

# **Making knowledge work**

Written by Maïté Jouvenot

# Education to fight EXCLUSION

**W**hat is being done today about the tide of exclusion facing so many of the world's young people? Images of youth unrest, unemployment, delinquency, despair and conflict are all too well-known, as is the discourse on their causes, but how well-known are the solutions being actively sought around the world, particularly in the countries of the

knowledge and will for change as its starting point, using local creativity and, often, the popular or informal economy as the impetus for income-generating activities. Through the informal economy, where solidarity and entrepreneurial skills are vital, young people can acquire literacy skills and see the concrete results of learning, working together and setting up businesses.

## A few words about the Project...

*South? With this present series, Innovations for Youth, UNESCO's youth project "EDUCATION TO FIGHT EXCLUSION" has decided to identify, promote and connect particular projects around the world, which are indicative of new trends and seem to hold rich lessons for all those combating youth marginalization. It is, indeed, vital that governments, UN agencies, international organizations, NGO's, educators and also communities learn of innovations for youth and acquire a new vision of how to approach young people's problems and learning needs. Current economic structures and education systems are obviously not serving the best interests of all young people. Merely advocating their expansion can only lead to further marginalization of young people and accordingly further jeopardize the future of the world. Change is urgently needed, particularly in the field of basic education.*

*As well as this series, UNESCO's project "EDUCATION TO FIGHT EXCLUSION" also directly supports a selection of projects in over 30 countries. This can mean developing practical skills such as food processing, recycling techniques, energy technologies or creating alternative forms of education, such as learning through video and radio, night and street schools, youth camps, house construction programmes, schemes for the upgrading of slums. More often than not, these activities are in the non-formal education sector. Each of the UNESCO youth project's initiatives takes young people's*

*The wealth of experience in the informal economy shows that young people, especially in the South, have not been waiting around for answers to be given to them. Instead, in the sprawling and crowded cities of the world, they have already begun to pull through, coming together in networks, creating associations and developing small jobs. It is UNESCO's task, today, to validate their work and use it as a way to elaborate strategies for change and create a renewed impetus for basic education for youth. The world can no longer afford to ignore the plight of its excluded, notably in developing countries. It is up to all those fighting for change to support projects and call for a better use of resources, creating a wider and more sustainable vision of the world and education where young people, even the most excluded, can find their place.*

---

### Contact

**UNESCO**

**Special Youth Project**

ED/BAS/LIT

7, Place de Fontenoy

75352 Paris 07 SP, France

Tel: 33 1 45 68 09 82

Fax: 33 1 45 68 56 27 / 29

E-mail: [m.bousquet@unesco.org](mailto:m.bousquet@unesco.org)





**CORDONNERIE**

Cizage  
Ressemelage

Couture

Changement de Couleur

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Non-formal education within the framework of “Education for All” .....	p. 06
Youth in developing countries: lack of education and poverty .....	p. 08
Reviewing external models in economy and education .....	p. 10
Non-formal education or how to respond effectively to the lack of education and the increase of poverty .....	p. 18
<i>The Special Youth Project at a glance in...</i>	
<b>Mozambique</b> .....	<b>p. 11</b>
<b>Haiti</b> .....	<b>p. 14</b>
<b>Egypt</b> .....	<b>p. 19</b>
<b>Crimea</b> .....	<b>p. 22</b>
<b>Senegal</b> .....	<b>p. 24</b>
<b>Lao PDR</b> .....	<b>p. 27</b>
<b>Mongolia</b> .....	<b>p. 30</b>
<b>Viet Nam</b> .....	<b>p. 34</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>p. 37</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>p. 39</b>

**The authors are responsible for the choice and presentation of the facts contained in this document and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.**





# NON-FORMAL EDUCATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF “**EDUCATION FOR ALL**”

Ten years after the Jomtien conference, the target of offering education to all has not yet been achieved. Considerable efforts in the field of education made by several developing countries, have simultaneously been cancelled out by an overwhelming population increase.

At the same time, the application of structural adjustment policies has led many countries to make drastic reductions in their budgets, notably in the fields of health and education. Thus, non-conventional methods of education are being reconsidered, both by learners and their families as well as by the various actors in the development process\*.

It is in this context of economic disarray, as well as in response to the insufficiencies and inadequacy of the classic educational system, that non-formal education experiences are being sought and developed. This kind of education embraces “all educational activities, organized and systematic, practised outside the formal educational system in order to provide specific knowledge to selected sub-groups of the population”\*.

This revival of interest in non-formal education derives from several observations:

- The necessity of a dual educational strategy for those excluded from school. Non-formal education is not intended to replace the traditional school but as an alternative in those places where it does not exist (slums, isolated and scattered rural areas, ...) or where it is not adapted to the needs of young people (their time schedule, the demands of the local economy, their socio-cultural environment, ...).

- The intergenerational impact of non-formal education. One literate member of the family could suffice to break the circle of illiteracy.
- Gender disparities. By targeting specific groups, non-formal education reduces the inequality in women’s access to education.
- Costs of non-formal education are lower than those of formal education.
- Pedagogical methods are more appropriate, notably in the use of local languages and in subject matter based on learners’ needs.

However, despite this reasoning, non-formal education continues to be regarded with a certain amount of mistrust and is the subject of various criticisms:

- A high drop-out rate
- The complex processes involved in the implementation of non-formal education projects due, in particular, to the diverse populations to which they are directed.
- An insufficient institutional weave
- The difficulty of establishing objective evaluation criteria

Therefore, this publication proposes to demonstrate the contribution of non-formal education in the fight against poverty, notably by providing literacy to marginalized youth. It will also be necessary to draw up a framework for future actions in order to rethink formal education and to allow non-formal education to play its full role in the educational strategies of developing countries.

\* COOMBS P. H., PROSSNER R. C., AHMED M. (1973), *New paths for learning for rural children and youth : non-formal education for rural development*, International Council for Educational Development, X, New York.





# YOUTH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: LACK OF EDUCATION AND POVERTY

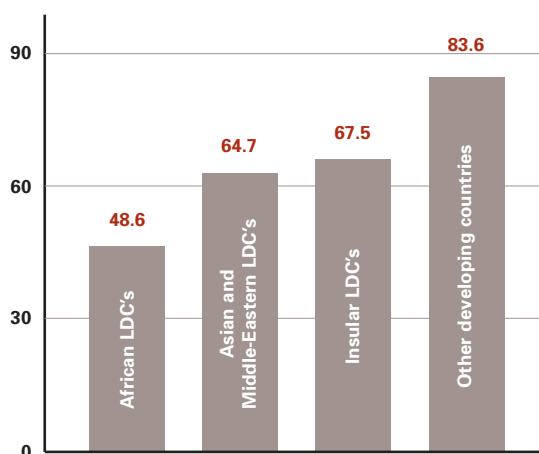
At present 284 million children aged 12 to 17 are out of school. Their number is expected to reach 324 million by 2010. They will be part of the 884.7 million illiterate adults and of the 1.3 billion people living on less than one US dollar a day. The link between poverty and illiteracy today is well established; those countries which are economically less advanced are also those where literacy rates are lowest.

It should be noted that real progress has been made by developing countries in the field of education. In fact, since the 1970s, a considerable increase in enrolment rates can be observed, although veiled by the high population growth. Also, the inequalities according to region or sex are slow to disappear.

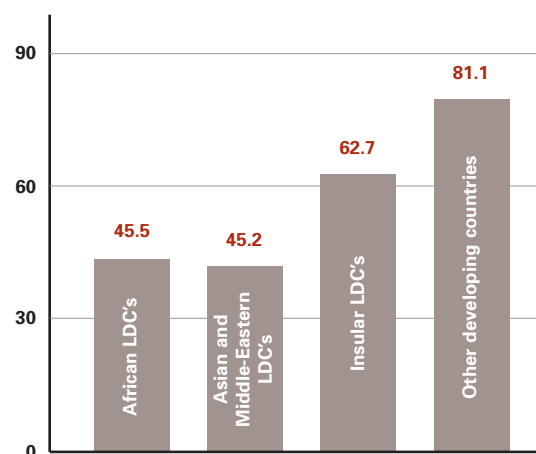
The lack of coherent and precise political commitment, national economies strangled by debt, inappropriate choices in social spheres to respond to the targets of structural adjustment plans, have considerably hindered the quantitative and qualitative development of education in Southern countries.

In order to achieve education for all, developing countries will have to face many challenges in the coming decades: a more rapid increase in the numbers to be educated compared to other regions of the world, higher drop-out rates and high schooling costs. In this context, it is necessary to reconsider the efficiency of the school system to form responsible and independent citizens, and to explore new educational methods.

**School enrolment ratios  
(primary and secondary),  
1996**



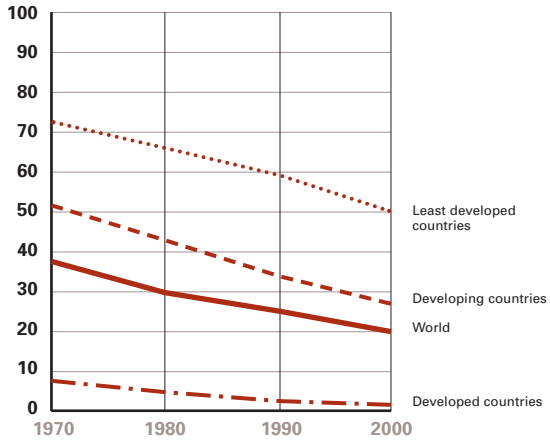
**Adult literacy rate,  
1996**



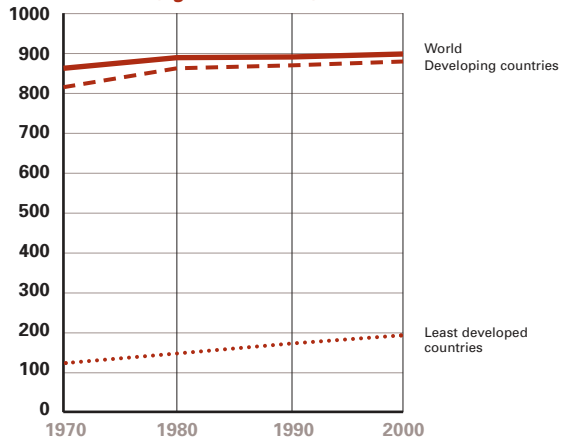
Source: UNCTAD, Statistical profiles of LDC's, 2001



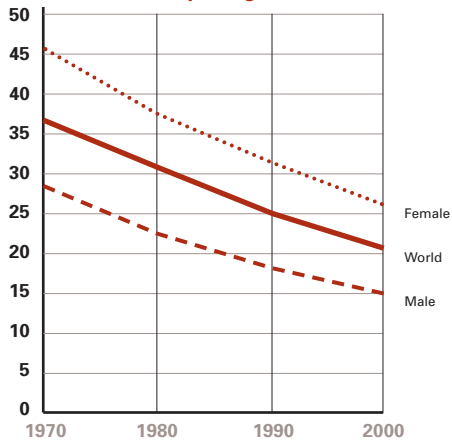
**Illiteracy rate estimates  
(age 15 and over)**



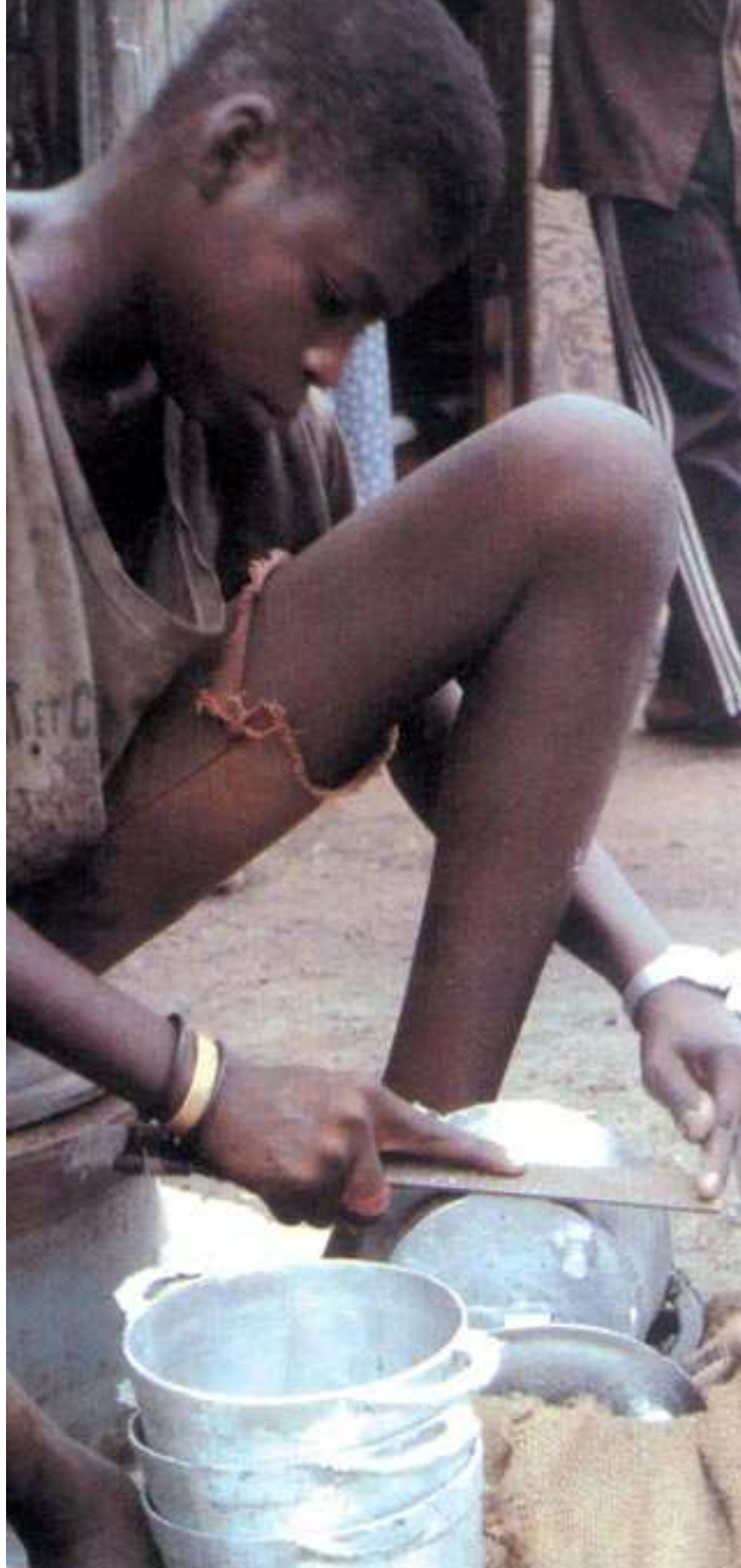
**Illiteracy population estimates  
(age 15 and over)**



**Illiteracy and gender**



Source: [www.unescostat.unesco.org](http://www.unescostat.unesco.org)



# REVIEWING EXTERNAL MODELS IN ECONOMY AND EDUCATION

## Informal economy, an alternative development model?

The inflexibility and inadequacy of external models are currently being reviewed, both in economical and education terms. As regards goods and services, the poor create their own “parallel” means of exchange. This form of economy, which concerns more than half the active population in developing countries, called “informal” because it does not follow the criteria set up by external observers, is now becoming much more than a simple strategy of day-to-day survival: **a response of the poor to their poverty**. It is in this way that the productivity, the imitation of the life-style and the consumer standards of the North are bypassed. The exchange value of a commodity depends first of all on its functional value, that is its impact on the life and liberty of everyone; profit is less sought after than the possibility of creating the value of the article in order to carry out the exchange. Circulation of money is more important than its accumulation.

But above all, the diversity of goods and services exchanged is accompanied by production methods and social relations which could well result in the emergence of a development model specific to the populations of the South.

## The failure of the formal educational system in providing basic education to all

Educational methods also have to be re-examined. Of course the millions of out-of-school children in the world today should remind us of the efforts made by many countries to achieve universal primary education. However, these efforts have basically consisted in extending the formal

educational system without modifying its pedagogical methods, in content as well as in teaching methods.

The present educational systems in developing countries were not established on the basis of their intrinsic social, educational, economical, and cultural dynamics. They result from an imposition, an importation, or simply the imitation of external models.

This “superimposition” on the ways of transmitting traditional knowledge does not fit in with the life of the child and of its community, because it is based on an unknown reality. The teaching carried out at school as much as the pedagogical methods employed, the pace it imposes on the child as much as the site where it takes place, make this education largely incompatible with the one which has led to the reproduction of the community, its standards and its values.

Schooling is experienced by many pupils as artificial, hard to assimilate since it is far from the reality of everyday life and therefore of little use. What school requires pupils to do, to experience or to learn, is not understood by them, and thus many of them drop out before having acquired the basic knowledge in reading, writing and arithmetic necessary to have a productive life.

In addition, governments have more and more difficulty in maintaining non-profitable educational systems because they are expensive and inappropriate to the economical needs of their countries. This situation forces us to take into consideration new approaches to education in order to extend, complete and reinforce the efforts achieved within the framework of formal education.

**Non-formal educational activities are:**

- Organized and structured
- Directed at an identifiable public
- Aimed at specific educational objectives
- Carried out mainly outside the formal educational system and addressed to-out-of school learners

There is no question that basic non-formal education should replace the school institution which, in spite of its remoteness from the reality of developing countries as well as the underprivileged areas of industrialized countries, has become an important community centre.

However, the generalisation of education implies that a **minimum basic education**, accessible and useful, be given to the majority of the population of all societies. In order to achieve this, the school can no longer be considered as the only teaching place, in the same way as it can no longer expect to assume, unaided, the educational needs of society.

Basic non-formal education can substitute formal schooling in those places where it does not exist or it does not meet the needs of young people. Often, it has even facilitated its introduction. It is aimed at children for whom there is no adequate system of formal teaching and at those adults who have not had access to education. To those who have never gone to school, it offers the means for a permanent education

and it allows them to acquire certain skills which formerly they had been denied. It aims principally at integrating underprivileged groups of populations living in isolated rural areas or in the suburbs of large cities, where their basic needs are not met and their involvement in the life of their society is limited.

The *Special Youth Project* has attempted to meet this double necessity: improve the living conditions of populations by enabling them to master the procedures and methods. From the identification and prioritization of their needs to the elaboration of a methodology; from the conception of the material to the evaluation of the results obtained, the Special Youth Project has involved, as much as possible, local participants in the different stages of the educational activities prepared specifically for them. In this way, the implementation of the project, as well as like the specific contents of education, became a teaching subject.

**Basic non-formal education addresses:**

- Children who have never been to school or who have prematurely dropped out of school
- Adults who were deprived of elementary teaching or who have become illiterate again
- Young adults who went to school
- Specific groups (nomads, refugees) or geographically isolated people with no access to the school system

**Mozambique**

**Rebuilding a country with innovative hands**

**In 1992, peace agreement marking the end of civil war in Mozambique were signed in Rome. Hunger, misery, natural disasters and the climate of violence which reigned, have**

**completely destabilized the lives of Mozambican families and particularly of young people. It is to these young people that we must turn today. Those under 25 years of age account**

**for 60% of the national population, and those between 10 and 30 years of age represent 50%. It is thus impossible to help Mozambique without first helping its youth.**



## Mozambique



Area: 801590 sq km  
Population: 19.1 million inhabitants,  
43% under 15 years of age  
Birth rate: 38 ‰  
Death rate: 23.3 ‰  
Infant mortality rate: 139.86 ‰  
Population growth rate: 1.47%  
Life expectancy at birth: 37.52  
years  
Literacy rate: 40.1%  
(men : 57.7 % ; women : 23.3 %)  
GDP per capita: 1000 \$  
No data available on  
unemployment rate and  
population living below the  
poverty line

*In the field of education, figures show that the situation in Mozambique is inferior to the average in sub-Saharan African countries: the literacy rate was of 32.9% in 1994, against 40.8% for the African average. For women the figure was 21.4% against an African average of 28.5%.*

*UNESCO has been in action since February 1996, in partnership with the Governments of Portugal and Mozambique, within the framework of a project in favour of the integration of young people through arts and crafts production. In 1997, the Special Youth Project, together with the UNESCO Centre in Maputo, launched the project Iniciativa Jovem with the aim of sustaining basic education in Maputo and in other priority regions of the country. Iniciativa Jovem has not been conceived as an extension of Empresa Jovem, the previous project, but the two teams have worked together and shared their experiences.*

*More precisely, Iniciativa Jovem's aim is to improve the social environment of the most deprived communities by offering young people educational and cultural possibilities which will allow them to become protagonists of a positive social change. For this purpose, Iniciativa Jovem has created youth centres scattered in various provinces and*

*designed to give basic education (reading, writing and arithmetic) and a parallel practical skills training.*

*The aim is to give young people the opportunity to enter the economic arena by developing innovative and little-known activities, like collecting and recycling waste or cultivating medicinal plants. Since employment opportunities are still low in a country staggering from years of political, economic and social crisis, the centres gather information on employment possibilities in the region and make every endeavour to elaborate appropriate training plans.*

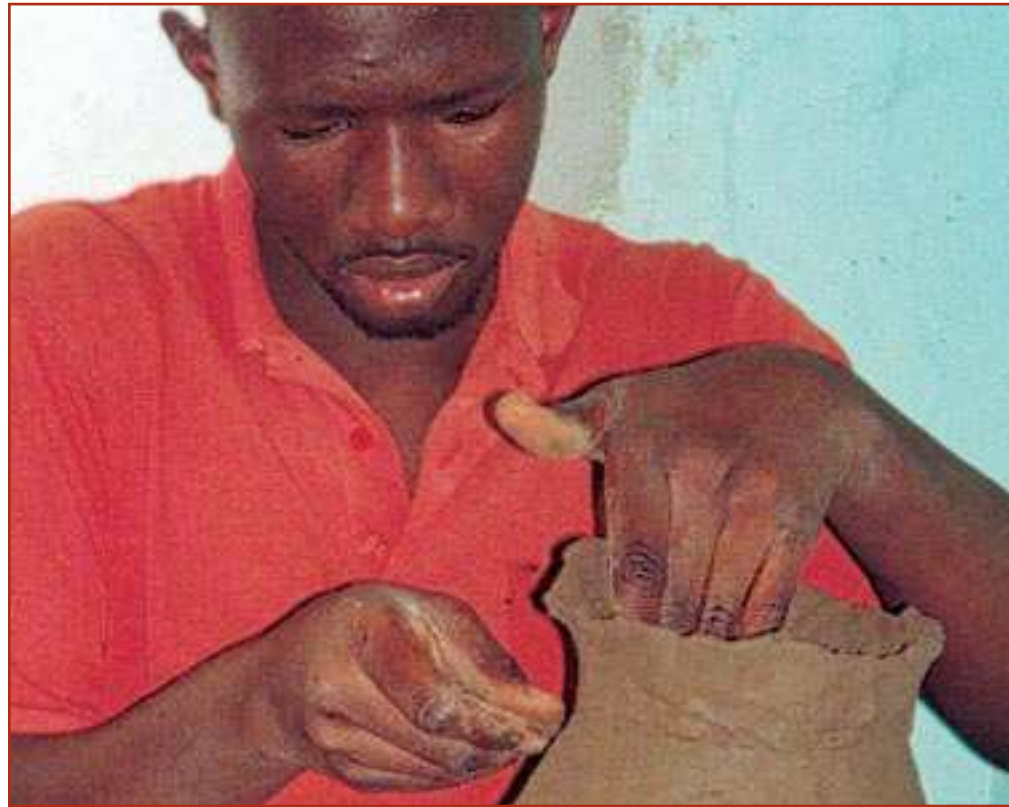
*The participation of young people in the project has been pivotal and crucial. Firstly, they have carried out surveys, not only to assess the needs but also the economic potential of the regions in which the centres were going to be constructed. Secondly, they have taken steps to motivate the inhabitants, on the one hand, to introduce the project to other young people and, on the other hand, to induce the entire community to take part in the activities of the centre, in order to ensure its success and maximize its importance. Finally, the organizational structure has led to the emergence of community leaders.*

*During the first year, the participants selected two of their*

***number to represent them on the steering committee. Later, at the beginning of the last phase, they elected a Director General and heads of each production unit. These people benefited from further training in English and were closely supervised by the project personnel in order to ensure that they acquire the necessary management skills.***

***The main difficulties encountered by the project are linked to the insufficiency in financial and human resources. To understand the diverse nature of the target groups (young mothers, street children, refugees, ex child-soldiers, etc.) is to understand how difficult it was for those in charge of the project to find local qualified personnel to train the young. Moreover, budget cuts hampered the implementation and even the continuation of certain training activities.***

***However, everyone agrees in saying that the creation of the centres, despite all the obstacles and limitations encountered, has been a major event for the mobilization of the young, with***



***the aim of shaping their future and that of their country.***

***Furthermore, important lessons for future action have emerged from the project, notably the need to link teaching, both practical and theoretical, to the reality of the populations who***

***receive it. The simple juxtaposition of pedagogical initiatives to the life of the learners, especially when they are marginalized people, has little chance of generating motivation, which is necessary to trigger the desire to learn and to overcome the barriers of poverty.***

The main challenge of the Special Youth Project was to involve the communities in the development activities that concern them and to arouse a sense of ownership in order to make them realize that they possess the means to improve their situation, and that external aid is only a contribution, limited in time. By participating in the improvement of their livelihoods, underprivileged populations shape their own destiny and become the protagonists of their own development. Moreover, they learn to reflect on the

difficulties affecting their situation, to find solutions and to negotiate with the entire community on the conditions of their implementation. By doing this, the practice of democracy is gradually integrated.

Everyone has to become a pole of conception and negotiation. Each member of a community has to feel capable of acting on his own socio-economic environment through dialogue and negotiations with all the participants present.

However, in order to effectively participate in the life of the community, notably in taking the decisions which concern it, each individual needs a basic education. Here, non-formal education plays an extremely significant role, especially with young people and adults.

At present, written information represents the pivot of general information. Regarding decisions, those who are well informed and capable of defending their own opinions take control. Inequality in education nourishes political and economic inequality. Therefore, non-formal education proposes solutions which face the overall problem: linking literacy, know-how and learning to be.

In addition, in the course of the last decades, experience has brought to light certain conditions that contribute decisively to the acquirement and retention of knowledge; among them, the participation of the populations concerned. Basic non-formal education programmes facilitate this involvement of beneficiaries because from the beginning the contact between trainer and learners is voluntary and targeted; it could almost appear as a “free-choice” education. This type of education, attentive to the needs of the group to which it is

directed, kindles enthusiasm, motivation and the courage to speak up. People normally excluded from the official political and economical spheres, from all decisions, finally feel part of the decisions taken concerning them. They finally feel respected and listened to.

When participation and voluntarism meet, literacy can be an act of human liberation. Personal commitment is seen as a necessity for the success of the project; as opposed to certain so-called development activities in which inequalities are even more apparent through manipulation of the weakest.

To facilitate effective participation, the initiatives of the Special Youth Project are often backed up by grass-roots organizations, such as the Vallue Citizens Association, in Haiti. Where these did not exist, the Special Youth Project encouraged them. This was the case of Senegal where, thanks to meetings between instructors, it was decided to create an operational network, the Association of Street Corner Trainers (AFRCR) to promote the best practices in non-formal education. In fact, literacy programmes are never really successful until a local network accepts responsibility for them.

## Haiti

### ***Video as a means to fight the barriers of illiteracy***

***It is in one of the poorest countries of the world, under-industrialized, in debt and politically unstable, that the project Aprann e travay (Learn and Work) has developed. The title on its own indicates the degree of urgency and how much is at stake: 80% of the population live below the poverty line; 55% of Haitians are illiterate; the unemployment rate is around 70% and informal***

***economy occupies two thirds of the active population. Finally, those under fifteen years of age represent 50 % of the population.***

***Aprann e Travay attempts to give to as many people as it can the means to produce and be resourceful. In order to achieve this as rapidly as possible, activities rely on existing grass-roots***

***organizations. These allow the project to assist a large number of people in difficulty and to become a unifying element enabling beneficiaries to build their future together. On the other hand, the pedagogical content is based on traditional know-how and local crafts. Finally, thanks to the video, training is independent of the level of literacy of the learners, which contributes to the***



## Haiti



Area: 27 750 sq km  
Population: 6.87 million inhabitants, 41% under 15 years of age  
Birth rate: 31.97 ‰  
Death rate: 15.13 ‰  
Infant mortality rate: 97 ‰  
Population growth rate: 1.39%  
Life expectancy at birth: 49 years  
Literacy rate: 45% (men: 48% ; women: 42% )  
GDP per capita: 1340 \$  
Unemployment rate: 70%  
Population living below the poverty line: 80%

*involvement of a large number of people interested. The practical training which follows gives young people the basics in metallurgy, brickwork, sewing, tailoring and weaving. Moreover, they learn to make use of the economic potential of recycling activities.*

*Since the national situation is that of the poorest Latin-American country, resulting from more than thirty years of dictatorship, the information*

*contained in the pedagogical materials (videos, brochures and posters) places as much stress on the work ability as on the necessary attitude to create and maintain a productive activity. Issues such as citizenship and how to deal with the difficulties of everyday life are dealt with equally in the training process. This type of pedagogy aims at updating and giving full value to traditional knowledge and local craftsmanship as well as sensitizing young people to the opportunities offered by the informal economy. The objective is to convince Haitians of the economic opportunities available in their region and make them assume an active role in its development.*

*By the end of the training, some of the participants were able to conceive and construct the different parts of a kitchen wood-stove, others could create different clothes both for men and for women... moreover, 40% of the participants enrolled in literacy classes could now read and write their own name.*

*The pride which comes from the ability to write one's name instead of simply appending one's fingerprints is an invaluable step towards building self-esteem. This new dignity will gradually become a permanent motivation of the*

*individual to improve his/her living conditions. This is why the results can only be evaluated in the long-term by taking into account, for example, the steps taken by the participants to be a useful element of their community, or even by the indirect beneficiaries of the training such as the family of the learner, or even his future apprentices!*

*Given the urgency of the situation, development activities such as Aprann e Travay cannot be limited only to a small number of beneficiaries. Although it is important to target their interventions, these should not limit their scope of action, but must, on the contrary, come within the framework of overall social change.*

*The impact of the project actually surpasses the domain of the training offered. On the one hand it has contributed to slowing down the rural exodus by helping young people to conceive their future in the community of their origins and not*



*necessarily in Port-au-Prince. On the other hand, thanks to the sale of products created by the learners, some have managed to save money and return to the formal education system, thus demonstrating that there is no competition between the two education systems- formal, non-formal- but rather that they are complementary. The sale of the products also enabled a community development fund to be created for the region of Goave. Finally, the project has aroused the interest of neighbouring countries and a list of trades available in the informal economy is being compiled with the support of the UNESCO Cultural Sector and the Regional Office of Costa Rica.*

*It is nevertheless necessary to mention the difficulties that the project has had to overcome and the lessons to be learned from its results. The problems encountered are mainly due to the lack of preparation and means. On the one hand, the funds allocated were*

*particularly insufficient for the maintenance and repair of the machines. On the other hand, no provision had been made for the distribution and commercialization of the products of the various workshops.*

*Finally, an important number of drop-outs were noted in certain subjects. In most cases, the learners could not afford to buy the materials to practice with. Some think that responsibilities were not made sufficiently clear at the beginning of the project. It is however important to recognize that, although the project failed in foreseeing all the details for its full implementation, it had to confront the obstacles inherent to mutual assistance.*

*However, this project has provided lessons for future action. Firstly, it is necessary to organize a network for the distribution of raw materials in order to make them available to the largest number possible and to counteract the effects of inflation on the local economy*

*and the purchasing power of the population. Moreover, to rush into the implementation of activities without having given sufficient time to the planning phase of a project can affect its future success. Finally, inter-institutional and horizontal management has been valuable to the project, notably through the exchange of experiences in solving certain problems.*

*The use of audio-visual material that can be transported and broadcast to a large audience constitutes an innovative alternative in fighting poverty in a country where 55% of illiterates live below the poverty line. The importance of the psycho-social impact of this methodology is also evident. Making this modern technology available to the poorest changes their way of seeing the future. It helps them to see themselves as active elements in the development of their country instead of a burden. The state of poverty is no longer experienced as something inevitable.*

---

In this perspective, the main aim of the benefiting groups participating in development activities is to be responsible and self-sufficient as regards the improvement of their living conditions. It also means to become a full citizen, capable of assuming and participating in the elaboration of the laws and norms of the community, both at a local and at an international level.

One of the major obstacles to the development of non-formal education is the lack of understanding and/or non-recognition of the acquired skills, which hinder the establishment of links to formal education. Non-formal education programmes are often difficult to evaluate. But in any case, the results of both formal and non-formal education are seen in the long-term.

However, in the framework of formal education the contents of the programmes are defined in advance and are followed by corresponding evaluation tests. The contents of non-formal education programmes depend entirely on the target group, on its needs and on the context in which it evolves. This group, contrary to that of formal education, is not homogenous. Sometimes different age groups with different levels of education can work within the same project. The flexibility of non-formal education programmes and the diversity of participants, do not allow the use of the same evaluation measures as those used in the chronologically and hierarchically structured institutional, education system. Nevertheless, specific lines of research on indicators that can evaluate the progress of the learners and the impact of the non-formal education projects are being pursued.

Furthermore, non-formal educational activities are mainly implemented by non-governmental organizations or by local associations, and are little known by public authorities, added to which there is a mutual distrust between actors in public and private education for ideological and economical reasons. Some continue to think that non-formal education is a third-rate education and that in the face of the lack of resources it is better to concentrate all efforts on the institutional system. For others, education constitutes a profit-making business in the field of development. Between the two, there are those who fear that the multiplication of non-formal education programmes will contribute to the privatization of education and those who, on the contrary, wish it.

Apart from these conflicts of ideas and interests, it is currently acknowledged that the target of universalizing education cannot be achieved in the traditional way if the means remain unvaried. It is therefore indispensable to encourage the links between formal and non-formal education in order to avoid the dispersal of means and to move effectively towards a permanent global education (out-of-school children, marginalized youth, illiterate adults).

Using to advantage educational resources means collaboration between teachers of the school and out-of-school systems. Educators as well as the teaching material and the infrastructures are all concerned.

In fact, the notion of basic education encourages the convergence of school and out-of-school aspects within the framework of an elementary education process, conceived as an educational minimum to respond to the needs of a community as much as the starting-point for lifelong education. Starting from this, it is possible to identify some training areas common to the teachers of the formal and of the non-formal systems, followed by regular exchanges so that the two sub-systems share not only their pedagogical problems but also their successes. The formal system can learn a lot from the non-formal, notably in terms of functionality. Now is the time for non-formal education programmes to go beyond the experimental phase and to reach a larger number of people.

Moreover, non-formal education activities for adults and youngsters who are illiterate or excluded from education, can take advantage of the school infrastructures and turn the school into a community education centre, open to both children and adults. In addition to maximizing the always expensive infrastructures, this process contributes to a universal acceptance of school and overcomes the reticence of those who feel excluded from education and thus from all social progress.

Finally, the link between the two sub-systems can equally apply to joint production of multipurpose teaching materials: handbooks, post-literacy brochures, rural press and libraries; optimum use of printing services and delivery system, broadcasting of joint educational programmes, etc.





# NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

## OR HOW TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO THE LACK OF EDUCATION AND THE INCREASE OF POVERTY

**F**or a long time School (and not education) has been regarded as a *sine qua non* to development, without ever really asking how to provide with schooling or why. Today, every initiative of non-formal education initiative attempts to start with these questions.

In the face of uncertainty over the future, the loss of traditional references, the increase of extreme poverty, social fractures and the feeling of instability, the formal educational system is powerless; and this is true both in countries of the South as well as the North, where in differing degrees, young people encounter similar difficulties.

Non-formal education supports a pedagogy which leads the individual to develop while developing, to learn while doing.

### **Action-research: thinking what one does; doing what one thinks**

Action-research is an evolutionary process. It means starting from what exists, questioning it, improving it, directing it, and always verifying its effects. Often, the experts and their institutions have tried to develop an education model completely foreign to the reality of the populations, which ignored the existing methods of knowledge transmission. Today, we can perceive the extent of the failure of this acculturation effort as well as the dismantling of the older models conceived to serve the regeneration of local societies. Not only have the solutions proposed

and/or imposed proved inadequate and ineffective, they have also destroyed what previously shaped these societies.

There is no question of prolonging the debate on the ethnic destruction of Western frenzy of civilisation, nor of hindering the movement by paralyzing cultural and social customs. Action-research promotes exploration of action and through action, with the actors and beneficiaries, identifies appropriate solutions, implements them, and finally confirms or sanctions their impact.

In action-research, action is seen as the pursuit of pre-existing situations, as opposed to the creation of new ones which, in most cases, are only the mere reproduction of models belonging to the mental universe of outside agents. Innovations can only be successfully put into practice if they originate from the actors themselves.

### **Why action-research?**

- It makes actors capable of recognizing problems
- It helps to find efficient solutions to problems
- It can be conducted with relatively small resources and in a reasonable time delay

**Action-research enables valid and creative solutions to be found through the systematic analysis of problems.**

### **Starting from the individual's assets**

The *Special Project for the Enhancement of Learning and Training Opportunities for Marginalized Youth*, considers that every individual has some of the knowledge necessary for his and the community's well-being. Unfortunately, this knowledge is rarely recognized and used as such. There are many development programmes that, in the image of old colonial powers, have totally denigrated local traditional techniques and know-how, judging western scientific reasoning as the only valid one. By starting from the potential of underprivileged populations to improve their lives and by recognizing their knowledge, the Special Youth Project has tried, first of

all, to activate a demand for education on the part of those concerned; thus the subject matter become dependent on the motivations and needs of the learners. The Special Youth Project also encouraged the adoption of attitudes in favour of learning and of personal development, instead of pouring out a stream of ready-programmed knowledge, ignoring completely the personal situation and experience of the learner.

During the last decades, associations have been created with the aim of orienting indigenous knowledge to current needs. This is the case in Egypt, where *zabbaleen*, affected by a double exclusion - economic and cultural- as rubbish-collectors, are now becoming a valuable aid for the national community and the tourist sector. Already in charge of 30% of the waste of Cairo, one of the most populated capitals of the world, their action is now extending to other regions of Egypt.

## **Egypt**

### **Recycling waste, revaluing lives**

***The Sinai peninsula is considered one of the most beautiful tourist sites in the world. In the course of recent years, more and more modern cities and hotels have been built along the coast of the Red Sea, endangering the environment of the region. The coral reef and aquatic life are slowly disappearing, suffocated by waste ranging from plastic bags to polluting chemicals. Beyond the coast, the mountains are often being used as illicit dumping grounds. Garbage collection and the processing system carried out by the municipalities remains insufficient in proportion to the extent of the task.***

***Two basic socio-economic factors can be added to these environmental considerations: first, the necessity to create, in***

***the next few years, 500,000 jobs a year in order to absorb an increasing active population ; second, the fact that 49% of***



## Egypt



Area: 1 001 450 sq km  
Population: 68.36 million inhabitants, 35% under 15 years of age  
Birth rate: 25.4 %  
Death rate: 7.83 %  
Infant mortality rate: 62.3 %  
Population growth rate: 1.72 %  
Life expectancy at birth: 63 years  
Literacy rate: 51.4% (men: 63.6 %, women: 38.8 %)  
GDP per capita: 3000 \$  
Unemployment rate: 11.8 %  
No data available on population living below the poverty line

*those over 15 years of age are illiterate. It is on the basis of these three considerations that UNESCO decided, together with the Association for the Protection of the Environment, to repeat the activities carried out by the latter in the villages of Mokattam, close to Cairo, in Nuweiba, in the south of Sinai.*

*The main aim of the project is to establish long-term training centres for recycling in areas*

*with a high population of young marginalized people. These centres will offer them a flexible educational environment, together with income-generating training activities.*

*This pedagogical project has privileged hands-on training, notably with young people trained in the former recycling projects, like the one in Mokattam. Their participation has contributed to the creation of a continuous circle. After being trained, the young people have to train other young people. In return, they benefit from the infrastructures of the centres where co-operatives have been created, enabling them to sell their products.*

*The training process includes two main stages. Firstly, the separation of organic and solid waste in the city streets, in the presence of artisans and facilitators. Secondly, courses of basic literacy and elementary arithmetic are given at non-formal education workshops based on specific everyday activities. For example, reading, writing and arithmetic are introduced and strengthened as the means for weighing quantities of recyclable material; hygiene is introduced as a prerequisite for obtaining finished quality*

*products; accountancy training is aimed at diversifying working opportunities, so that rather than specializing in one field, the learner can manage all kinds of activity.*

*It is important to stress the fact that this project has given young people more than literacy and a basic technical training. It has effectively contributed to establishing the basic principles of hygiene, to sensitizing them to the marine ecosystem and environmental protection, and to making them feel autonomous individuals capable of helping their community.*

*Project activities have also involved young people in surveys to ascertain possible opportunities for handicraft production.*

*The project then identified, within the local economy, artisans and self-employed workers capable of training young*

*people in different skills, such as carpentry, shoe-making, weaving, metalwork, food production, etc.*

*Moreover, the project has created links with private sector enterprises. Several of these are concerned about the problems of recycling waste. At the top of the list is the tourist sector. The Hilton hotel*







*chain has given concrete support to the training activities and developed a new system of processing waste so that the latter can be sorted directly behind the hotel. As one of the representatives of the hotel chain said "something had to be done urgently!". But many suffer from the counterfeiting of their products, such as an international cosmetics company whose shampoo bottles are illegally reused.*

*The gradual regulation of recycling activities and the treatment of waste is necessary, as is the creation of a network of small and medium enterprises (SME's) specialized*

*in recycling. This is the more necessary now that multinational companies specialized in the processing of waste and water purification are interested in the Egyptian market.*

*Municipalities and some representatives of the Egyptian Ministry of the Environment have taken part in seminars and negotiations with the hotel sector in order to evolve a real strategy for the management of solid waste at local and national levels. This agreement between politicians, enterprises and people in charge of the project, has stressed that it is in the interests of all to defend the*

*natural habitat on which the region depends.*

*Moreover, the methodology used in the project proves that it is possible to find solutions to the problems of waste deriving from modern life; that such solutions can be useful to young people in giving them training and income; and above all, that they do not require any substantial foreign intervention!*

*The growth of cities in developing countries and the consequent population density means that we can no longer ignore the environmental problems caused by the non-collection of waste due to lack of public services. The gravity of this problem is further increased when it threatens the national economy. Making recycling the central point of the non-formal educational project for marginalized youth and to stop the destruction of natural resources, emphasizes the multiplicity and interrelation of critical factors of crisis. Owing to this interdependence of problems, the effectiveness of the development projects depends on an integral approach to the situation.*

This is also the case in Crimea where Indian construction techniques have been combined with modern anti-seismic standards. Due to this exchange

of know-how, makeshift shelters are being replaced by real houses.

## Crimea

# Working together to create a better future

**T**o understand the many sides of this project, it is necessary first of all to recall certain events which influenced the political and cultural configuration of Crimea today.

In 1944, the Tatars of Crimea (around 200,000 people at the time) were accused of collaborating with the Nazi invaders and deported permanently as "special colonists" to regions of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbek. Living under strict military supervision, their language was banned from

school, literature and research. In 1946, the independent Republic of Crimea was abolished and Crimea repopulated by the Russians. Legally speaking, the deported Tatars ceased to exist.

A few years after the death of Stalin, Khrushchev ceded Crimea to the Ukraine, which, after the break-up of the USSR, caused serious diplomatic problems.

In 1967, an official Soviet decree stated the Tatars' innocence, but did not do anything to facilitate their return to Crimea

nor to compensate them for lost lives or confiscated property. However, the years of repression and forced assimilation had not managed to destroy the national Tatar identity. Perestroika permitted the resurgence of national identities of the minorities deported from the USSR by giving them room to manoeuvre. Around the middle of the 1990s, around 90,000 Tatars of Crimea had already returned, on their own initiative, to their country of origin. In autumn 1991, their number had risen to 150,000.

## Ukraine



Area: 603 700 sq. km

Population: 49 million inhabitants, 2.5 million living in Crimea, 18 % of the population are under 15 years of age

Population growth rate: -0.83 %

Life expectancy at birth: 66 years

Literacy rate: 98 % (men: 100 % ; women: 97 %)

GDP per capita: 2 200 \$

Official unemployment rate: 4.3 %

Population below the poverty line: 50 %

Contemporary history has left a mark on Crimea, both politically and culturally. Today, its society is a mixture of languages and religions: out of 2.5 million inhabitants (in 1998) 65% are Russians, 22% are Ukrainians and 10% are Tatars. Added to this, 3% are Bulgarian, Belorussian, Armenian, Greek and other minorities. Most of the Russians and Ukrainians are orthodox, but the majority of the Tatars of Crimea are Muslims.

Since their return, the Tatars fight not only for their political, economical and cultural rights, but also for their actual survival. Their community is confined to ghettos, mostly in the suburbs. Moreover, they have to face not



*only the problems linked to their condition as a minority but also the difficulties of Ukrainian society as a whole. These problems concern mainly citizenship (lack of citizenship means no job, no instruction, no health-care, etc.), employment (an unemployment rate of 60%), housing (usually makeshift shelters), social security (expensive health-care), education as well as cultural and linguistic conservation.*

*In 1998, taking advantage of the Crimean Integration and Development Programme launched by the United Nations Development Programme, UNESCO organized a work-site for the integration of young people in difficulty. This project aims, through the construction of a community centre for young people, at encouraging dialogue among the different communities in the region of*

*Sudak. This centre will be built following an Indian construction technique based on the use of local materials and traditional know-how, integrating modern housing standards. A few years earlier, UNESCO and the Franco-Indian Wharda Development Association had already carried out a similar project in India.*

*The work-site evolved within the framework of a youth camp fostering the development of an integrated approach to non-formal education as well as team-work, civics education and cross-cultural dialogue among young people.*

*In June 1998, Indian engineers specialized in development of construction technologies arrived in Alchak. The camp became a combination of exchange of know-how and basic vocational training, as*

*well as a massive gathering of young people from different cultural horizons around a common project: the construction of their own centre in which they would be able to organize gatherings, parties, shows, etc. The main aim of the project was to encourage young people to meet in order to get to know each other better and plan their lives together.*

*By the end of August, the young people had managed to build their centre, according to the Indian method. Apart from the actual concrete result of the project, it has had a considerable impact on a socio-educational level.*

*First of all it gave employment possibilities to young people in the field of low-cost lodging construction, desperately needed in the region. Teamwork showed them the advantages of working together rather than opposing one another. Moreover, the camp made possible a renewal of dialogue, the creation of a spirit of co-operation among young people with different cultural and religious backgrounds in a region considered by the international community as a real social powder keg. In this sense, the camp has made young people forget their cultural differences and has given them a strong dose of hope by showing them that it is possible for them to live and build their future together. In*



*fact, the construction of a community centre has been more than a means of teaching young people construction techniques with the use of local resources. It has also been an excellent catalyzer for future projects. From now on, thanks to their work, young people have a place where they can*

*meet and develop common activities.*

*Finally, the camp for young people in Crimea has allowed technology transfer from the South (India) to the North (Ukraine). This co-operation between South and North is strongly encouraged by the*

*Special Youth Project as it opens up the industrialized North to the knowledge and innovations of the South and, at the same time, contributes effectively in modifying the image of the so-called "excluded" by showing that each community has knowledge to share.*

The action of UNESCO in non-formal education projects is often to reinforce local initiatives already underway and to encourage the exchange of knowledge and the acquisition of new skills. In Senegal, support to the West-African *Ecopole* constitutes a real recognition of creativity of the people as the main resource for the development of

the country. It is also the confirmation that informal economy can be an answer to the poor state of the national economic network. Starting from this situation and the people's reactions, the Special Youth Project has supported the "street corner training".

## **Senegal** *A people's education for an informal economy*

**S**ince 1970, periodic droughts in Senegal have increased, considerably limiting agricultural activities and obliging rural inhabitants, especially young people, to move to the cities. At the same time, the international economic situation, the implementation of structural adjustment policies and the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 have aggravated the country's state of poverty and upset the traditional structures of social organization.

*Fifty per cent of the poorest people of Senegal are*

*concentrated in the suburbs of Dakar. Promiscuity, lack of infrastructures, of hygiene and the inadequate distribution of water contribute to health problems, as well as to insecurity and violent demonstrations. The informal economy employs more than 60% of the working population and 43% of children of school age do not go to school. It is on the streets that young and not-so- young people meet in an attempt to survive.*

*In this context, the Special Youth Project has decided to back up the NGO ENDA Tiers*

*Monde in order to reinforce basic non-formal education activities and vocational training in the poorest neighbourhoods of Dakar, mainly inhabited by rural migrants.*

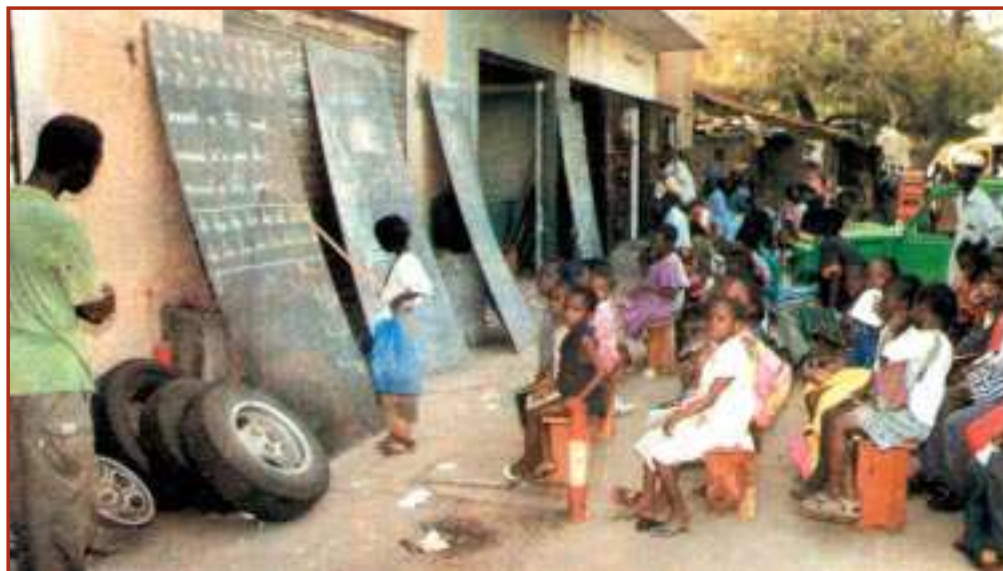
*In the field, this has meant supporting West-African Ecopole as a place of experimentation, production of pedagogical material and training for young people and workers in the informal economy. Correspondingly, the Special Youth Project has supported, both materially and conceptually, community*

## Senegal



Area: 196 190 sq km  
Population: 10 million inhabitants,  
45% under 15 years of age  
Birth rate: 37.94 ‰  
Death rate: 8.57 ‰  
Infant mortality rate: 58 ‰  
Population growth rate: 2.94 %  
Life expectancy at birth: 62 years  
Literacy rate: 33.1% (men: 43 % ;  
women: 23.2 %)  
GDP per capita: 1650 \$  
No data available on  
unemployment rate and  
population living below the  
poverty line.

*educational initiatives, commonly called “street corner training”. Firstly, through the publication of textbooks for literacy and non-formal basic education and the supply of furniture (tables, chairs). Secondly, by gathering together the various actors of educational activities for the more underprivileged in order to disseminate the latest non-formal educational practices.*



*The project implemented by ENDA and UNESCO is based on the principles of participation and solidarity, and aims at developing people’s self-confidence. Therefore young people participate in the project, in the elaboration of the didactic material, in tutoring activities for the less advanced and also in activities for the improvement and upgrading of their neighbourhoods.*

*These activities have enabled young people and their families to make the project their own. They have also contributed in making them responsible and in convincing them that their future and the improvement of their livelihoods is in their hands. The notion of citizenship followed naturally through awareness of the common good. Also the revival of traditional solidarity networks,*

*teamwork in the framework of permanent action-research, setting-up of mutual credit and loan systems, initiative and negotiation, have all contributed to reinforce the social bond and the feeling of being part of a community in young people.*

*The training offered by the project has combined basic education and technical training by sensitising young people and their families to the opportunities offered by the informal economy. Courses of preventive education were also held, especially encouraging the use of local medicinal plants.*

*To sum up, the project has attempted to give young people the means to fight their poverty and at the same time to sensitize them to environmental problems and the necessity to*

*develop effective citizenship for everyone. To this end, several open-air activities were organized in the framework of the Sigg operation, in order to offer excluded young people, often obliged to work, entertainment and socio-educational activities. Held on the beaches of Dakar and led by young people from sports and cultural associations, these activities combine training and sport, discussion and reflection on ways of overcoming the difficulties of daily life through community initiatives. This way of organising young people developed to take on a more systematic form with the creation of a continuous training programme in the*

*districts, involving other people of the community as well as Sigg animators.*

*Unexpected results showed that the main needs were on material and organizational levels. In fact, as a result of their meetings, educators are now aware of the necessity to co-ordinate their actions and exchange their experiences. They have thus decided to create an operational network, the Association of Street Corner Trainers, in order to promote the best practices in non-formal education.*

*Thanks to this action-research-training approach, which means learning through action and its*

*retroactive effects in an evolutionary process, and its participatory approach, the project has demonstrated that what each person knows can be taught and shared with the others, thus creating a multiplier effect. Moreover, by supporting basic pre-existing grass-roots organizations, the project has managed to ensure its sustainability and the people's adhesion. Finally, by backing up Ecopole and street training, it recognizes the importance of popular initiatives as the key to economic and social development. And, in the context of western Africa, this concerns not only the excluded but the community as a whole.*

It is time to recognize the vitality of populations who, apart from “getting by”, invent activities and ways to live. In the suburban and rural areas, in face of adversity, populations excluded from modern life have managed to create a relational network, a sociability adapted to new ways of living, new ways of exchanging, consuming and producing together.

Of course the mechanisms of this informal economy are more complicated than they seem, and it would be a mistake to think that it can solve all the problems of developing countries. The artisans of this economy are not safe from economic fluctuations and trends. On the contrary, they are the more vulnerable because they count on meagre, almost non-existent personal savings to cover the expenses of their enterprises. This is why it is necessary to facilitate their access to credit, to raw materials, to equipment, but also to training and the whole basic social services.

#### **Non-formal education can contribute to developing popular economy by:**

- reinforcing the possibilities of the beneficiaries to take initiatives which will lead to their self-determination;
- giving access to credit to finance their employment initiatives as opposed to beg. The research for autonomy, for the power to negotiate with financial institutions, is one of the main targets;
- encouraging, where possible, a policy of collective creation of wealth, for example through co-operatives or mutual aid;
- reinforcing the management and forecasting capacity of producer or micro-entrepreneur associations.



The activities conducted by the Special Youth Project have attempted to respond to these questions. The efforts made in the fields of literacy and basic technical training would have been in vain if they had not been accompanied by mechanisms facilitating learners access to credit. Also, those in charge of the different field projects have tried to develop a policy of negotiation to link populations with political authorities, for the continuation of on-going educational activities and to set in motion a real socio-economic development process.

If the fight against poverty is really the aim of national governments, major international organizations and donor countries, the necessary aid should be devoted to making use of all the economic and socio-cultural potential of these micro-enterprises which have been wrongly described as structureless.

### **Basic non-formal education is functional, that is, real and realistic**

Basic non-formal education combines literacy and practical training. It is called functional because it is first of all directed towards income-generating activities. Its aim is to increase individual skills by encouraging the development of certain attitudes and abilities which will allow people to make use of these

achievements in their daily, private and professional lives.

In Mongolia or Lao PDR, the Special Youth Project has attempted through distance basic education to impart populations the necessary techniques to improve their agricultural and/or handicraft activities and render them capable of improving their conditions. The technical training aspects have been linked, throughout the learning process, to hygiene courses, the renewal of traditional pharmacopoeia using local plants, AIDS prevention, protection of the environment, etc. By doing this, the Project counted on attitudes as much as on aptitudes, considering the creation of income-generating activities as a vital prerequisite, among others, for the improvement of the living conditions of underprivileged populations.

The participation of women in the Laotian and Mongolian basic non-formal education projects has given excellent results. In fact, women play a key role in the development of their community. On the one hand, they are in charge of the house and children. They are thus the most suited to transmit basic literacy as well as the principles of hygiene to the younger generations. On the other hand, they contribute to the family income through animal rearing and handicraft activities. Technical training has thus offered them the means to optimize their productivity.

## **Lao PDR**

## **Distance education, a second chance**

***The Lao People's Democratic Republic is poor. Life expectancy is one of the lowest in the world (53 years of age) and infant mortality is very high. If 70% of the adults are literate only 44% of the women are; and even if primary education covers 69% of an age group, the average attendance***

***in a school establishment is not more than three years. A large part of the Laotian population is semi-literate, if not completely illiterate. This situation affects mainly women and ethnic minorities.***

***The aim of the Special Youth Project in Lao PDR was to fill***

***this gap and offer the populations who do not have access to education the opportunity to learn. Already in 1995, UNESCO collaborated with the Laotian authorities to launch a distance education project for women and ethnic minorities. This experience created in people's minds the***

## Lao PDR



Area: 236 800 sq km  
Population: 5, 5 million inhabitants, 43% under 15 years of age  
Birth rate: 38.3 ‰  
Death rate: 13.35 ‰  
Infant mortality rate: 94. 8 ‰  
Population growth rate: 2.5%  
Life expectancy at birth: 53 years  
Literacy rate: 57%  
(men: 70% ; women: 44%)  
GDP per capita: 1300 \$  
Unemployment rate: 5.7%  
Population living below the poverty line: 46.1%

*idea that learning to read, write and count was not an end in itself but should appear to the populations concerned as a means to improve their livelihoods, make their daily tasks lighter and contribute to the family budget through the creation of income-generating activities.*

*The Special Youth Project backed up this first initiative in order to support sustainable*



*rural development in Lao PDR. More precisely, it meant establishing a friendly environment for learning and acquiring basic technical skills in the three target provinces of Savannakhet, Khammouane and Bolikhamxay. UNESCO and the Laotian Ministry of Education, through its Non-formal Education Department, implemented, in January 1997, a real system of “educational irrigation” designed to reach populations living in the most isolated areas of the country and to give a chance to learn to those whom the formal system had not managed to teach.*

*In practice, the system consisted of radio broadcasts, audio tapes, written material, visiting facilitators and village volunteers, the whole network spreading through the three chosen provinces.*

*The contents of each of these pedagogical tools were based on information collected from the villagers. The needs assessment allowed to prioritize the issues dealt with in the radio programmes, the audio tapes, the brochures and learning booklets.*

*As regards literacy, those in charge of the project decided to keep the contents of the former distance non-formal education project after adapting them. The presentation of the learning textbooks was conceived to make them as easy to read as possible (simple vocabulary, big letters, many illustrations). The brochures and booklets both deal with the same issues but with different objectives: the brochures try to sensitize the villagers to subjects such as AIDS, while the booklets*

*discuss the more technical aspects, such as prevention.*

*The villagers gather periodically in pagodas, school buildings (where they exist), or in the chief's house, to discuss the contents of the material received and listen to the tapes and/or the radio broadcast. The volunteer checks what they learn, ensures that everybody understands it and leads a debate on the issue dealt with that day. It is the chance for everyone to talk, express their opinions and share them with others in a relaxed atmosphere. Moreover, each village is provided with a mobile library, especially appreciated by children as it offers them the chance to read many traditional tales. The village also receives the newspapers especially printed for the villagers by the provincial centres, to ensure post-literacy and to create a literate environment.*

*Today, among the most significant results, is the villagers' request for more knowledge and, above all, to be taught how to put into practice the theoretical information received. For example, it is no longer enough to teach them that "traditional medicine can cure chicken diseases", they demand concrete technical assistance which helps them to put into practice this information. Their attitude*



*demonstrates their desire for new productive activities. Instead of asking for grain, money or other forms of external aid, they have understood that they themselves can achieve a lot with a little technical help. The project has also catalysed information exchange and co-operation between villages. In the Bolikhamxay region a few villagers went to a neighbouring village, a dozen kilometres away, to learn how to make sugar. Learning the process of transforming raw materials into the final product has allowed them to increase their incomes. Other signs of development in the villages: thanks to the information delivered by the programme, the production of fruit and vegetables has increased by 70% and cases of malaria have gone down by 60%!*

*The success of the project lies in this integrated approach, that is, the combination of various elements to obtain a multiplier and prolific effect. The villagers know today that following family planning advice and preventing diseases is as important as improving their agricultural techniques: it is the combination of these three elements which will lead to an increase in income and the improvement of their lives in general.*

*Finally, the project has made people aware of the risks accompanying the development of societies and generates the necessary reflection on the deriving constraints. How to ensure that the dynamics put in motion in the villages will benefit the villagers? Many traditions die out under the pressures of*



*modern society with, among others, disastrous effects on the environment and culture. This is why it is indispensable*

*to maintain traditional cultures while informing populations on how to increase their productivity, create co-*

*operatives or take advantage of the opportunities offered by a market economy.*

Non-formal educational activities can help young women from rural areas to understand the importance of mutual training and the exchange of knowledge for pooling skills for their empowerment and the raising of their socio-economic status within the community.

## **Mongolia**

## **Learning for life**

**S**ince 1991, Mongolia has had to face the changes due to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The transition of a guided economy towards a market economy has created new economic, as well as educational, necessities.

Since 1997, UNESCO, together with the Mongolian Ministry of Science, Education and Culture (MOSEC), has been carrying

out a distance education programme for youth-at-risk and nomadic families in Mongolia: Learning for Life. The project contributes to the development of Mongolian society and the change-over from a guided economy to a liberal economic system.

This programme, implemented within the framework of the Special Youth Project,

benefited from the experience and the infrastructure of the distance education project for the women of the Gobi desert (1995-1996). With this experience behind them, Learning for Life was conceived for the Mongolian population at a national level, and principally marginalized youth living in rural or urban areas and nomadic families.

Through radio programmes, learning booklets and visiting teachers, the project provided them with basic vocational training followed by courses in literacy and arithmetic. Moreover, the project made possible meetings between learners. These exchanges have considerably reinforced the learning process through the sharing of information and encouraged the creation of a network of learners through youth groups.

The success of the training is due to its functionality, which



*means its relevance to daily problems encountered by the populations. The project treated health problems, family planning, hygiene and nutrition. Survival and income-generating activities which could be developed by the nomads were also major themes of the course. In a country where the majority of what used to be bought must now be produced, it was important to train the population in the methods of production and treatment of wool, tanning and processing leather, transforming old*

*clothes into new articles; but also baking bread, making medicinal and cosmetic use of plants and flowers or making dyes. Learning to write, read and calculate was achieved through developing commercial skills, such as accountancy or planning and through subjects such as civic education, the environment and traditional culture.*

*Moreover, the project provided young people and families with information concerning the mechanisms of the market economy and the possibilities*



*of creating their own professional activity. Altogether this contributed to increasing their self-confidence. By showing them new life opportunities, the project motivated participants to take charge of the improvement of their own lives.*

*The methodology used has also enabled the actors to participate in the different stages of the project. Thus, the pedagogical team of Learning for Life elaborated the self-learning materials in collaboration with the members of the Non-formal Education Centre of the Ministry of Education. In total, thirty self-teaching textbooks were produced on subjects identified by assessing the needs of the populations.*

## Mongolia

Area: 1.565 million sq km  
 Population : 2.62 million inhabitants, 34% under 15 years of age  
 Birth rate : 21.5 ‰  
 Death rate : 6.14 ‰  
 Infant mortality rate : 41.2 ‰  
 Population growth rate : 1.54%  
 Life expectancy at birth : 67 years  
 Literacy rate : 83% (men : 88.6% ; women : 77.2%)  
 GDP per capita : 2 320 \$  
 Unemployment rate : 4.5%  
 Population living below the poverty line : 40%

*The novelty of this approach, on the one hand, consists in the fact of having created a structure conducive to teamwork, not much practised method by Mongolian authorities. On the other hand, for drafting certain handbooks such as “How to Create an Activity”, trainers had to undertake research on a subject with which they were not familiar and for which little information was available. We can thus affirm that the project has set in motion a double learning process: excluded youth and nomadic families, and the trainers and educational authorities of the country.*

*According to those who conceived the project, local administrators and visiting teachers, the main advantages of a project such as Learning for Life, in a country like Mongolia, are:*

- *To offer educational opportunities to a significant*

*number of people, whose way of life does not allow them to regularly attend a formal school;*

- *To have broadened their outlook to accept different educational methods;*
- *To have developed country-wide non-formal educational structures and notably distance basic education;*
- *To have enabled literate people who have interrupted their schooling, to cultivate and widen their knowledge.*

*It should also be mentioned that, despite its scope, Learning for Life did not manage to respond to the educational needs of everyone. This was due to several factors:*

- *The isolation of the learners and especially the mobility of nomadic families remains an obstacle for the visiting teachers, notably because of lack of transport;*
- *Differences in the levels of education;*

- *Lack of experience concerning self-teaching practices;*
- *Poor radio reception in some of the provincial centres;*
- *Insufficient financial backing from the local authorities.*

*Despite all these obstacles, Learning for Life has reached 40,000 families and established permanent centres for continuing and spreading distance education in Mongolia.*

*Furthermore, it has made the Mongolian population and its leaders aware of the educational adjustments needed to confront the economic transition that the country is undergoing.*

*Finally and above all, the biggest success of the project has been to gather together thousands of people who, in spite of a significant shortage of means, intend to continue its implementation.*

---

Adult literacy, and women's in particular, is an additional value to the skills of the beneficiaries. Functional literacy reinforces working skills. Individuals learn simultaneously to read, write and count; to set up small projects, to administer their possessions and to optimize their productivity.

In the non-formal educational projects which UNESCO promotes, the pedagogical process is centred on the learner, not on the school or the

teacher. Non-formal educational activities take into consideration responsibilities, time schedule, environment, home life. If the learner has to work, courses are held in the evening. If he spends his time in the street, the courses take place in the street. If he lives in isolated and sparsely populated areas, distance education programmes will be implemented. In non-formal educational projects everything has to be done to enable individuals to progress.



**Dramas are radio series lasting 10-15 min. The drama retraces the situation of a model family, composed of father, mother, four brothers and sisters (from the small child to the adolescent) confronting various adventures and situations of everyday life. From a pedagogical point of view, this series permits:**

- The identification of the target population with the fictional characters
- Preventive education presented in an attractive form
- The tackling of issues unlikely to be found in a classic and formal discussion
- The loyalty of the audience

**Examples of the issues dealt with:**

- The new-born child is ill: how to cure him?
- The eldest daughter receives an offer of work in the city: the risks, the discovery of the city, its advantages and inconveniences
- Serious drought or flooding: food is scarce and this results in recourse to micro-credit
- The collective purchase of a tool

Moreover, **it is crucial to reinforce the links between education and development.** Culture and local concerns must serve as a support to pedagogical contents. If education claims to play a key role in the fight against poverty and in the enhancement of the living conditions of the population, it must take account of its vital problems which are health and housing as well as food production, water supply, road construction or environmental protection. Especially when experience has shown that all pedagogical activities are more successful in the learning process, when they treat the most critical problems of the whole community.

### **Self-help groups and hands-on training**

During recent decades, dedicated first to development and then to the fight against poverty, it has become evident that material and human means, as important and efficient as they may be, are not sufficient for the success of development projects and their long-term viability. Added to this, is the

decrease of funds allocated to development aid. It is therefore necessary to explore new methods of co-operation and, above all, to encourage grassroots initiatives rather than imposing idyllic schemes unrelated to the reality of the populations.

Self-help groups move in this direction. *The Project for Non-formal Education and Vocational Training of Young People in the Poorest Districts of Ho Chi Minh City* is a good example. The personnel in charge is there solely to help young people to meet, identify their needs, facilitate contacts with the local authorities and together evolve coherent training programmes. It is **supportive** and **consultative**. It creates the appropriate conditions for action by grouping young people together, stimulates reflection and considers possible problems; but does not undertake concrete action and its degree of involvement depends on demands made by young people. Moreover, it ensures that the latter make use of and develop to a maximum the learning and innovative potential of each of their projects.

**D**espite strong economic growth, the unemployment rate in Ho Chi Minh City is very high. This is due notably to the stream of rural migrants overpopulating the slums of the Vietnamese capital. This is the context for the practical vocational training and non-formal basic education initiative for underprivileged young people from the Binh Hoa and Tan Phong districts, implemented by UNESCO in collaboration with the NGO ENDA Tiers Monde.

*people in building their future, both individually and collectively.*

*The task of the staff in charge of the project has been mainly to back up and reinforce young peoples' training and organizational capacities by bringing them together over common objectives, creating bonds of solidarity and co-operation, thus demonstrating that if it is difficult to do things alone, together a lot can be accomplished. As a*

*young people to enable them to find an occupation, learn a profession and improve their livelihoods.*

*These self-help groups have enabled young people to meet, in the full meaning of the word. Thanks to these groups, they were able to identify their problems, together create active projects, take initiatives and responsibility for a common activity. By developing a group dynamic, the project created the right atmosphere for young people to learn and act together and to live in harmony with other people.*



*Once the groups had been formed, they submitted to the counsellors their own training projects which were used as the basis for training programmes. The involvement of young people was made all the more easy as they trained for something they had chosen to do. This self-building process allowed them to discover themselves and their capabilities, reinforced mutual confidence and self-esteem.*

*In line with the principles of the Special Youth Programme, this project aimed at a participatory approach to involve, above all, at underprivileged young*

*consequence, several self-help trade groups have been formed. These groups were conceived as a means to develop self-confidence in*

*Access to credit to help young people create small income-generating activities rapidly appeared as a complementary and indispensable element to*

*the training objectives. Thus the project, apart from practical training, offered young people the opportunity to achieve their objectives through a loan-system enabling them to start a productive activity. As the project progressed, centres for exchanging knowledge were set up with the purpose of disseminating the lessons learned.*

*Since non-formal education aims at being, first of all functional, the project training programmes took place mainly in a technical atmosphere, e.g. apprenticeships. Apart from the transmission of know-how, this enabled the acquisition of professional behaviour and skills: discipline, relations with clients, basic management notions, planning, etc. In this sense, the project focused on the attitudes as well as the aptitudes necessary for the development of income-generating activities. If today the continuation of self-help groups seems to be limited –many leave the group once they have found a stable activity- the passing of young people through this self-help structure plays a determinant role in their future insertion in society.*

*Furthermore, the impact of the activities has been important both for individuals as well as for the community. A real multiplier training process is*

*what, in fact, has taken place through experience exchange networks and self-help groups, reinforced by brief vocational training.*

*The project aimed not at assisting young people but at them assisting themselves. By learning to work together, they gained awareness of what they knew and what they could learn from others. This has had a triple effect: on the one hand it has reinforced self-confidence in young people; on the other hand, the practice of democracy has slowly become part of the research for common objectives through dialogue; finally, the entire community took an interest in these young people who were previously ignored, even feared and scorned.*

*The local private sector also assumed its own responsibilities by becoming involved in the young people's vocational projects, sometimes by giving them training "on site" which could then result in enrolment as apprentice; at other times by giving them advice and sharing their own research experiences or employment creation.*

*Finally, taking into account the administrative and political roles of the district authorities, their participation in the project was indispensable. Their doubts were rapidly dissipated*

## Vietnam



Area: 329,560 sq km  
Population: 78.8 million inhabitants, 33% under 15 years of age  
Birth rate: 21.62 ‰  
Death rate: 6.26 ‰  
Infant mortality rate: 31.13 ‰  
Population growth rate: 1.49%  
Life expectancy at birth: 69 years  
Literacy rate: 93.7 %  
(men: 96.5 % ; women 91.2 %)  
GDP per capita: 1850 \$  
Unemployment rate: 25%  
Population living below the poverty line: 37 %



*and replaced by a real collaboration which, in practice, meant the creation of centres where young people could meet, or by the organization of remedial courses. The local authorities, together with ENDA and the Social Labour Centre, played a real role as facilitators.*

*To sum up, the duration of the project and its impact in the poor districts of Ho Chi Minh City seem today to be taking a positive turn. Nevertheless, if the self-help group system is self-supporting, the assessment and sensitization phases of the young remain indispensable. Although more and more of*

*them understand the objectives of the project and what it can bring them in terms of training, professional contacts and liaison with other young people, there is still much to be done to mobilize others and dispel hesitations.*

---

Through self-help groups, people who face the same difficulties, who have a common experience, gather to find appropriate solutions. But self-help does not mean simply helping each other; it also means acting together and sharing information and knowledge. **Because of life experience, everyone possesses knowledge which will allow him/her to be both learner and teacher in the educational project in which he/she participates.**

Moreover, in a self-help group all members are equal. No expert is there to express his opinion. All members have to be active. They help each other according to needs and capacities: they enrich each other. Each individual puts his/her energy into the dynamic of the group and in exchange this dynamic enables him/her to take initiatives and decisions which he/she might not have taken alone.



# IN CONCLUSION

Firstly it is vital to take education back to its original objective: as an instrument for the development of the individual and society. If we want a more relevant and socially useful education, we have to rediscover its practical value so that it can completely reintegrate into the production processes and the different levels of social relations. This is particularly true in the countries of the South where the gap between the originators of the educational programmes and the reality of the populations is enormous. But the gap is also widening in the North.

The failure of the current educational systems is largely due to their weak anchorage in the societies in which they operate. The capacity to learn implies different elements which cannot be simplified and understood as being part of a unique educational system. Non-formal educational practices can help the formal educational systems not only to meet their educational objectives, but also to face society's rapid and constant technological, social and economic evolution.

**It will not be possible to achieve the objective of "Education for All", unless partnerships are established between formal education and non-formal education,** to re-examine the former and give the place it deserves to the latter. This link between the two systems should also lead to:

- a) co-ordinating activities throughout the territory (country, region)
- b) exploiting the existing educational structures
- c) establishing a real pedagogical dialogue between the different actors
- d) giving more value to non-formal education as a way to access remedial structures for populations with an underprivileged economic status.



- e) endorsing the training and skills acquired through non-formal education programmes, in order to:
- develop links between the non-formal and the formal educational systems;
  - facilitate vocational enrolment by reorienting employment criteria (the importance given to a diploma hinders the recognition of non-formal training)

A real partnership between formal and non-formal education will only be possible if certain educational responsibilities are delegated to the local authorities, thus contributing to the **decentralization** process. Moreover, this will enable populations to control better their vital resources and keep their distance from generally accepted ideas and /or inherited models. Through the decentralization process and the possibilities of social and political experimentation, populations will be able to discover their creative capacities, strengthen their social cohesion and decide their future.

Nevertheless, concerns regarding the efficiency of non-formal basic education and training initiatives on a local scale must not conceal the importance of a coherent link between local responsibilities and national authorities, on the one hand; civil society and the public sector, on the other. No necessary public service or social action can do without a minimum of **institutionalization**, that is a certain degree of “formalization”. The problem with the educational system as it appears today is not its institutional aspect but its rigidity, its concern to obtain identical finished products, its complex bureaucracy and conservatism in pedagogical matters.

But attention! On the pretext of wishing to support non-formal education in their countries, some governments have institutionalized to such an extent

that, instead of encouraging the dynamism of non-formal education as an innovative alternative, they have reproduced the defects of formal education: the same principles of evaluation and selection, the same administrative inertia, the same corporate coalitions. In order to be a real **educational alternative**, non-formal education must be based on the socio-economic environment as well as on the cultural character of the populations. The teacher has to go to the learner and his reality. Only if the learner, his expectations and needs are taken into consideration, will the implementation of the educational process be successful.

The integration of all these variables (cultural, political, social, economic) implies a great flexibility in the conception, implementation and orientation of the activities carried out. This has sometimes given a “confused” image of non-formal educational initiatives. In face of the increasing number of marginalized young people left to themselves without the minimum education enabling them to fight poverty, it is imperative to go beyond the stage of experimentation and to find solutions which are replicable on a large-scale. This is where the challenge of non-formal education lies today: offer access to basic education to the largest number possible, while still maintaining its practicality and capacity to adapt to differing situations.

The possibility of strengthening inclusive approaches to education and diversifying delivery systems lies in the capitalization and dissemination of best practices in non-formal education, as well as a close partnership between governmental institutions and civil society. In this field as in others, the use of new information and communication technologies offers many potentials; notably that of demonstrating that the methods and means of learning as well as teaching are numerous.





## BIBLIOGRAPHY

AAVV, *Adult Education and Development*, No. 56, Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association, Bonn, 2001.

AAVV, *Participate in Development*, Paris, UNESCO, 1986.

AAVV, *Pauvreté, décentralisation et changement social. Eléments pour la reconstruction d'une société politique*, Dakar, Enda Graf Sahel, 1998.

COOMBS P. H., PROSSER R.C., AHMED M., *New Paths to Learning for Rural Children and Youth : Non Formal Education for Rural Development*, X, New York, International Council for Educational Development, 1973.

*Education to Fight Exclusion*, The UNESCO Special Project for the Enhancement of Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth, Mid-term review. Paris, UNESCO, 1999.

FACCINI B., *Recycled Rags, Renewed Lives*, Paris, UNESCO, 1999 (UNESCO Innovations for Youth series, No. 3).

FURTER P., *The Articulation of School Education and Out-of-school Training*, Paris, UNESCO, 1984 (Education Studies and Documents, No. 53)

HAMADACHE A., *Non-formal Education: A Definition of the Concept and Some Examples*, Paris, Unesco, 1991 (Prospects, vol. XXI, No. 1)

HAMADACHE A., *The Articulation of Non-formal Education and Formal Education. Implications for Teacher Training*, Paris, UNESCO, 1993.

*Country Profiles of Least Developed Countries*, Geneva, UNCTAD, 2001.

RAVIGNAN (de) A., *Working and Inventing on the Streets of Africa*, UNESCO, Paris, 1998 (Innovations for Youth series, No. 1)

ROBINSON B., *In the Green Desert*, UNESCO, Paris, 1997 (Education for All 12, "Innovations" series)

SAUTE N. and FACCINI B., *"Empresa Jovem". The Dream of Inventive Hands*, Paris, UNESCO, 2001 (Innovations for Youth series, No. 4)

SEYNI NDIONE E. et al., *Réinventer le présent. Quelques jalons pour l'action*, Dakar, Enda Graf Sahel, 1994 (collection recherches populaires)

VÉLIS J.-P., *Learning for Life*, Paris, UNESCO, 1999 (Innovations for Youth series, No. 2)



# Education to fight EXCLUSION

For further information, please contact :

## SPECIAL YOUTH PROJECT

ED/BAS/LIT  
UNESCO  
7, place de Fontenoy  
75 352 Paris 07 SP  
France

[www.unesco.org/education-exclusion](http://www.unesco.org/education-exclusion)