UNESCO International Literacy Prizes 2024

Promoting multilingual education: Literacy for mutual understanding and peace

Every year, the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes reward projects that promote literacy. This year's Prizes recognize projects from Austria, Egypt, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria and Panama.

Education 2030

About the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes

Every year, the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes focus on a specific theme. This year, the spotlight is on Promoting multilingual education: a Literacy for mutual understanding and peace.

UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize
(3 awards)

Established in 1989, with the support of the **Government of the Republic of Korea**. It gives special consideration to language-based literacy development.

UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy
(3 awards)

Established in 2005, with the support of the **Government of the People's Republic of China**. It gives special consideration to functional literacy, leveraging technological environments in support of adults in rural areas and out-of-school youth.

Austria

'voXmi educational network' programme from the University Colleges of Teacher Education Austria, is awarded the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize. Focusing on the needs of urban educational environments, the programme emphasizes multilingual classrooms.

Austria's largest University Colleges of Teacher Education (Salzburg, Styria, Vienna, Vorarlberg) address the needs of diverse, urban educational environments, including multilingual classrooms. The 'voXmi' programme for 'learning and experiencing languages from and with each other' is a nationwide educational network created in 2008 as a project of the Federal Ministry of Education.

With more than 62 educational institutions actively participating, the programme aims to combat all forms of exclusion, racism and linguicism while promoting a culture of peace and social cohesion within Austria's migrant communities. By valuing and integrating the diverse languages of children and their families into educational processes, 'voXmi' seeks to create an inclusive environment. The primary focus of 'voXmi' is to engage teachers in adapting their practices to the reality of multilingualism among Austrian students. It provides training for responsible use of digital media in teaching and facilitates discussions on best practices for involving parents in a multilingual migrant society.

The programme promotes language-friendly pedagogical approaches across all educational levels, making methods and activities widely accessible to educators while implementing language-conscious and language-sensitive educational offers or appropriate instruction in all subjects.

In the long term, the programme aims to provide ongoing guidance and support throughout all stages of learners' professional development, encompassing both training and career advancement. Its goal is to foster implementation of language-friendly teaching practices and cultivate a supportive institutional culture.

For more information:
https://www.voxmi.at/

Ghana

The 'Libraries Without Walls' programme of the Foundation for Educational Equity and Development from Ghana is awarded the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize. This initiative offers literacy, STEM, and digital learning opportunities to children in Ghana's underserved areas.

The Foundation for Educational Equity and Development (FEED) is a Ghanaian non-profit organization committed to improving literacy and educational opportunities for underserved children and youth. Funded by grants and crowdfunding, FEED partners with local schools, community centres, NGOs and technology companies to deliver impactful programmes and provide access to digital learning tools. The Foundation also collaborates with local government education authorities to develop comprehensive literacy programmes.

Active since 2017, FEED's 'Libraries Without Walls' programme offers educational opportunities to more than 3,000 children each year in underserved regions of Ghana. Utilizing mobile libraries, digital tools, and innovative initiatives, the programme engages children and out-of-school youth with a variety of resources and hands-on activities. It features interactive sessions and workshops to support teachers and promote functional literacy, aiming to boost digital skills, self-confidence, and lifelong learning. It includes a total of 200 hours of comprehensive education aimed to reduce educational disparities and empower communities. Success is measured through surveys assessing improvements in opportunities, life skills, and community engagement. It also promotes local languages by incorporating storytelling in mobile libraries, engaging children with stories in their first languages to foster appreciation of their linguistic heritage.

Between 2021 and 2023, the programme benefited more than 12,000 learners, 75 per cent of whom were girls and young women. Looking ahead, the programme is building a multi-language online platform to further enhance literacy skills of children and youth in Ghana.

For more information:
https://feedghana.org/

Panama

'ProEd LECTO LABS' programme of the Fundación ProEd from Panama is awarded the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize. It fosters teacher and school community partnerships to enhance the quality of teaching of literacy skills and promote programme implementation.

Founded in 2007 in Panama, ProEd is a non-governmental organization dedicated to addressing educational inequity by providing high-quality, research-based professional development opportunities for educators and school leaders. It partners with the Ministry of Education for programme accreditation and receives support from individual and corporate sponsors.

ProEd's 'LECTO LABS' programme provides primary school teachers with updated, research-based literacy methodologies to enhance reading and writing instruction in Spanish. Designed, implemented, and evaluated by coaches trained by the Fundación ProEd, the materials and curricula support teachers in public primary schools across all ten provinces, focusing on marginalized communities where many at-risk students struggle with reading fluency and comprehension. 'LECTO LABS' adopts research-based instructional methodologies within a professional community of practice. Teachers undergo 80 hours of training, engage in a book club to experience the joy of reading, and participate in shared discussions. They are then expected to create student and teacher book clubs in their own schools. Teachers who successfully complete the programme receive a classroom library.

In the future, the programme aims to provide real-time practice through the 'ProEd Kids' after-school enrichment programme, enabling peer observations and simultaneous coaching.

For more information:
https://fundacionproed.org/

The UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize

- University Colleges of Teacher Education (Austria)
  'voXmi educational network' programme
- Foundation for Educational Equity and Development (Ghana)
  'Libraries Without Walls' programme
- Fundación ProEd (Panama)
  'ProEd LECTO LABS' programme

The UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy

- Mansoura University (Egypt)
  'Illiteracy Eradication Project'
- Sokola Institute (Indonesia)
  'Sokola literacy education for indigenous Indonesians' programme
- Aid for Rural Education Access Initiative (AREAi) (Nigeria)
  'FastTrack' programme

More information on the laureates:

https://www.unesco.org/en/prizes/literacy
https://www.unesco.org/en/days/literacy
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Egypt

'Illiteracy Eradication Project' of the Mansoura University from Egypt is awarded the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for its significant contributions to education, scientific research, and community service.

The renowned Mansoura University in Egypt was established in 1962 as the first accredited public university in the country. Started in 2019, the 'Illiteracy Eradication Project' by the Mansoura University is designed to achieve sustainability and quality of life in the Egyptian countryside by promoting youth and adult literacy in rural areas. The project innovatively utilizes university students as educators for illiterate individuals in various rural areas, villages, and governorates.

These students, equipped with cognitive, technological, and ethical skills, not only bring their knowledge but also enthusiasm and a strong sense of social responsibility to their teaching roles.

Illiteracy Eradication Project has graduated over 130,000 learners, more than half of whom are women, aiming to address gender disparities in literacy and education access. It continues to expand literacy initiatives to include non-Arabic speakers, digitalize its adult education curriculum, promote digital literacy skills, and create educational videos for all ages.

Since 2020, the project has significantly improved the success rate of candidates in standardized literacy exams, increasing the percentage of successful candidates to 95 per cent in 2023, compared to 69 per cent at the project's inception.

For more information:
http://www.mans.edu.eg/en

Indonesia

'Sokola literacy education for indigenous Indonesians' programme from the Sokola Institute in Indonesia is awarded the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy. The programme builds the capacity of indigenous communities to utilize literacy and advocacy skills as tools to navigate changes and achieve self-determination.

Sokola Institute is a non-governmental organization established in 2003 located in Jakarta, Indonesia. It is the first non-profit organization in the country to focus on education for indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups. It develops culturally and contextually sensitive methods and approaches to assist indigenous peoples in preserving their endangered cultures and habitats.

The 'Sokola literacy education for indigenous Indonesians' programme combines first language instruction with ethnographic methods, integrating syllables and phonetics to strengthen students' native languages. In addition to strengthening their native languages, the Sokola programme helps learners acquire national languages to engage with the broader community and advocate effectively with the government. It is inclusive and accessible to all age groups, offers flexible scheduling, and trains local individuals to become community educators. The curriculum covers basic and applied literacy as well as community-led education initiatives. Students receive tailored training in basic literacy based on their abilities, and additional skills are provided according to needs assessments conducted within each community.

Since 2003, the programme has reached 1,000 learners. Between 2021 and 2023, 200 participants benefited from the programme, 40 per cent of whom were girls and women. The organization implements its activities in close collaboration with local communities and partners with local governments and other NGOs. These partnerships contribute to fundraising, resource-sharing and expanding the reach of the programme.

For more information:
https://www.sokola.org/

Nigeria

'FastTrack' programme of the Aid for Rural Education' Access Initiative from Nigeria is awarded the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for providing technical and infrastructural support to scale the learning outcomes of vulnerable children and youth.

The Aid for Rural Education Access Initiative (AREAi) is a non-profit organization funded through competitive grants, innovation funding, and government partnerships. Since its inception in 2014, AREAi has been dedicated to working with under-resourced schools and marginalized communities in Nigeria. The organization provides technical and infrastructural support to enhance learning outcomes for vulnerable children and youth from low-income families.

The programme specifically targets foreign refugee children aged 5 – 18 and internally displaced persons from northeastern Nigeria. The 'FastTrack' programme includes a bilingual mode of language instruction, teaching both the national language and the learner's first language, with tailored instruction based on proficiency levels. The programme also leverages offline technology to improve understanding and comprehension.

Since the start of the programme in 2021, more than 19,000 refugees, displaced and out-of-school children across seven Nigerian states, of whom 90 per cent are girls, have successfully completed literacy and life skills training. The programme's educators who are young university graduates and community-based facilitators have been able to pass on their literacy and indigenous language skills to refugee children in their communities.

The programme operates at national and regional levels, particularly targeting the local humanitarian landscape in East Africa. It also aims to establish mechanisms for local refugee-led and community-based educational organizations in Nigeria to learn from and replicate its methodologies.

For more information:
https://areai4africa.org/

Background information

*Since 1967, **UNESCO International Literacy Prizes** have rewarded excellence and innovation in the field of literacy. In all, 518 projects and programmes undertaken by governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals around the world have been recognized. Through these prestigious Prizes, UNESCO seeks to support effective literacy practices and encourages the promotion of dynamic literate societies.*

*An **International Jury** appointed by UNESCO's Director-General meets in Paris once a year to recommend potential prizewinning programmes for the Director-General's decision. The jury is made up of high-profile practitioners and academics in the field of education who are appointed for a period of two years. Candidatures for the prizes are submitted by Member States or by international non-governmental organizations in official partnership with UNESCO. The International Jury is presently composed of prominent experts from all regions of the world.*

UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners. UNESCO also leads efforts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.

The Global Education 2030 Agenda

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

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Sustainable Development Goals