



HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Global Engagement Division

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April 9, 2025

Subject: **Webinar on 'Her Literacy, Her Power: Bridging the gender gap in literacy', 9 April 2025**

The undersigned has been directed to refer to communicate from Pakistan National Commission for UNESCO (PNCU) apprising of a Webinar slated for April 19, 2025 from 04:00 pm till 05:30 pm (PST).

2. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, in collaboration with the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), is hosting a webinar titled "Her Literacy, Her Power: Bridging the Gender Gap in Literacy". Held under the framework of the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL), the webinar will bring together policy-makers, researchers, and education practitioners to exchange knowledge on advancing women's literacy. The event will highlight gender-responsive literacy policies, showcase impactful programmes, and share recent research insights to promote inclusive, lifelong learning opportunities for women across GAL member countries.

3. Your esteemed institution is therefore beseeched to circulate the aforesaid information on webinar to concerned quarters of your institution so that the interested may join the webinar online via using the following link for their registration: https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9VwX3OQESYWA8Xb2DCcF2w. A comprehensive working paper for the subject webinar is also enclosed herewith for information.

With best regards,

Encl: **As above.**

(Muhammad Shahzeb Zafar)

Assistant Director

Vice Chancellor / Rector / Heads of HEIs/DAIs

All Public and Private Sector HEIs / DAIs of Pakistan

Copy to:

- i. **In-charge IC offices**, All public sector HEIs / DAIs of Pakistan
- ii. **In-charge (GE)**, Higher Education Commission, Pakistan



Wednesday, 9 April 2025, 13.00–14.30 hours (CEST)
Language: English and French (simultaneous interpretation)

Webinar: 'Her Literacy, Her Power: Bridging the gender gap in literacy'

Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of
Lifelong Learning (GAL)

Zoom registration link: https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9VwX3OQESYWA8Xb2DCcF2w

Background

On Wednesday, 9 April 2025, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), in its role as the secretariat of the [Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning \(GAL\)](#), will cohost a webinar entitled 'Her Literacy, Her Power: Bridging the gender gap in literacy' with the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), a new GAL Associate Member. The event will provide a platform for literacy stakeholders from GAL countries to exchange insights on policies, programmes and research dedicated to advancing women's literacy.

Women's literacy is fundamental to achieving gender equality, social inclusion and sustainable development. Despite global progress, however, women still make up 63 per cent of the 754 million adults who lack basic literacy skills (UIS, 2023). Structural barriers – such as sociocultural norms, economic constraints, limited access to quality education, and a lack of gender-responsive policies – continue to hinder women's access to literacy programmes and learning opportunities. These barriers are particularly prevalent in low-income, crisis-ridden regions and rural communities. Significant gender disparities in education persist, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, home to 19 of the 31 GAL countries. Furthermore, in at least 20 countries, again mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, very few poor rural young women complete secondary school. In the Central African Republic, where the adult literacy rate is just 38 per cent, the gender gap in literacy is vast even among the youngest cohort: only about 61 young women are literate for every 100 young men (UNESCO, 2024).¹ Similarly, adult female literacy appears extremely low in Chad and Guinea. In Chad, just 15 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 are reported to have attended secondary school, and only 1 in 5 non-attendees can read without difficulty. In Guinea, 4 per cent have pursued post-secondary education, and 11 per cent of the remainder can read fluently.

In some other world regions, beyond sub-Saharan Africa, women's right to education remains precarious. In Afghanistan, the Taliban regime's complete ban on education for women and girls violates the country's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). At the turn of the 21st century, Afghanistan already had one of the lowest literacy rates for women globally, and the Taliban regime's recent decrees risk undoing the limited progress achieved between 2001 and 2021.

While women in Eastern and South-eastern Asia have higher literacy rates and more equal access to education, a significant number are nonetheless considered to lack basic literacy skills. Although progress has been made in the region, 75 per cent of women over the age of 65 continue to lack these skills, indicating that older generations continue to face major literacy challenges even as younger women gain better access to education. These figures further illustrate the critical need for tailored interventions designed to close the gender gap in literacy (UNESCO, 2020).²

The implications of low literacy among women extend far beyond the individual; they affect entire families, communities and societies. Women with low literacy are often excluded from economic and social activities and services. This in turn hinders their ability to improve their livelihoods and break the cycle of poverty. Coupled with limited access to healthcare, this lack of literacy perpetuates poor health outcomes, thereby further marginalizing women. Moreover, low literacy restricts women's ability to exercise their rights, engage in decision-making, and contribute to social and political change. In today's digital age, the inability to use technology and navigate digital platforms adds another layer of exclusion, preventing women from accessing online learning, job opportunities and vital information. All of these

¹ UNESCO. 2024. *Global education monitoring report summary, 2024/5. Leadership in education: Lead for learning*. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391406> (Accessed: 15 February 2025.)

² UNESCO. 2020. *Global education monitoring report, 2020. Inclusion and education: All means all*. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718> (Accessed: 5 February 2025.)

challenges contribute to women's social and economic marginalization, ultimately hindering sustainable development.

Through GAL, UIL recognizes the urgent need to strengthen literacy policies and programmes that specifically centre on women's learning needs and opportunities. By bringing together policy-makers, practitioners, researchers and literacy advocates, this webinar will facilitate knowledge-sharing on effective strategies for enhancing women's literacy in GAL countries.

The webinar aims to:

- share gender-responsive literacy policies from GAL countries, highlighting key enablers for and barriers to women's literacy;
- present promising literacy programmes that have led to learning and empowerment opportunities for women;
- highlight recent research and insights on trends, challenges and innovations in women's literacy.

What is the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL)?

GAL was established in 2016 to advance global literacy efforts and address challenges in promoting literacy around the world. Today, the alliance comprises 31 countries strongly committed to improving youth and adult literacy, with a particular focus on disadvantaged and marginalized communities in GAL countries.³ GAL's work is guided by the [GAL Strategy 2020–2025](#), which defines goals for the advancement of literacy and numeracy in five key areas: (1) policy and planning, (2) equity, (3) innovation, (4) data and (5) partnerships. The strategic goals pertaining to equity recognize the importance of women's literacy for promoting inclusion, education and social cohesion.

The GAL Secretariat can be reached by email at uil-galsecretariat@unesco.org.

Agenda

| 9 April 2025 13:00 – 14:30 (CEST) | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 13:00–13:10 | Introduction Ms Isabell Kempf, Director, UIL |
| 13:10–14:25 | Advancing Women's Literacy: Policies, programmes and research Moderator: Ms Rakhat Zholdoshalieva, Quality Learning Ecosystems, GAL Secretariat, UIL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy approaches to women's literacy in India: Ms Archana Sharma Awasthi, Joint Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education, India • FAWE's contribution to literacy for women and girls in Africa: Ms Catherine Asego, Senior Advocacy Officer, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) |

³ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, People's Republic of China, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Kingdom of Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone and South Sudan. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <https://uis.unesco.org/en>.

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| | <p>Moderator: Ms Sofia Chatzigianni, Quality Learning Ecosystems, GAL Secretariat, UIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional literacy of women members of farmers' organizations (ALFOP): Mr Djasrangar Djamadjibeye, Coordinator, French Farmers and International Development (Afdi), Chad • Implementing literacy programme for women in Afghanistan: Ms Arzhang Yusefi, Project Officer/Team Lead, Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education, UNESCO Kabul Office, Afghanistan • Aagahi literacy programme for women and out-of-school girls: Ms Amna W. Khalid, Executive Advisor, The Citizens Foundation, Pakistan • Research perspective on women's literacy and intergenerational transformation: Ms Vicky Duckworth, Professor of Further Education, Edge Hill University, UK |
| 14:25–14:30 | Closing remarks by the GAL Secretariat |

Background information

- [Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning \(GAL\): Strategy 2020–2025](#)
- [Narrowing the gender gap: Empowering women through literacy programmes. Case studies from the UNESCO Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database \(LitBase\)](#)

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 and responding to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

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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