inspirational Business Stories', an innovative approach to teaching and learning that uses business-oriented storybooks to provide guidance, aiming to motivate youth to create sustainable businesses in environments with limited resources. 'Inspirational Business Stories' has allowed over 500 high school beneficiaries to gain skills in reading, creative writing, comprehension and grammar, as well as STEM and entrepreneurship. Over 30 school and home businesses have been set-up, and the project has won four international business awards for its partner schools. Currently, JCF provides inspirational storybooks for SHEET (Safety, Health and Eco-Entrepreneurship Training) in English and local languages to serve as a guide to educate urban poor school administrators, staff, students and guardians, and mitigate the hazards of COVID-19 and beyond.

## Mirta Isabel Figueroa Fernandez

*Director, University Center for Social Participation (CUPS); Meritorious Autonomous University of Puebla*



Mirta Isabel Figueroa Fernandez was born in Puebla, Mexico, in 1977. She studied a degree in Psychology at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP) and a Master's degree in Public Policies for Social Development and Educational Management at the Cooperation Center for Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CREFAL). She completed her Postgraduate Degree in Reading, Writing and Education from FLACSO, Argentina.

In 2001, she participated as a volunteer in the first literacy campaign carried out by BUAP, with the initial idea of helping for a week, but has remained as a collaborator of the University Center for Social Participation (CUPS) ever since. Since 2013, she has been the Director of CUPS, and together with a team of 10 collaborators and many volunteers, she coordinates the Literacy and Community Work Campaigns, as well as the Schools and Community Centers programs in Puebla. Her passion for community work and education in marginalized contexts has grown over time, and more recently, she has focused on studying educational strategies to reduce growing violence in Mexico, and to rebuild its social fabric based on education.

## Abulrahman Al-Aslami

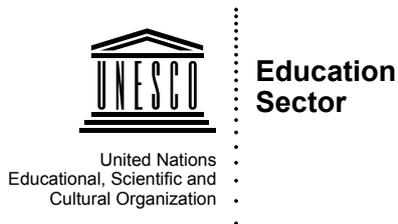
*Director of media and public relations for literacy and adult education*



Abdulrahman Al-Aslami is the Director of media and public relations for literacy and adult education in Yemen's capital city of Sana'a. He is also a literacy and adult education consultant, has worked as Head of the Training section in the Literacy Office, and has previously worked as a literacy instructor and English language teacher. He has also worked as an English and medical terminology instructor at private and public institutes for health sciences, and the College of Health and Technical Emergency Sciences. He is a member of the protection committee of the Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF). He participated in teacher training workshops of British council, and training programs for the protection committees presented by SDF in partnership with UNHCR. He is also the coordinator of refugee education in the Literacy Office, interested in educating refugees and acclimating them to the local societies in which they live. He was an advocate of the incorporation of a constitutional article on intellectual property rights, and a coordinator for the update of the English language and medical syllabi for the ILOS system for High Institute for Health Sciences.

### UNESCO Education Sector

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation on which to build peace and drive sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education and the Education Sector provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens national education systems and responds to contemporary global challenges through education with a special focus on gender equality and Africa.



### The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



## Stay in touch

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