



## The 1<sup>st</sup> National Intergenerational Literacy Learners' Conference

Organized by

Uganda Rural Literacy and Community Development Association,

In Conjunction with:

- Arua District Local Government
- Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
- Ministry of Education and Sports
- Makererere University Institute of Adult and Continuing Education
- AMREF - Kenya
- Adult Literacy and Basic Education Centre
- Uganda Adult Education Network
- National Association of Professional Environmentalists
- Uganda Literacy and Adult Learners' Association
- Islamic University in Uganda; and
- Here is Life

Theme: Literacies in Livelihoods and Development: Bridging the Divides

Venue: Agobia Church, Nyai Village, Micu parish, Aroi Division, Arua District, Uganda

Dates: January 27 – 30, 2009

## Introduction

This conference, initiated by Uganda Rural Literacy and Community Development Association (URLCODA)'s Intergenerational literacy learners, promises to be one of the most exciting and remarkable events, not only in Arua district, Uganda, but also the Great Lakes region. Drawing on the traditional/indigenous values/practices in education as well as the principles of evidence based learning, the conference expects to attract participants of all ages and experiences to engage in discussions and reflect on issues related to acquisition and application of literacy skills and adult learning within the context of their livelihood strategies. Academics/researchers, development practitioners and political leaders will be interacting with learners, observing their presentations, taking notes and thereafter meet to discuss and document what they might have learnt from the interactions.

The motivation for this learner-centred event, the first of its kind in the West Nile region of Uganda, is derived from the recognition of the high correlation between illiteracy and poverty as well as the existence of staggering figures ranging from 700 – to nearly 800 million adults worldwide who lack literacy skills and cannot therefore meaningfully participate in developmental activities (see UNESCO 2005<sup>1</sup>; Actionaid 2007<sup>2</sup>). This means the contributions of such people in effectively responding to the current global challenges such as: the rapid population growth and the pressure this puts on the available natural resources, the deteriorating land productivity and the resultant food shortage, the raging energy and foods crises; the dreadful HIV/AIDS scourge; and the declining quality in primary and basic education, are miserably limited. These underlying causes in turn worsen the poverty and hunger situations and escalate conflicts among people, thereby breeding tendencies of corruption in the society. It is the poor, illiterate, voiceless, and the powerless that end up being the final victims of these circumstances. Hence, this conference hopes to provide a platform for the core learners to examine the impacts of the above problems on them through various unstructured forms of presentations, sharing their experiences and in the end, building a common vision that they can use to influence policies that infringe on their right to education, learning and active participation in socio-economic and political activities in their communities. The conference is conceived on the basis that the active involvement of the core learners in discussing, understanding and harmonizing the perceptions about the different literacies is critical for addressing the ever increasing structural inequalities/injustices and divides between and within regions, states and communities.

The initiative is expected to create an alliance between scholars in Higher Education, development practitioners, political leaders and the communities to collectively respond to the above stated challenges. The evidence based learning oriented approach is expected to boost the contribution of scholars in Higher Education towards poverty reduction efforts and attainment of some of the Millennium Development Goals. Through the free multi-stakeholder interactions, the dominant view of literacy, which has led people without school literacy to consider themselves as illiterate, ignorant and insignificant contributors of knowledge in the society will be discouraged. Efforts shall be made to move towards popularizing the recognition of multiple literacies that have enabled our past communities to manage their environment in a sustainable manner and with minimum conflicts. The main idea is to promote continuous learning and education to equip people with the appropriate skills of effective communication, leadership and good governance, rural entrepreneurship, and conflict transformation and management which should enable every individual in the society to withstand and confront the

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. (2005). *Literacy for Life, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006: Summary*. Paris: UNESCO

<sup>2</sup> Actionaid. (2007). "Writing the Wrongs: A High Level Workshop on Adult Literacy" Held on February 16, 2007 in Abuja, Nigeria

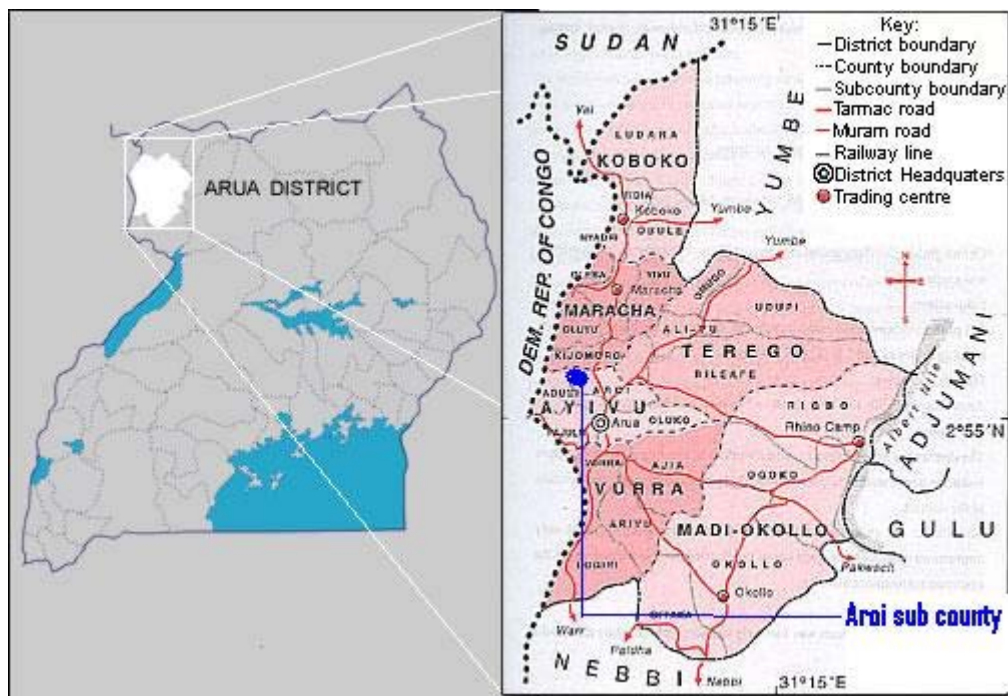
challenges of global neo liberal forces. The conference is expected to be participatory, collaborative and reflective. It will be intergenerational and based on efforts to marry the modern educational and learning practices with our indigenous and traditional values and practices.

### Dates and Venue of the Conference

The conference is slated to take place from January 27 – 30, 2009 in Nyai Village, Micu Parish, Aroi Sub County, Arua district of northwestern region of Uganda. Nyai Village is situated in Aroi Sub County (shaded in blue colour in Figure 1), roughly 10 km to the North of Arua town. The village is characterized by warm and highly hospitable people who always ready to assist visitors in case of problems. Besides the general hospitality of the people, the village was chosen as the site for the event because of the following three compelling reasons:

- Nyai village has a well conserved natural environment which the conference participants are expected to utilize in the process of knowledge creation and experience sharing. This is very important because the conference lays a lot of emphasis on indigenous education, knowledge and practices in which the natural environment is crucial
- The village has one of the strongest groups of intergenerational literacy learners in the district and as a result, the morale of the learners there would be greatly boosted by allowing them to host the conference; and
- The local population in Nyai village had already experimented hosting a similar conference for West Nile region from January 16 – 18, 2008, which was a huge success and had requested to do the same for this first national conference of intergenerational literacy learners. Hence, the local community will be readily available to support the conference in a number of ways such offering labour, accommodation, entertainment; and
- The location of the village close the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan will offer opportunities for intending participants from these two neighbouring countries to come and join the conference and also enable interested participants from other parts of Uganda take a walk to see how DR Congo looks like by visiting the border markets like Odramacaku, just 4 – 5 km away from the conference venue.

Figure 1: Location of Aroi Sub County in Arua District, Uganda



Source: [www.arua.go.ug/](http://www.arua.go.ug/)

## Target Participants

The conference will bring together a total of 150 people (100 learners of all ages and 50 conference workers, researchers/academics, literacy/development practitioners and opinion leaders) from within and without Uganda. Of particular interest in this conference will be the emphasis on a significant number of very elderly learners and children since the event is supposed to be intergenerational in nature. It will be a learner-oriented conference where academics, practitioners, researchers and politicians will play a complementary role.

The mobilization of the learners within Uganda shall be done by URLCODA, Uganda Literacy and Adult Learners' Association, Adult Literacy and Basic Education Centre, Uganda Adult Education Network and the National Association of Professional Environmentalists.

## Purpose of the Conference

The purpose of the conference is to mobilize local communities and other stakeholders to support and promote the integration of indigenous and formal literacies for attaining sustainable livelihoods based on the principles of non-formal and lifelong learning. This is expected to lay a foundation for the practice of evidence based learning where every stakeholder is expected to participate and take action for bringing about positive changes in the lives of the poor, thereby promoting the principles of equity and social justice for all.

## Conference Objectives

The conference will seek to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To Bring together 150 participants to discuss and reflect on issues of literacy and adult learning in order to come up with effective approaches to acquisition and application of the different literacies in undertaking livelihood strategies
- 2) To enable learners of diverse cultural and generational backgrounds interact and present the activities they are engaged in, with a traditional touch for purposes of identifying the good elements from our indigenous practices for boosting learning of the multiple literacies at all levels in the current contexts
- 3) To introduce a new dimension in the conceptualization of literacy instead of focusing on the dominant/single literacy whose understanding is restricted to schooling only
- 4) To identify individuals, groups and agencies who will, in the spirit of evidence based learning, promote the multiple literacies whose meanings are derived from the socio-economic and cultural contexts and practices of the people who use them; and
- 5) Generate recommendations intended to influence public policy responsiveness towards integrated learning for attaining sustainable rural livelihoods

## The Nature, activities and methods of presentations

In line with the values/principles of indigenous non-formal learning, the event will among others, be dominated by the very elderly, children, the youth and women who will share experiences on various learning and skills related issues in a natural environment of typical rural setting. Participants will be learning from a "nature-oriented conference" rather than the traditionally hotel-based conferences with luxurious facilities. Participants will literally share everything as rural communities usually do.

A variety of activities such as: literacy learners' testimonies, exhibition of learners' products; debates among learners on topical issues; reading and writing competitions among learners; listening to stories from elderly participants while sitting by evening fire places; football matches between women learners; playing games that help learners acquire reading, writing and simple arithmetic skills; and informal workshop oriented

presentations of different forms will be undertaken. Learners' presentations focusing on their encounter with real-life situations and literacy/numeracy skills related issues using local languages and in line with the theme of the conference will take the form of: film shows; posters; demonstrations; traditional story telling; music, dance and drama; group discussions; testimonies; skills training, exhibitions etc. The volunteer organizers will make every effort to ensure that there are enough competent translators to make everybody get the messages being passed across in the face of the linguistic diversity that will characterize the conference. For written papers, they will be translated in advance and conferees will have copies in various languages of their choice.

## Registration, Accommodation and other Logistical Arrangements

Participants shall be expected to make a humble contribution of Uganda shillings 20,000 only (US\$ 13) for registration (using an estimated exchange rate of \$ 1: USShs 1,500). This is just to show a sign of commitment and should not be considered as fee. The organizers are making every effort to approach relevant organizations with interest in what is being undertaken to sponsor at least 100 learners and cover their transport, meals and related costs.

Volunteer organizers and other people who are not learners shall be expected to arrange their own transport and accommodation at their own cost in case they may not like the idea of being accommodated by the host learners in and around the conference venue. Such conferees shall be able to secure at their own expenses, hotels rooms in Arua town, roughly 10 km from town to the conference venue. These may cost approximately US \$ 40 onwards per night. Any person wanting to make reservation can contact any of the persons listed in this document to give information about the conference.

Since the conference is driven by values of traditional and indigenous education, participants should prepare to share with the host learners most of their experiences including accommodation. The host learners are prepared to accommodate those who are coming from other parts of the country and this free cross-cultural interaction between the participants is expected to form part of the learning process. The host learners are making this as a great contribution towards the success of the event. However, it would be advisable for intending participants to consider coming with some beddings and portable mats.

Groups from different places should come prepared to exhibit their cultures in form of the different activities suggested above in a cultural evening slated for January 29, 2008. More detailed programme for the event shall regularly be posted on [www.renfrica.org](http://www.renfrica.org), so interested person should continue to check on this page.

## Weather and Health-related Issues

Arua is generally a warm place and the dates chosen for the conference fall in a month in which temperatures normally range from 18 - 30° C. During this period, there is normally no rain in the area. It is however, important to note that the experience in the **previous** conference showed that certain activities had proceed into the nights and this is likely **to** be a possibility in the forthcoming one. It can some times get relatively cold, so warm clothing for the night activities would be advisable. Those intending to participate should therefore prepare accordingly.

By the end of august the organizers will issue registration/application forms in which people will be expected to indicate their dietary preferences and needs of those with disability. URLCODA has a pool of volunteer medical officers who will generally be there to help in cases of medical emergencies. It is also advisable for those coming from Malaria-free areas to take preventive medicine before coming though cases of mosquito bites in dry season in which the conference dates have fallen are rare.

## Options of Means of Transportation in Uganda

From Entebbe International Airport **to the Capital-Kampala**, one can either use special hire taxis, which cost from an equivalent of US \$ 20 - 30 or public taxis which cost about an equivalent of US \$ 2-3. While in Kampala, one can also use motorcycles which are convenient for avoiding city jams. However, caution needs to be taken as this is sometimes risky in terms of accidents since the riders tend to disregard traffic rules. From Kampala to Arua which is approximately 520 km, there are a number

of buses which ply the route on daily basis from both sides. The fares for the buses range from an equivalent of US, \$ 15 – 17. One just needs to book this in advance, so all those interested should get in touch with the conference organizers ahead of time to make proper travel arrangements within the country. One other option to reach Arua from Kampala would be by an hour's flight using Eagle air which costs about **US \$ 220** return ticket. We will continue to provide information on travel arrangements on regular basis until the conference dates.

### Possible Places to Visit

Uganda is generally a beautiful country often referred to as the *Pearl of Africa* and is therefore endowed with very many interesting places to visit. Whereas it is not in the capacity of the Conference to fund such visits, groups who are able to afford it can inform the organizers to arrange for them visits to some of the National Parks, Water falls, and some may also decide to go to border market in the Democratic Republic of Congo which is just 5 – 6 km away from the conference venue. Those traveling Kampala to Arua by bus shall however be able to cross and see river Nile and some animals such as elephants, baboons, and monkeys in Murchison Falls National Park.

### Possible Partner Organization

Some of the partners in this venture URLCODA anticipates to contact include for support: UNESCO; International Reading Association, SNV; the Reading Association of Uganda; AMREF; National Environment Management Authority; National Book Trust of Uganda; Uganda AIDS Commission; USAID; UNICEF; SIDA; FORUM SYD; Olof Polme; ABF; Green Peace; Global Focus; Y's Men's Club – Arua Branch, Lion's Club, Action Aid Uganda, ADRA-Uganda; Uganda Christian University, National Teachers College-Muni; Arua Diocese; Madi and West Nile Diocese; ADINGON; World Vision; Danish Refugee Council; DANIDA; etc. In view of the nature of the issue this conference intends to address, the list of stakeholders is really endless.

### How you can support the Efforts of other Volunteers

You can join hands with the volunteer organizers of this event through: (1) Sponsoring some participants; (2) donating some funds or material resources to support some of the activities; (3) registering to come and physically be part of the three-day deliberations; (4) referring an interested person; and (4) linking URLCODA and its partners in this endeavour to a prospective funding body that can offer any form of assistance for the success of the conference.

NB: Donations and Sponsorships can be made through URLCODA's Bank Account whose details are as follows:

A/C Name : Uganda Rural Literacy and Community Development Association  
A/C No. : 2020436564  
Bank : Centenary Bank  
Branch : Arua  
A/C Type : Savings

### International Advisory Group

The conceptualization and organization of this conference has and will continue to benefit from the tremendous wealth of experience of the following academics whom the organizers have been consulting on regular basis. Their valuable intellectual input is therefore greatly acknowledged.

- Prof. Alan Rogers - University of East Anglia
- Prof. Kate Parry - City University of New York

- Prof. R, E. Mazur - CSRL, Iowa State University
- Prof. Bonny Norton - University of British Columbia
- Prof. Astrid Vonkotze - University of Kwazulu Natal
- Dr. Mike Lazarowich - Toronto- Canada
- Ms. Christine Glanz - UNESCO – Hamburg
- Dr. Thokozani Xlaba - University of Kwazulu Natal
- Ms. Maren Elfert - UNESCO – Hamburg
- Dr. Peter Maurice Siminyu - Nat. Spinal Injury Hos. Nairobi
- Dr. Rogers Ayiko - Swedish International Institute of Public Health Sciences
- Dr. Okumu-Bigambo - Moi University
- Mr. John Muiruri - AMREF – Kenya
- Ms. Lauryn Oates - University of British Colombia
- Mr. Abraham K. Mulwo - University of Kwazulu Natal

For More Information about the conference, contact any of the following persons:

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