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The British Association for Literacy in Development

Informal Literacy Discussion No.14

International Advocacy on Literacy in Development: Challenges and Opportunities

Monday, 27th January 2014, 5.30 – 7.30pm

led by

David Archer, Head of Programme Development, ActionAid

at

Feed the Minds

Park Place, 12, Lawn Lane, London SW8 1UD

(5 minutes' walk from Vauxhall mainline and underground stations)

EVERYONE IS VERY WELCOME.

Please note that this event is free to members of BALID. Non-members are asked to contribute £10 (£5 if unwaged) to cover costs.

Since Education For All was declared in Jomtien in 1990 and reinforced in Dakar 2000, one of the 6 goals has slipped off the global agenda more than others – adult literacy. It was squeezed out by MDGs focusing only on 2 of 6 EFA goals. Governments and donors have almost stopped investing in adult literacy and, on the few occasions they do invest, they use outdated conceptions of literacy and ineffective teaching methods.

As we enter post 2015 there are significant opportunities. There is a growing consensus on what works in the field of adult literacy – as captured for example in the 12 international benchmarks proposed by the Global Campaign for Education. The recommendations of the

High Level Panel refer to lifelong learning - and literacy can be seen as pivotal to addressing the cross-cutting issues raised by the panel or indeed for delivering on the various proposed goals.

However, there are also serious dangers. Many actors are pushing for a narrow education goal based simply on early grade reading in primary schools, completely ignoring adults. The discourse is dominated by looking at economic returns - unsurprising given the continued ascendancy of the World Bank and the growing power of private sector voices

There needs to be a fundamental shift of focus towards expanding domestic financing if national governments are to regain control over setting their own education priorities. This re-assertion of domestic financing and domestic decision-making represents the best prospect for renewed investment in progressive adult literacy programmes in most countries.

In advocating to DFID our focus should be on them genuinely supporting domestic education priorities rather than imposing their own agenda.

Some reading available

- 'Post 2015', *Adult Education and Development journal* - issue 80, DVV International, 2013.
- 'Writing the Wrongs: International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy' *Global Campaign for Education* and *ActionAid*, 2005
- 'Towards Universal learning: Recommendations from the Learning Metrics Task Force.' *UNESCO Institute of Statistics and Brookings*, Sept 2013

David Archer is Head of Programme Development with ActionAid (www.actionaid.org), a board member of the Global Campaign for Education (www.campaignforeducation.org) and is the elected representative for Northern civil society on the board of the Global Partnership for Education. Trained as a secondary school teacher in the 1980s, he specialised in adult literacy, working on programmes across Latin America inspired by Paulo Freire. In the 1990s he developed the Reflect approach to adult learning (see www.reflect-action.org) and he led the development of international benchmarks on adult literacy in 2005 (*Writing the Wrongs*, GCE). As Head of Education for ActionAid for many years he has worked extensively on rights-based approaches, challenging the IMF and World Bank and managing the Right to Education Project (see www.right-to-education.org).