

Message from the
Minister for Gender,
Sports, Culture and
Social Services,
Mr Ochilo Ayacko

As we celebrate this year's International Literacy Day, I send a message of goodwill to the entire adult and continuing education fraternity on this important day in our literacy calendar. We are pleased to join other countries in celebrating gains made in the fight against illiteracy. This is because illiteracy is a major barrier to reducing poverty. Experience has proved that literacy is a foundation for raising living standards, fighting gender inequities, increasing entrepreneurship

and empowering poor communities to act more effectively in pursuit of their goals in life.

Cognisant of the fact that basic education is a fundamental human right, the Government reiterates its firm commitment to the provision and

promotion of literacy to all. As stated in the Narc manifesto, and in pursuit of Education For All (EFA) goals, we will strive to improve the adult and continuing education programmes so that our people can reap the benefits of literacy to improve their livelihood and quality for life.

My ministry appreciates the complementary role played by other groups in the provision of literacy. I would like to assure you that the necessary conditions are, and will, continue to be created to enhance greater involvement and participation by the civil society, faith-based and community-based organisations and the private sector.

The signing of a joint communiqué' by faith-based organisations in July this year is a good sign and a milestone in the revival and revamping of adult literacy programmes.

The adult literacy programme has continued to face a number of challenges, which have reduced its impact. Some of the challenges include decline in the number of teachers and supervisors due to natural attrition and embargo on recruitment, lack of attractive continuing education programmes and weak monitoring and evaluation systems. My ministry is working on ways of addressing these challenges. Our vision is to have, at least, one teacher in each of the 6000 sub-locations for effective implementation of the programme. Currently the impact of the programme is very low and there are many areas that are not served.

The vision of my ministry is to have a literate and empowered citizenry who will use literacy skills to make informed choices and decisions. The responsibility of realising this vision lies squarely on all Kenyans. Let us take the fight against illiteracy to every corner of this country. Only through this will we realise high levels of literacy and ensure high socio-economic and political development.

Finally I wish all those that are graduating today success in their endeavour to improve their lives and that of their families. It is my wish that they will use the literacy skills acquired to open more windows of opportunities.



It's time to reflect on literacy gains

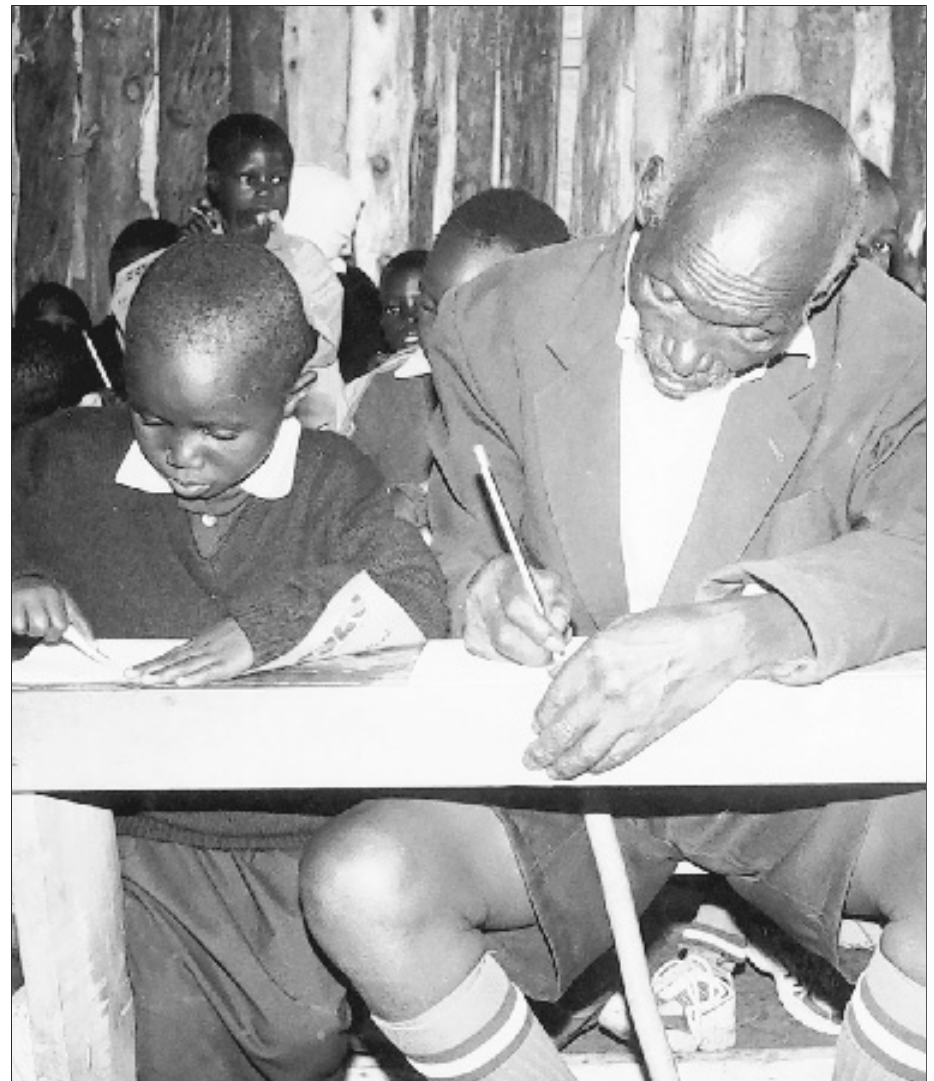
Knowledge society

Today, Kenya will join other countries worldwide to celebrate the International Literacy Day. The national celebrations will be held at the City Stadium and will be presided over the Minister for Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, Mr Ochillo Ayacko, and addressed, among others, by the director, UNESCO Nairobi Office, Dr Paul Vitta. Celebrations will also be organised at the provincial and district levels throughout the country.

The International Literacy Day is celebrated every year on September 8 and is aimed at providing countries with the opportunity to reflect on gains made as well as challenges met in providing literacy to all citizens. Provision of literacy for all is an obligation for all countries. The Universal Human Rights enjoin all countries to provide education to all and so are the various international covenants and treaties. The Education for All initiative is a commitment by all countries to eliminate illiteracy in all its forms among children and youth and, halve it among adults, by 2015.

To underscore the commitment to provision of literacy, the United Nations declared the period between January 2003 to 2012 as the International Literacy Decade, when governments are obliged to double their efforts in the literacy campaigns to ensure that all their people get the skills of reading, writing and computing.

The commitment is beyond the numbers who become literate. It includes the quality of what is learnt, how and where it is learnt and the continuity of the learning process. It is also about acquisition of various skills such as those for survival,



Kimani Nganga Maruge during the first days in school. The challenge for many countries is to provide literacy to millions of illiterate people so that they can have a chance to read, write, apply new knowledge.

co-existence, citizenship, environment protection, governance, and human rights, among others.

UNESCO, which is the United Nations agency responsible for championing the EFA campaigns, says literacy for all requires not only increased enrolment in school or in youth and adult education programmes. But it also requires adequate and stimulating literate environments at home, in the classroom, in the workplace, and in the community.

It also says that literacy is not a simple and elementary skill. It is a highly complex and dynamic practice, a lifelong learning process that is continuously expanding in domains and applications. Most importantly, literacy for all addresses the needs and circumstances of people who are marginalised, excluded and disadvantaged. Globally, 862 million adults are illiterate with the majority of them being women. In Kenya, about four million people are literate and again, the majority are women. The challenge, therefore, is to provide literacy to these millions of illiterate people so that they can have a chance to read, write, apply new knowledge and lead a fulfilling life.

For Kenya, some significant steps have been made in the fight against illiteracy.

The introduction of free primary education in 2003, for example, went a long way to open up doors for thousands of children and youth to access education. In fact, even some adults took the opportunity to enrol in primary schools so that they could acquire basic literacy skills.

While major gains have been made in primary education, adult literacy, which caters for those who did not get a chance to learn in their youth, has been dogged with several challenges such as low funding, shortage of teachers and lack of reading and teaching materials. Currently, only about 100,000 adults are enrolled in the literacy classes, a major drop from the previous figures of about 500,000.

Providing adult literacy in Kenya

The Department of Adult Education, which is currently under the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, is responsible for coordinating, supervising and providing adult literacy programmes. However, it does this with the support of various organisations, which provide literacy programmes of diverse nature. Some of the organisations involved in the provision of adult literacy programmes are as follows:

Celebrating gains in literacy

Goal: Established in 1997 by a sports journalist John O'Shea, Goal's main objective is to alleviate suffering among the poorest, especially in the developing countries. Currently, it operates in 19 countries offering life-saving aid during emergencies, implementing and rehabilitating long-term projects and caring for the street children and those affected and infected by HIV/AIDS.

In Kenya, Goal is involved in refugee assistance programme and street children rehabilitation. The HIV/AIDS street education project targets children, especially girls in Nairobi's Mukuru slums and the city's central business district. It has a Community Children's Education Centre in Mukuru slums that caters for children from the streets and slums aged between eight to 18 years, and provides them with education that equips them with life skills. It also operates a vocational skills training for street and slum youth and who, upon graduation, are assisted to start business or get into some gainful employment.

FAWEK: The Forum for African Women Educationalists, Kenya (FAWEK), is one of the 33 chapters of the pan-African non-governmental organisation Forum for African Women Educationalists. Its objectives are to promote and support girls' education through, among others, influencing policy and practice in all aspects of education to ensure responsiveness; conduct public awareness on the linkages between girls' education and development; promoting and encouraging a holistic approach to education of girls and women; lobbying governments to increase education funding, especially for girls.

Some of FAWEK's activities are promoting innovation in the education for girls; working with other interested groups to promote girls' education; developing and disseminating information on girls' education, monitoring and evaluating the impact of various policies on female education and setting up bursary fund for needy bright girls. **ActionAid Kenya** has been working

Education for All goals

The World Forum on Education For All (EFA) that was held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000, came up with a framework of action and set the year 2015 as the deadline for EFA. The Dakar goals are:

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- Ensuring that by 2015 all children, with emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances and

from ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary of good quality;

- Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;

- Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;

- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; and

- Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.



It is not too late to learn: A determined Mrs Anne Limo is set for school with the desire to learn to read and write.

with the Department of Adult Education to promote literacy programmes in Kenya. A major area of partnership has been on literacy for empowerment. ActionAid conceived the REFLECT approach to adult literacy and social change in 1993 and has been successfully implemented in Uganda, Bangladesh and El Salvador. Reflect is an acronym for Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques. It is a tool for strengthening the community's capacity to communication through literacy skills. In Kenya, the programme has been running in five districts namely Mwingi, Samburu, Narok, Malindi and Mombasa.

ActionAid has collaborated in the training of adult teachers in the district in the use of Reflect. At the national level, ActionAid is an active member of the steering committee on literacy survey. It has also been involved in the review of the literacy curriculum and sharing experiences on non-formal education as well as providing learning and teaching materials. ActionAid also supports the renewed vision of literacy as outlined in the UN literacy Decade Plan of Action. It will continue working with the Department of Adult Education to revive and strengthen adult literacy in the country.

The Kenya Adult Education Association (KAEA) is a national membership organisation that coordinates adult education stakeholders and literacy initiatives. It works closely with the Department of Adult Education in the implementation of literacy programmes through its countrywide networks. KAEA's objective is to advocate, promote, coordinate and support literacy and adult education programmes nationwide. Its goal is to see adult learners acquire life skills and knowledge imparted through non-formal education. Ultimately, these skills should enable the adults to contribute to the socio-economic development of their societies and in that fight poverty.

KAEA has implemented various community-based projects and has assisted adult learners to pursue various courses. There are many adult learners who have sat and passed national examinations through KAEA's support. Through the support of some NGOs, the organisation has assisted community organisations to build their capacities, project management and resource mobilisation.

Kenya Literacy Decade Network was registered in 2003 to push for the realisation of the United Nations Literacy Decade, 2003 – 2012 under the motto, "literacy as freedom". Some of its objectives are demonstrating the crucial role that literacy has in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); enabling the new

literate to sustain the acquired skills of reading, writing and computation; and promoting gender parity in access to adult literacy.

Concern Worldwide is committed to working towards the creation of a society free of poverty, oppression and social inequalities. The organisation works with local and international organisations to improve the cause of the poor. Its aim is to improve the livelihood of the poor and increasing their access to basic education. It has been working in Nairobi slums and Suba District. In implementing its programmes, Concern adopts a rights-based approach, emphasises community participation, capacity building and mainstreaming HIV/AIDS.

Bible Translation and Literacy: The literacy work of Bible Translation and Literacy (BTL) was started in Kenya in 1981 and has covered more than 13 of the small language groups. Of the 50-plus languages in the country, about 30 are spoken by small groups, who live in hardship areas. These areas have lagged behind in education and do not have any literature in their language.

BTL's literacy campaign is aimed at equipping people with life skills to enable them improve their social and economic status. BTL works with the church, communities and other agencies in developing reading materials in the local languages. It believes that the ability to read and write enhances the practical, social and spiritual development of the marginalised groups. The organisation helps the communities to develop materials in local languages, train teachers and supervisors and also provide literacy classes.

BTL is in the process of launching a centre for literacy and language development (CELLADEV) that will offer training on local languages, coordinate literacy activities, conduct research; carry out advocacy; and mobilise resources, among others.

For its work, BTL won various literacy awards, including the International Reading Association Literacy Award, Noma Literacy Prize, King Sejong Literacy Prizes and Malcom Adishesiah International Literacy Prize.

BTL is currently working among the following communities: Boni in Lamu, Borana and Daasanach in Marsabit, Digo and Duruma in Kwale, Endo in Marakwet, Giryama in Kilifi, Pokomo and Orma in Tana River, Sabao in Mt Elgon District, Suba and Tharaka.

Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of International Literacy Day.

On 8 September each year for almost the last four decades, the world has Celebrated International Literacy Day. Our celebration is particularly significant as this annual international event has gained valuable momentum following the 2003 launch of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD). Together, we must capitalise upon this important opportunity to reflect on the world's progress in literacy and to move forward. Despite notable advances in many countries, more than 860 million adults are illiterate and more than 100 million children have no access to school. Moreover, countless children, young people and adults who attend school or other



commitment to the fourth goal agreed by the participants in the World Education Forum on Education for All (EFA) held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000. This Dakar goal focuses upon "achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education

educational programmes fall short of the required level to be considered literate in today's increasingly complex world. This should be a major preoccupation in light of the international community's commitment to the fourth goal agreed by the participants in the World Education Forum on Education for All (EFA) held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000. This Dakar goal focuses upon "achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults." The emphasis within the fourth Dakar goal on women's literacy leads us to the theme of this year's International Literacy Day, namely, 'literacy and gender'. In a situation where almost one in seven people is illiterate, this injustice is compounded by the fact that two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women. There is a clear need for literacy programmes that address the groups of learners that most need special attention – notably women and girls who are not in school. Where men and boys lack access to quality learning opportunities, they too need special attention. Promoting gender equality in literacy education does not mean pitting women against men.

It means giving special attention to the more vulnerable groups of learners. National and local governments as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) must ensure that literacy is high on their agenda. Equally important is the quality of

the literacy programmes. One of the most important factors influencing literacy provision is gender sensitivity. This means that programmes have to recognise women and men as equal members of society and as valuable citizens. Programmes must move away from the traditional and stereotypical and offer equal life opportunities and choices.

I call on all countries, rich and poor, partner agencies in the United Nations, bilateral and private donors and, indeed, private citizens everywhere, to rise to the occasion and take on the challenge to make sure that the word "illiterate" is eradicated from our vocabulary.

A literate world is a possible and desirable one. There are enough resources. What is now needed is the collective will of the international community to ensure that the necessary support is forthcoming.

– Koïchiro Matsuura