



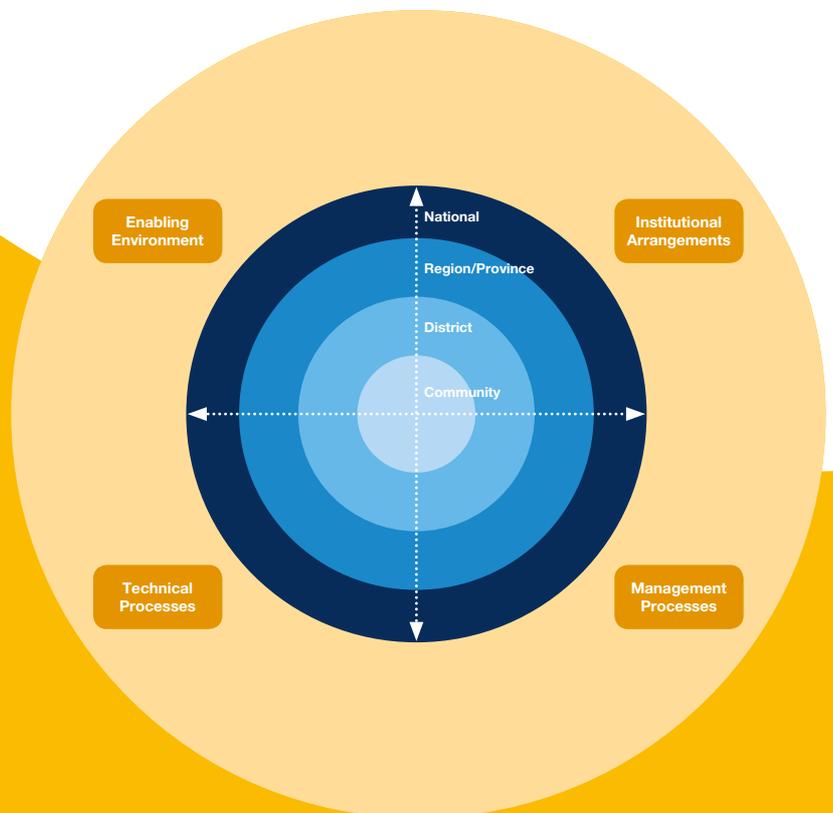
DVV International

Education for Everyone. Worldwide.  
Lifelong.

# Adult Learning & Education – System Building Approach (ALESBA)

Toolkit for Implementation

## Introduction to the Approach and Toolkit



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## **Adult Learning & Education – System Building Approach (ALESBA)**

### **Toolkit for Implementation**

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- The team that conducted the demand assessment on the needs and interests of ALE learners in 2019/2020. The findings provided a basis for further analysis in Phase Two and informed Phase Three.

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Sonja Belete



**W**hen the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, it was a moment of celebration for the education sector. For the first time, the global community accepted that learning is lifelong and that enough opportunities to learn should be provided to people of all ages, sexes, social and ethnic groups. This development nurtured the hope that decision-makers and key stakeholders would broaden education policies, and place greater value on Adult Learning and Education (ALE). However, while it is obvious that several improvements have been made, ALE remains the most neglected sub-sector in many national education systems.

A key challenge many government and non-government adult education institutions face is the lack of a system to develop, fund, monitor, and support ALE at a national, regional and local level. While many countries have more or less sophisticated systems in place for primary and secondary schooling, higher education, and sometimes vocational education, the same cannot be said for ALE.

DVW International has more than 50 years' experience in supporting the establishment and improvement of ALE systems. One lesson learnt from these efforts is that isolated interventions bear a high risk of failure. The same is true for processes that are mainly based on foreign expertise and copy-paste schemes.

With this background in mind, DVW International's team in East/Horn of Africa, under the leadership of Sonja Belete, started a process of developing a holistic model

for sustainably improving ALE systems. These booklets present the methods and experiences that have been developed over time. We called it the "Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach" (ALESBA), and it is based on several simple truths:

- Sustainable system building is a time-consuming, long-term process, that demands a great deal of patience and flexibility.
- Ownership is the key. Local actors should shape the process and create the system. External expertise can be useful, but should not lead the process or impose (quick) solutions.
- System building demands consensus building between the key partners. This factor is essential for success and should be established from the beginning and maintained throughout the process.

Sonja Belete and her team developed the ALESBA in a bottom-up manner, mainly based on experience from Ethiopia and Uganda. Meanwhile, the approach has been taken up by ten other countries in Africa. The process was shaped by the principles of action learning to ensure that formats and tools were developed and further updated during the journey. Learning-by-doing is a key success factor of the approach and should be used throughout the implementation of the process. ALESBA is an approach, which can guide stakeholders in the complex task of system building, at the same time it is open to improvement, adaptation, and modification!

We wish you great success in building and reforming ALE systems, and hope our experience can contribute to your work!

Uwe Gartenschlaeger

# Abbreviations

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<b>AEC</b>	Adult Education Centre(s)
<b>ALE</b>	Adult Learning and Education
<b>ALESBA</b>	Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach
<b>BFA</b>	Belem Framework for Action
<b>CBOs</b>	Community Based Organisations
<b>CG</b>	Curriculum globALE
<b>CI</b>	Curriculum institutionALE
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organisation(s)
<b>CLCs</b>	Community Learning Center(s)
<b>CONFINTEA</b>	World Conferences on Adult Education
<b>ESDP</b>	Education Sector Development Plan
<b>FAL</b>	Functional Adult Literacy
<b>FDC</b>	Folk Development Centre(s)
<b>GRALE</b>	Global Report on Adult Learning and Education
<b>IALE</b>	Institutions of Adult Education and Learning
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IFAE</b>	Integrated Functional Adult Education
<b>LAMP</b>	Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme
<b>LLL</b>	Lifelong Learning
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MIS</b>	Management Information System
<b>MGLSD</b>	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (Uganda)
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education (Ethiopia)
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>PRA</b>	Participatory Rural Appraisal
<b>RALE</b>	Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education
<b>REFLECT</b>	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
<b>SBA</b>	System Building Approach
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>ToT</b>	Training of Trainers
<b>ToF</b>	Training of Facilitators
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>UIL</b>	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training
<b>vhs</b>	Volkshochschulen

# **INTRODUCTION TO THE APPROACH AND TOOLKIT**

# 1. INTRODUCTION



***“Unless we intervene, we will not learn what some of the essential dynamics of the system really are.”***

Kurt Lewin quoted by Schein (Schein, Vol 1, Number 1)

The critical role of Adult Education and Learning (ALE) in the development of society and poverty reduction has long been recognised. There can be no doubt that ALE is a key factor for both economic and social development, on top of having the dimension of being a human right. It can assist to foster active citizenship, strengthen personal growth and secure social inclusion, and therefore going far beyond achieving skills for employability. Adult Learning and Education is part of the lifelong learning cycle and is a diverse sector. It is more than adult literacy and includes a wide range of adult learning opportunities including non-formal skills training, business skills training, and livelihood skills training, etc. This complexity of the sector should challenge us to interact with these elements better and to strengthen them with hard facts (Süssmuth, 2009).

DWV International, as the leading professional organisation in the field of adult education and development cooperation, has committed itself to support lifelong learning for more than 50 years. As a globally acting professional organisation for ALE, DWV International, together with government and civil society partners, aims to build sustainable adult education systems to achieve optimised service delivery in youth and adult education. This needs a holistic approach which considers the adult education system as a whole with all its elements. In this context, DWV International has developed the Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach (ALESBA) over six years through an action-learning process in Ethiopia and Uganda.

Using tools and processes from adult education, systems theory, service delivery optimisation, governance, public administration, organisational development, and several participatory approaches, such as PRA and REFLECT, the approach grew organically by testing the tools and processes over time with government partners. As the East/Horn of Africa region started to pilot Community Learning Centres (CLCs) as places where a variety of adult education services could be delivered, these practical experiences fed into the development of the ALESBA.

The ALESBA aims to ensure that different forms of adult learning and education services are delivered to youth and adults through relevant and accessible modalities with the necessary programme quality. It acknowledges that to strengthen service delivery it is necessary to analyse the dimensions and actual process of delivery, and hence the whole Adult Learning and Education system. It identifies the core characteristics of the system and explores restructuring, business process engineering, and other mechanisms to address challenges from a holistic perspective, attempting to address causes rather than symptoms of the problem.

The conceptual framework of the ALESBA categorises the system into four major elements which are further divided into building blocks. The elements and building blocks are interconnected and interdependent with feedback loops. The conceptual framework acknowledges that the scope of adult learning and education systems has an integrated nature which considers services such as functional

adult literacy combined with non-formal skills training, etc., meaning 'horizontal integration'. These integrated services are understood to be delivered across the spheres of governance (macro-meso-micro) – 'vertical integration', meaning that links and feedback loops exist between each sphere/level of implementation.

The approach consists of five phases which can assist governments, civil society and other relevant actors to:

- **Build consensus** with all stakeholders of the adult education system in a particular country and define the scope of the system that needs improvement (Phase One – Consensus Building).
- **Assess the status of the system** in the context of the projects and programmes that form part of the country's adult learning and education system, determining which elements and building blocks of the system are in place and how well they function (Phase Two – Part One: Assessment).
- Further **assess the underlying causes of blockages** in the system through diagnostic studies (Phase Two – Part Two: Diagnosis).
- Search for the **best entry points to address system challenges** through alternative analysis and designing a new system (Phase Three – Alternatives Analysis and Design).
- Implement and **test the newly designed system** in selected areas over time (Phase Four – Implement and Test).
- Review the tested system, make the necessary adjustments and **up-scale for improved adult education service delivery**. (Phase Five – Review, Adjust and Up-scale).

The toolkit for the ALESBA intends to assist its users to:

- Become more familiar with the Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach and its conceptual framework, phases, elements and system building blocks.
- Define their role as stakeholders and identify which specific area of the ALE system they would like to address in their respective countries.
- Explore and use the methods and tools in each phase and to contextualise them.
- Contribute towards building an improved system for ALE service delivery.

Currently, the toolkit provides more in-depth information on Phases One and Two of the approach since Phases Three, Four and Five are still being tested through action-learning in the East/Horn of Africa region. However, the framework and selected tools for the last three phases are included in the toolkit. Considering that ALE system building can take years to complete, the toolkit will be updated once the tools in the last three phases have been used and tested.

The toolkit consists of a series of booklets that takes the user through the approach based on the different phases of implementation. The first booklet covers an introduction to the approach and the toolkit. It is an essential starting point for the remaining booklets which are arranged according to the phases of the approach. The following booklets are available in the toolkit:

- Introduction to the approach and toolkit
- Phase One – Consensus Building
- Phase Two – Assessment and Diagnosis
- Phase Three – Alternatives Analysis and Design
- Phase Four – Implement and Test
- Phase Five – Review, Adjust and Up-scale

The approach is intended for all ALE stakeholders interested in improving the systems in their countries. It is a living document and tools and experiences can be shared by all users across countries. The toolkit links with other DVV International products such as Curriculum globALE and Curriculum institutionALE.

The contents of the first booklet give the user an overview of the approach. The explanation of concepts and processes are deepened in the remaining booklets, as per each phase of the approach. Therefore, the first booklet provides background regarding the rationale for the approach and how it was developed. It sets out the underlying principles which form the foundation for understanding the approach. The theoretical underpinning and comparison with similar approaches help to position the ALESBA within the discourse and practice of ALE. The booklet also provides an overview of the conceptual framework and phases of the approach, the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, and the scope and context within which the approach can be used. It concludes with implications for organisations interested in using the approach and guidelines for using the toolkit.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

***“All forms of learning and change starts with some form of dissatisfaction or frustration.”***

Kurt Lewin as quoted by: (Schein, Vol 1, Number 1)

**According to UNESCO’s 4th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 4), in almost one-third of countries, less than five percent of adults aged 15 and above participate in education and learning programmes. Although some countries could report progress, it is evident that in many places in the world adult learning is not where it needs to be. The following challenges remain (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2019):**

- Insufficient participation of marginalised and vulnerable groups, particularly those deprived of access to lifelong learning opportunities. This directly impacts the livelihood and life skills they need to navigate in an increasingly complex world.
- Poor data collection and monitoring and evaluation systems mean we do not know who is participating, what the quality of the programmes are and therefore, what changes and improvements are needed.
- Although many countries have formulated and approved new ALE policies, these are often not rolled out nationally with the necessary governance systems to support implementation.
- Funding for ALE remains inadequate in most countries.

The Africa continent in particular is challenged by the educational and livelihood needs of its rapidly growing population. Even after decades of sustained efforts to eradicate adult illiteracy, the rates remain high with gender and urban/rural disparities. The remarkable growth in free universal primary education will hopefully alleviate this problem over time. However, the school drop-out rates continue to create groups of illiterate/semi-literate and unskilled/semi-skilled youth and adults with limited opportunities to improve their livelihoods.

The need to invest in adult learning and education remains. While the link between education and poverty reduction has long been understood, the political argument has not

been won yet. There is still a lack of conceptual clarity about the wider ALE sector and how to integrate adult literacy with non-formal skills training, vocational and life skills, etc. Each set of actors emphasises differences in principles, purposes and practices rather than establishing connections and seeking cross-cutting alliances. The sector remains under-professionalised with poor employment conditions which ultimately impact the quality of education offered.

The DW International East/Horn of Africa region and specifically the Ethiopia and Uganda country offices with their government partners started to ask questions such as:

- Despite national adult and non-formal education programmes, why do illiteracy and poverty rates remain high in most African countries?
- Why have the efforts of both government and NGOs not changed the statistics?
- How can we define and implement adult learning and education in an integrated manner?
- Why does the ALE system seem unable to deliver quality services to all target groups?
- What constitutes an ALE system? What are the components and how do they relate to each other?
- How do we measure progress in building an adult learning and education system?
- Which government sector offices, stakeholders and other role-players are involved and what are their roles and responsibilities?
- Does the current work of government, DW International and other NGOs contribute to a sustainable system that can deliver services?
- What entry points should be used to build or improve an existing adult education system?
- What are the phases involved in building a sustainable adult education system over time?

Through a series of consultative workshops, processes and meetings, we realised that like many other stakeholders our efforts to support the more technical components of adult education are insufficient and do not address the root causes for poor ALE provision and service delivery. Having a policy and strategy in place do not guarantee quality and relevant service delivery to the target group. Training trainers and facilitators, developing new curricula and materials are important steps towards improving the quality of services. But they will have no impact unless an approved, well-staffed and funded governance structure exists that can roll out these services. It seems that existing efforts usually only address the symptoms of a poor functioning adult education system, rather than the root causes.

We realised that insufficient attention is given to adult learning and education as a holistic, integrated system. Information about policies, governance, financing, designing curricula, training materials and conducting training, as well as monitoring and evaluation can be found in the literature and reports on implementation. **What is missing is a comprehensive conceptual framework that ties all these elements together in a systematic manner for the sole purpose of delivering quality ALE services.** This led to the exploration of systems thinking and approaches to better understand what system should be in place and how it should function.

The complexity and cross-cutting nature of ALE provided an impetus for exploring different conceptual approaches and models.

This paradigm shift required the DW International regional team and partners to step out of their adult education boxes and draw concepts and ideas from the fields of systems thinking, public administration, organisational development and governance. Gradually over time, a new approach to the work emerged organically, with lessons learnt every step of the way. This culminated in the development of the Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach (ALESBA), with the following objectives:

- To optimise adult learning and education services. Service delivery is the main purpose of a functioning system. The emphasis is on the community that needs the service.
- To provide a holistic, conceptual framework that can assist stakeholders to understand and build ALE systems systematically and sustainably throughout the different phases.



### 3. PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY IN DEVELOPING THE APPROACH

***“You cannot understand a system until you try to change it.”***

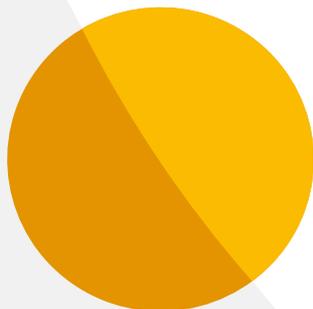
Kurt Lewin as quoted by Schein (Schein, Vol 1, Number 1).

The process of developing the ALESBA commenced in 2014 and included a series of events, workshops, conferences and reflection opportunities, as well as the continuous work which was part of DVV International’s project implementation in Ethiopia and Uganda. The experiences from both countries helped to test, feed into and develop different concepts and tools. As the East/Horn of Africa region started to share experiences with neighbouring Africa regions, the interest in the approach grew and led to an Africa training workshop on the Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach in 2019. The workshop inspired several African countries to take up the approach and provided an opportunity to further enrich the ALESBA with a diverse range of experiences and practical tools.

The methodology used to develop the approach is based on participatory action learning and research. Lessons learned from these events and programme/project implementation, coupled with research from the discourse in diverse fields such as Public Administration, Organisational Development and Adult Education, continue to inform the further development of the approach.

The term action research/learning refers to efforts by the practitioner to better understand what is happening in the learning and working environment. Although a variety of forms have evolved over the years, most of these approaches adopt a methodical, iterative approach which embraces problem identification, action planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection. The learning experiences and insights gained from the initial cycle feed into the planning of the next cycle, with the action plan and implementation being modified as the process repeats itself. The process is also characterised by the empowerment of the participants, collaboration through participation, acquisition of skills and knowledge and ultimately a change in practice, and the environment, etc. Practitioners not only look for ways to improve their practice within the various constraints of the situation in which they are working, but they also become critical agents of change and make their learning process public (Cilliers, n.d.).

These characteristics and principles have been embraced in the process of developing the ALESBA. The original intent was to improve the ALE systems in the East/Horn of Africa region. But over time, as the learning and practice evolved, other benefits became visible and a comprehensive approach towards adult learning and education system building emerged. The approach and toolkit draw on both theory and practice. It does not aim to be an academic instrument, but rather a practical approach with methods and tools that can improve ALE service delivery.



## 4. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS

At the heart of the ALESBA lies a series of underlying principles and considerations that influence the way the approach is understood and applied. These principles are interconnected and are briefly unpacked and explained below:

### Rights-based approach to development and adult learning and education

The ALESBA describes ALE as a right and employs a right-based approach to ALE service delivery. Using a rights-based approach shifts how we conceptualise ALE and development, as well as how we address the challenges within the service delivery system. In calling something a human right, there is an immediate implication that all people have an equal right to that service and that someone has the duty to fulfil the right and can be held accountable for its delivery (Lindsey, 2006). Therefore, the ALESBA also refers to ALE services as opposed to ALE provision. Services have a stronger inclination to the duties of the state and civil society.

A rights-based approach differentiates between rights holders (individuals and groups with valid claims to ALE as a right) and duty bearers which include the state/government and non-state actors. The implication is that instead of a service being offered based upon availability, education is a guaranteed right which must be delivered by the duty bearers. (Avramovska, 2015).

The ALESBA acknowledges both state and non-state actors as duty bearers but considers the state as the primary duty bearer under national and international law. The rationale is that non-state actors, specifically civil society actors, do not always have the means to deliver services sustainably, particularly for large numbers of youth and adults in a country. The roles and responsibilities of these duty bearers may differ from country to country and should be unpacked in Phase One of the approach (Consensus Building) to determine which role each actor will play in ALE system building.

### Integration

The design of ALE projects/programmes and services delivered by these interventions are frequently done in an integrated manner. For example, they may combine functional adult literacy with community development, and livelihoods skills training, etc. The integrated nature of the services often calls for the involvement of more

than one sector's expertise— and therefore requires input from multiple government sectors and/or civil society/NGO actors. The cross-cutting nature of adult learning and education is acknowledged in the design and implementation of the ALESBA and referred to as 'horizontal integration' across sectors.

ALE service delivery may emanate from a national policy and/or strategy, but is ultimately delivered at local government level and in the community. This implies that service delivery has to be understood across the spheres or levels of a country's governance system. This is referred to as 'vertical integration' within the context of the ALESBA.

### Micro-meso-macro

This terminology is aligned with DVV International's approach to project design but is also used by other actors. The macro level is understood to be the level where policies and strategies are formulated with the necessary guidelines, and budget allocations, etc. This usually plays out at a national level, depending on the governance structure of a country. The meso level refers to all kind of capacity building (within DVV International context) and most often the level where policies and strategies are translated into programme /project design to deliver services. This usually happens at relevant intermediary lower level governance structures, e.g., provincial, regional or district level. The micro level is understood to be the level where service delivery takes place and is the interface between the supply (service delivery) and demand-side (users of the service). This usually involves the lower levels of local government actors.

### Evidence-based influencing

Pilot projects can often provide evidence that a new methodology or approach is successful, has impact and the potential to be up-scaled for larger target groups or geographical areas. They also have the potential to influence policy and strategy formulation. Based on experiences in the East/Horn of Africa region, the ALESBA adheres to this principle provided the following requirements are met:

- For evidence-based influencing to be successful, all stakeholders and role-players have to be engaged and participate from the beginning of a project, Not merely as observers at the conclusion of the project but as participants with roles and responsibilities during the project's implementation.
- An opportunity should be created for reflection and on the spot adjustments during the piloting/implementation phase.
- Communication and feedback loops should be created across sectors and levels of governance/implementation.
- Action-learning with critical reflection should be an integral part of the process.

#### **Participation, partnership and ownership**

Participation, partnership and ownership are key principles imbedded in the ALESBA. All stakeholders involved in the process of system building are participants and partners in the process. There are no observers or customers. In the spirit of participatory action-learning, the system building approach takes the form of collective, self-reflective inquiry undertaken by all stakeholders involved in all five phases of the approach. They conduct assessments in the form of peer reviews and learn through critical collaborative enquiry. They own the results of the system assessment and jointly analyse alternative options for the design and improvement of the system. Without this participation and ownership, finger-pointing and blaming occur, minimising the opportunity for a new collaborative approach to ALE system building. The use of consultants is minimised and they are rather assigned to facilitatory and support roles.

Unless stakeholders drive the system building process and assess systems themselves, the results are often not believable and they will struggle to participate in creative problem-solving. Stakeholders should be the change agents of the process.

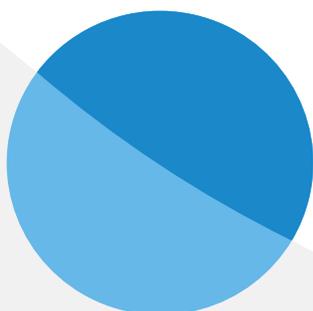
#### **Capacity building**

All stakeholders have to be trained and oriented in the ALESBA with its underlying principles, conceptual understanding, tools and processes, to take responsibility for activities in each phase. The capacity building exercises help to promote ownership, participation and sustainability. Each phase of the approach requires different skills, and training should take place accordingly. The remaining booklets in the toolkit provide content and guidelines for this training.

#### **Sustainability**

The objective of ALE system building is to create a sustainable system that can deliver services. Sustainability can be measured at different levels by assessing the following issues:

- To what extent are policies, strategies and laws in place which guarantee the right to ALE services?
- To what extent are ALE services planned and budgeted for in national and sector development plans?
- Do the institutions responsible for ALE services have the human and institutional capacity to deliver services for all target groups over time?
- Are the services relevant, accessible and delivered with the necessary quality to have an impact and change the lives of adult learners?



## 5. POINTERS ON THEORY AND COMPARISON

### “There is nothing so practical as a good theory”

Lewin quoted by Schein (Schein, Vol 1, Number 1).

**Great potential lies in bringing the Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach (ALESBA) closer to the discourse which is taking place in other policy and theory arenas, especially when the discussion touches on adult learning and education (ALE) as a sub-sector of the education system and as a key component of lifelong learning (LLL).**

In the age of globalisation and digitalisation, there is a need to ensure that education as a human right is seen from the perspective of LLL for all. This includes ALE for young people, adults and the elderly. In future, when LLL is increasingly recognised as a human right, ALE will emerge as an important component of this entitlement. (Dunbar, 2020). The national and international commitments made to date and the extent to which ALE has been recognised as a profession and academic discipline bear witness to the progress that has been made and the challenges that remain. The institutionalisation of ALE remains of key importance to ensure ALE can be claimed as a right.

#### Paradigm shift to LLL

According to UNESCO: “Lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living. It covers learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and older adults) in all life-wide contexts (families, schools, communities, and workplaces, etc.), and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands. Education systems that promote lifelong learning adopt a holistic and sector-wide approach involving all sub-sectors and levels of education to ensure the provision of learning opportunities for all individuals” (UIL, 2010).

This definition is in line with an important paradigm shift from education to learning that has taken place in the international policy arena in recent decades. In 1990 the *World Declaration on Education for All* was adopted in Jomtien (UNESCO, 1990). A decade later in 2000 the World Education Forum concluded with the *Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All* for the period 2000 – 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). During the intervening period, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published *Lifelong Learning for All* (OECD, 1996), and UNESCO released the Delors Commission report on *Learning: The Treasure Within* (Delors, 1996). When the World Bank published its new Education Strategy 2020 they called it *Learning for All. Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development* (World Bank, 2011).

The paradigm shift to LLL puts a new emphasis on strengthening ALE as a system and sub-sector of the education sphere. ALE can only be successfully carried out on a large scale if it has similar governance mechanisms and support structures to those in other sub-sectors of the education system, such as schooling, vocational or higher education. However, ALE also requires its own regulations, policy, legislation, and finance to function well in practice and to create and sustain opportunities for the education and learning of adults within all aspects of life and work.

#### ALE as core component of LLL

ALE is characterised by diversity in the scope, content, programmes, participants, governance, and structures. This variety is also reflected in lower levels of institutionalisation and professionalisation, depending on the historical and cultural developments in the countries or regions concerned. Even the terms used globally differ, and change over time, including the modes of formal, non-formal and informal learning (Rogers, 2014). This diversity is much wider than that of schools or universities, and closer to the diversity of forms of vocational education and training (VET). However, all these areas and fields of education, learning and training are part of LLL and should be seen as equally important sub-sectors of the education system. UNESCO defines ALE as: “A core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organisations and societies. Adult learning and education involve sustained activities and processes of acquiring, recognising, exchanging, and adapting capabilities. Given that the boundaries of youth and adulthood are shifting in most cultures, in this context, the term ‘adult’ denotes all those who engage in adult learning and education, even if they have not reached the legal age of maturity” (UNESCO, 2015b).

Demographic changes show that more people are living longer. Technological changes require that our knowledge, competencies, and skills are continuously updated. Societal and cultural changes ask us to pay greater attention to attitudes, behaviour, and values from a lifelong perspective. Therefore, ALE would need to receive a greater level of attention, provision, and support within and beyond the

education system. The motivation, readiness and qualification for learning throughout life are best developed as early as possible. ALE can compensate for what was not learned earlier in life. But equally important are all the complementary learning opportunities during adult life. It seems appropriate to look at building bridges, overcoming barriers, enabling connectivity and joining-up not only within the education system but also with other relevant areas and sectors of life and work for the individual and society.

### National and international commitments

Each country will have to find its own way of establishing an ALE system as a sub-sector within the national education system and its LLL orientation. However, all countries are part of the United Nations (UN) and members of UNESCO, both of which exert an influence on policy developments in the education field. In 1949 UNESCO initiated a series of World Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA). In 1972, CONFINTEA III in Tokyo helped to define elements of ALE as a profession. Beyond the needs for governance structures through policy, legislation, and financing, suggestions for ALE administration and organisation, planning and curricula, materials and media were developed, and initial debates took place on the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the sector. In 2009, CONFINTEA VI saw member states adopt the Belem Framework for Action (BFA), which defined five key areas, including policy, governance, financing, participation, and quality, for regular monitoring by the UIL through the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) (UIL, 2010).

Looking at past achievements and challenges for the future, the World Education Forum, held in Incheon, produced the Education 2030 Agenda, which in turn was fully integrated as Goal 4 into the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by the UN Sustainable Development Summit to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UNESCO, 2015a). The SDGs were agreed by all UN member states, and the implementation is part of national education planning as well as international cooperation. ALE was further codified in 2015 in the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE) which was adopted at the General Conference by all UNESCO member states (UNESCO, 2015b). Governments have to do all they can to ensure fulfilment and enable implementation. Civil society can

support, and at the same time hold their governments and international organisations accountable. RALE contains explicit and general notions for the processes of institutionalisation and professionalisation. However, the recommendations need adaptation for the diversity of contexts:

- “Creating or strengthening appropriate institutional structures, like community learning centres, for delivering adult learning and education and encouraging adults to use these as hubs for individual learning as well as community development.
- Developing appropriate content and modes of delivery, preferably using mother tongue as the language of instruction and adopting learner-centred pedagogy, supported by information and communication technology (ICT) and open educational resources.
- Improving training, capacity building, employment conditions and the professionalisation of adult educators” (UNESCO, 2015c, p. 4–5).

### LLL, ALE and the informal sector

Youth and adults in the informal sector lack formal or non-formal LLL opportunities. ALE is still the poor cousin as a sub-sector of the education system. In too many countries ALE is not governed by robust policy, legislation and financing, especially for those suffering from marginalisation and who work in the informal sector. “The governance of, and policies concerned with, lifelong learning in the informal economy face a double and intertwined challenge due to the fragmented nature of a system covering lifelong and life-wide skills issues. This is compounded by the added challenge of trying to engage an informal context through governance and policy tools and approaches which are primarily formal. The very size of the informal economy – 2 billion people – and its heterogeneous nature, means that it exists in diverse contexts across different countries and regions” (Palmer, 2020, p. 50).

In attempting to present the ALESBA to the larger community of professionals in government, civil society or academia, it helps to make use of research findings looking at new forms of educational governance or public management. Here the state remains important on all levels, but not alone, and not only as a top-down model. In addition to hierarchical ways, the horizontal operations of networks or learning regions, of local communities within villages or learning cities are gaining ground. Other perspectives must be respected, for example, regarding educational governance where the state and market dichotomy is fading because of varieties of public-private-partnerships, which include significant roles for civil society and community-based initiatives.



### ALE as a profession and academic discipline

Many countries have made arrangements for institutional settings and structures that can support community-based ALE. There is a wide range of community learning centres (CLC) with different names and functions, funded by local government or as voluntary associations. Larger companies have professional staff for the training and re-training of their workforce. Upgrading of competences and skills are also often outsourced to training institutions. Qualified and full-time staff work together with part-timers, and more training providers combine the analogue with the digital through blended learning. In countries where ALE is part of LLL and receives governmental support, increased and stable participation requires further professionalisation as a key area of intervention for the development of future ALE managers or facilitators. Some candidates have to be trained in the recognition, validation, and accreditation of prior learning, others need to be trained in monitoring and evaluation to ensure quality and to inform policy and outcomes. An important group includes those in ALE who want to upgrade their knowledge.

Higher education can help to prepare future adult educators. Many universities have Bachelor and Master Degree courses in education with a variety of focus, terms and specialisations, some provide opportunities for PhD qualifications, as well as comparative research and studies on ALE. It is desirable that such academic professionalisation of work in ALE with its wide range of practical fields, such as community development, literacy teaching, organisational or human resource development, international or comparative dimensions, has become a regular feature like the training of teachers or school managers. Such university degrees for adult educators would be important for future employment conditions. The research functions of the universities should be available for ALE and LLL with interdisciplinary perspectives and input, strengthening the potential as an academic discipline. For the time being, most of the research in education is related to schools or higher education. This is still the case in countries where there are more adults in ALE than youth in schools and universities. The same is true regarding the availability of data and statistics, which are always at hand for schools and higher education, but seldom collected and used for ALE.

### ALE – professionalisation and institutionalisation

The ALESBA has the potential to analyse and place ALE within the education system as a sub-sector with strong educational governance, engaging instruments, and mechanisms that lead to institutionalisation and professionalisation. There is also guidelines and materials to

promote ALE as a sub-sector. Curriculum globALE (CG) has been developed by DVV International and its partners for the training and re-training of practitioners in management, administration, and teaching (Avramovska, 2015). CG has been translated into more than ten languages and therefore is available for use in many contexts. More recently the Curriculum institutionALE (CI) has been added as a tool to analyse and further develop institutional requirements (Denys, 2020). Both curricula are important for the meso and micro levels, and through this are also supportive of the macro level.

Ultimately, the most important institutions for the adult learners and participants are those based within the community. Again, there are recommendations from the international level included in the SDGs: “Make learning spaces and environments for non-formal and adult learning and education widely available, including networks of community learning centres and spaces and provision for access to IT resources as essential elements of lifelong learning” (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 52) This points to the need to refine the forms of blended learning where institutions and digital learning options are developed in the interest of the learners.

At the same time, further clarification is required to understand the difference between the diverse range of local level institutions, such as adult education centres (AEC), community learning centres (CLC), folk development colleges (FDC), and now within the context of the CI, the suggestion to use institutions of adult learning and education (IALE). Approaches regarding the establishment of CLC in Ethiopia and Uganda have been reported on (DVV International East Africa Regional Office, 2020). During an international conference on AEC and CLC, participants agreed on key messages which could be applied in different contexts (DVV International, 2017 and Avramovska, 2015). At the meso level, the building and strengthening of ALE networks, associations or advisory councils are supportive. And in other countries, there are national institutions responsible for ALE research and development.

What can be learned from examples and experiences around the globe is that ALE is becoming a constitutional matter, and calling for further provision, through policies, legislation and finances, is of high importance to increase quality, participation, and to create equal opportunities for younger and older adults. For example in Germany policy, legislation and financing for education, including ALE, rests with the authority of the Länder (provinces or states). The local Volkshochschulen (vhs), or folk high schools, could be seen as the German equivalent of community learning centres (CLC). They are part of the governance structure of the city or village council. As such the vhs are part of the local LLL opportunities for adults (DVV International, 2011); (Hinzen, 2020).

## 6. ALESBA CONCEPTS, CONTEXT AND THE ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS

This section of the guideline prepares the ground for introducing the ALESBA conceptual framework and phases in the process. It focuses on the following aspects:

- The key concepts that are used and referred to within the approach.
- The scope and context within which the approach can be applied (e.g., adult literacy, and non-formal skills training, etc.)
- The stakeholders and role-players who will be involved in the process.

### 6.1 Conceptual understanding

The following are key concepts that are regularly referred to and used in the ALESBA toolkit.

#### Youth and Adults

The definition and age demarcation of youth and adults differ from country to country and there is no universally accepted definition. For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines youth as those between 15-24 years of age. Some countries define youth as 18-30 years of age. The ALESBA targets the delivery of ALE services to both adults and youth from 15 years and above. The approach recognises that the diverse range of learner target groups may have different interests, needs and demands and that the design and implementation of services may have to be adjusted accordingly.

#### System (Building)

There are many definitions of a system, for example:

- A system is a set of various processes in which cause and effect relationships can be found.
- A system embraces a series of concepts or factors which are employed for meeting a need.
- Systems are comprised of inputs, processing, output, feedback and environment (Daryani, 2012).

A system is usually understood to be an entity that consists of different elements and processes which are interconnected and interdependent with feedback loops. Each element and process is needed to make up the complete system and fulfils its own role and function. In the context of an ALE system, all elements and processes needed to deliver ALE services are considered. The system relies on the specific definition of adult learning and education in a country's context and spans across sectors and tiers/levels of governance. ALE System Building would refer to the process of assessing and diagnosing the system and finding alternatives to redesign/improve the system, test the improved design, make adjustments and up-scale to reach a wider target group.

#### Systems Thinking and Approach

Systems thinking is an approach for studying and managing complex feedback systems. The essence of systems thinking is that it considers all the relationships within the system and with the external environment, to understand what is happening, and to use this information to seek to improve it. The approach acknowledges that all parts of a system are connected directly or indirectly. Once a change occurs in one part of the system, it will impact all other parts of the system (either positively or negatively).

The approach calls for constant adjustment and has implications for how institutions, processes, skills and actors are organised. It requires working across organisational boundaries and governance levels and addressing problems holistically. System approaches focus on outcomes, they require multiple actors within and across levels of government and other actors to work together.

Systems thinking allows us to more effectively examine the complexities we work with and to test the way we see problems. It enables us to find the root causes and see leverage points where modifications may be most meaningful. It involves a mindset change to focus on how the parts of the whole are interrelated as well as a set of tools to assist in improving the system. It takes a longer-term view of solving problems sustainably (CPS HR Consulting).

#### Governance

The concept of governance can be described as a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services (Fukuyama, 2013). This definition aligns with the United Nations description of governance as the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance can be used in different contexts, such as corporate governance, international, national and local governance (Sheng).

Therefore, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementation as well as the formal and informal structures that have been put in place to make and

implement decisions. Government is one of the main actors of governance, other actors can include NGOs, cooperatives, research institutions, and citizen groups, such as associations, etc.

### Structure and Process

Structures and processes refer to organisational structures and the way they are organised, e.g., organograms, and hierarchies, etc. as well as internal cooperation and coordination structures, e.g., between different units (committees, and teams, etc.), and externally, e.g., between different government sectors and civil society role-players.

Therefore, a governance structure will refer to the multiple tiers of government, their responsibilities and resources, how they are structured, organised, work together and engage with other stakeholders to identify, implement and improve policy to achieve better outcomes for society (European Commission, 2017). The organisational structure is a reflection of the organisation's functions. Organisational functions refer to the various outputs or outcomes of the organisation's activities, e.g., its products and services.

Processes enable an institution to function. They are a range of activities linked to each other that turn inputs (people, information, and money, etc.), into outputs (services delivered) to meet policy and operational objectives. They are often complex, especially when they run across more than one organisation, or even various functions and units within the same organisation (European Commission, 2017).

### Service Delivery

Public services (e.g., health, education, and welfare, etc.), can be understood as all interactions between governments and citizens whether provided directly or through an intermediary. Every country organises its public services according to its institutions, culture, needs and considering the boundaries between public and private service delivery (European Commission, 2017). It has become increasingly clear that governments alone cannot meet the continually growing demand for services by acting alone and they need to look for support from other sectors of society.

Different models exist and services can be delivered by the government directly, through public-private partnerships, or with the involvement of civil society, etc. It should be

kept in mind that the government remains the primary duty-bearer and, no matter which model is followed, it remains primarily responsible for service delivery.

Therefore, ALE services would be services related to the education of youth and adults whether formal, informal or non-formal. It could include adult literacy classes, technical livelihood skills training, or business skills training, etc. It should consider the 'demand-side' (needs and interests of the target group) and the 'supply-side', structures and processes of government and partnerships with other stakeholders to deliver the services.

### Demand-Side

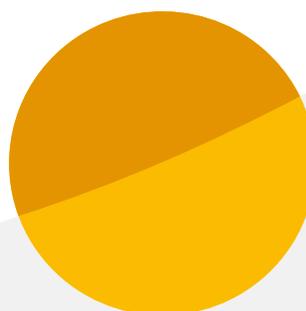
The 'demand-side' in public service delivery refers to the rights-holders. This implies citizens as individuals and groups that have a right to and need for the service. Their interests, needs and demands should be explored and acknowledged in designing and implementing services. They also should have an opportunity to interact with the service providers, and to comment on the quality and availability of the service.

### Supply-Side

The 'supply-side' of service delivery refers to the duty-bearers or the bodies and organisations responsible for delivering public services. This is primarily government structures ranging from national to the local level and refers to different government sector offices, such as education, health, and agriculture, etc., depending on the type of service. As mentioned above, services can also be provided through intermediaries.

### Project/Programme

Services are often provided in the form of national programmes rolled out by government sector offices, such as the 'national adult literacy programme'. When engaging NGOs reference is usually made to implementing projects. Therefore, it is important to make a distinction between projects and programmes.



Programmes focus on the coordination of several related projects and other activities over time to deliver certain outcomes/services. Programme management is more strategic in nature and cross-functional. Projects have a smaller scope and focus on the deliverables, milestones and tasks of a single initiative. A project can be aligned with the strategy and goal of a programme. Smaller-scale projects implemented by non-state actors can provide evidence-based examples for up-scaling and policy influencing by the government. The outcomes of the project can also feed into the results of larger-scale programmes.

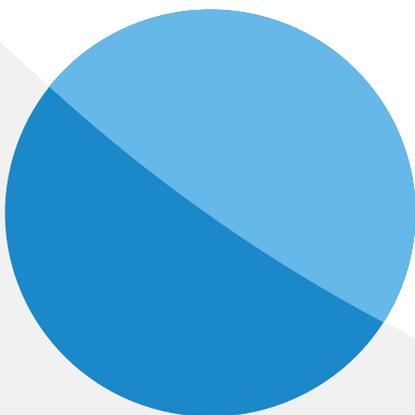
## 6.2 Defining the contextual definition and scope for using the approach

It should be emphasised that ALE is not limited to adult literacy and nor is it education for the poor. Rather it is a tool for human development and self-reliance. It should be inclusive of age, gender, ethnicity, and social background and must take account the numerous aspects of people's lives to understand the learning needs and to design programmes and services that can address these requirements (ICAE, 1994).

It is acknowledged that based on their own context, countries define the age parameters of adults and the focus and priority areas of programmes within the wider definition of ALE and LLL. For example, Ethiopia has higher education, TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training), and non-formal adult education in the form of the IFAE (Integrated Functional Adult Education) programme. In many countries, the systems for higher education and TVET are well developed, and it is mostly the institutions and systems that deal with informal and non-formal education that experience challenges, such as low prioritisation, low budget allocation for the sector, and inadequate and poorly trained staff, etc.

The ALESBA and conceptual framework are generic and in theory, can be useful for any segment of the sector. However, the approach leans towards the non-formal adult learning and education projects/programmes that focus on functional adult literacy, technical and livelihood skills training, including agricultural skills training, business skills training, life skills and other forms of training that can be useful for adults and their communities, whether it is environmental, health, youth or women-focused, and civic education, etc.

Therefore, before using the ALESBA, the first step is for stakeholders to define the focal area for system building within the wider concept of ALE. This is dependent on the country's understanding and definition of ALE. In some cases, this definition has a narrower focus on adult literacy, and in others a more integrated approach. Thus, it is important to clarify the concept, definition and components of the specific programme, which sectors and role-players will be involved, as well as the age parameters of the target group, etc.



### 6.3 The stakeholders and role-players

The ALESBA addresses both the supply and demand-side of ALE service delivery. Since its main objective is the improvement of ALE service delivery, the main users of the approach are on the supply-side, namely:

- Government offices from national to local level and all government sectors involved in adult education (e.g., Education, Agriculture, TVET, and Gender, etc.), as per the adult education system of a particular country.
- Civil society actors, including local and international NGOs.
- Academic institutions such as universities and colleges.
- Multilateral organisations and development partners.

Each stakeholder will play a role as per their mandate and responsibility within the system. The approach acknowledges the demand-side of service delivery by making provision for demand assessment tools to assess the needs and interests of youth and adult learners as individuals, within organised groups, or as CBOs. Their opinions on ALE service delivery is measured at the beginning and during the process of system building to ensure the system remains relevant and addresses the needs and demands of the target group. Scorecard tools are included to empower learners to voice the kind of service they need and the quality of delivery.

The responsibilities of the government to deliver ALE services are becoming more prominent. Especially, as neither international nor local NGOs have the means/resources to roll out large scale programmes that can provide access to ALE services for all. The ALESBA asks stakeholders to rethink roles and responsibilities regarding ALE service delivery. The fact that ALE is a human right has implications for service delivery. Therefore, the ALESBA emphasises assisting government to fulfil its role as duty bearer at all levels of implementation. Within this position, the role of NGOs and other stakeholders can be elaborated

within the country context. Phase One of the approach focuses on building consensus regarding these roles and responsibilities.

NGOs can take on various roles, ranging from filling service delivery gaps, encouraging the government to accept some variants in solving problems through evidence-based influencing, advocating for the formulation and implementation of policies, actively participating in adjusting official public programmes to the needs of the target group and co-operating with official government offices and agencies (Nicoleta, 2009).

The ALESBA argues that the roles of NGOs and government are complementary. By defining roles and responsibilities through a consensus-building process each stakeholder can contribute appropriate and much-needed efforts, skills and resources to building a sustainable ALE system. Different models of co-operation can be explored based on the strengths each stakeholder brings to the process. Universities have a key role in the professional development of adult educators, research on a variety of matters to influence policy and best practice, among others.

All stakeholders need to re-assess their roles and responsibilities, strengths and weaknesses and to re-align their commitment and capacity to advance the national development vision of ALE. Therefore, partnership and ownership of the process are key factors in the success of building a sustainable system.



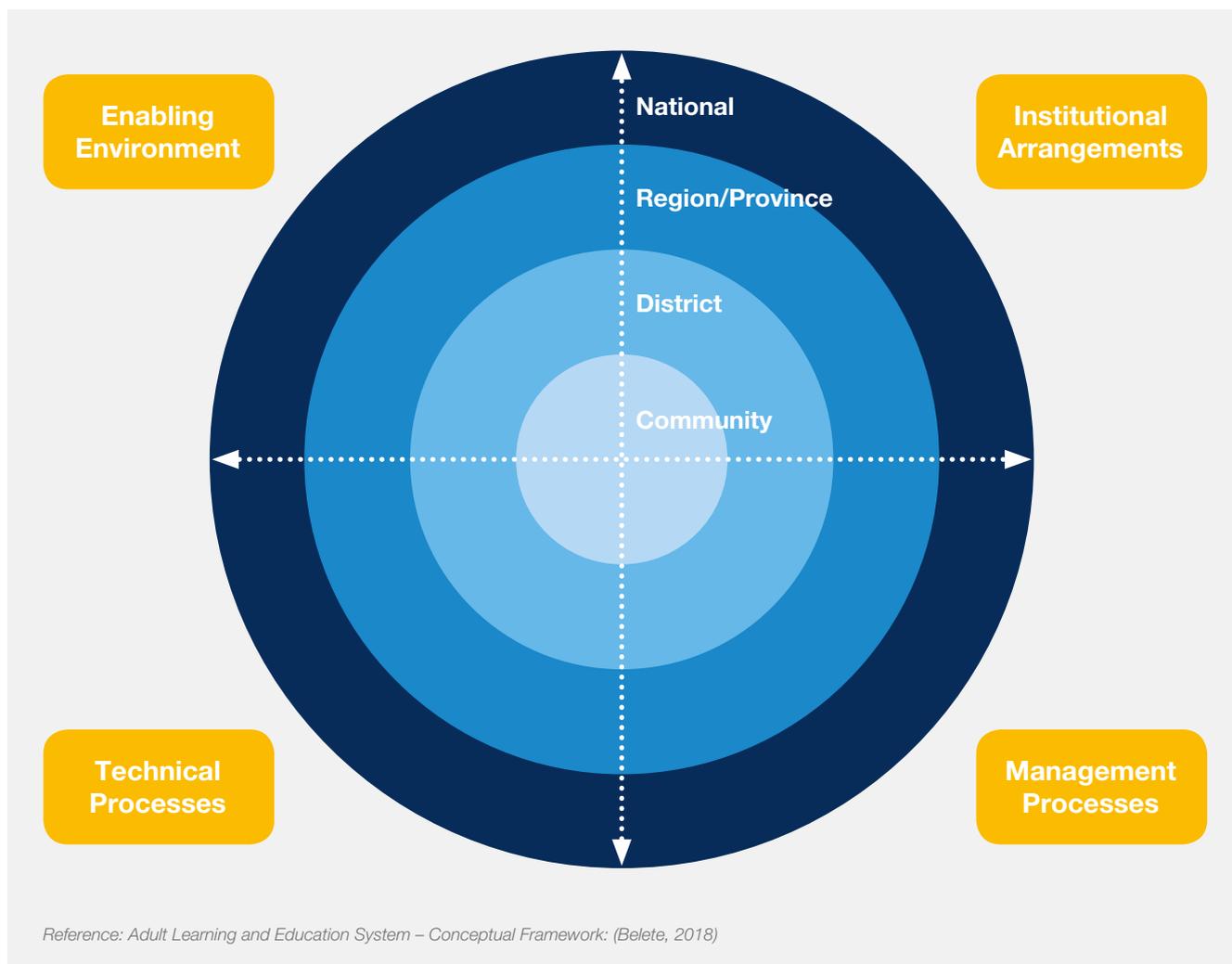
## 7. THE ALESBA CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PHASES

At the heart of the ALESBA lies a conceptual framework that captures the elements and building blocks of a comprehensive adult learning and education system. The framework is presented below, followed by an explanation of all the elements with their respective building blocks (see section 7.1). The ALESBA is implemented in five phases, which are briefly unpacked in section 7.2. Each phase is covered in depth in the remaining booklets in the ALESBA toolkit.

A system is usually understood as an entity composed of different elements, structures and processes

which are interconnected and interdependent with feedback loops. Each element and process is needed to make up the complete system and has to fulfil its role and function. In the context of ALE, all elements and processes needed to deliver ALE services must be considered. It relies on the specific definition and scope of ALE in a country's context. System building includes the process of assessing and diagnosing the system and finding alternatives to redesign/improve the system, test the improved design, make adjustments and scale up interventions to reach a wider target group in a larger geographical area, e.g., nation-wide.

### 7.1 ALESBA Conceptual Framework



### Conceptual Framework for the ALESBA

The conceptual framework on the previous page suggests that an ALE system should consider all tiers/spheres of governance across different levels. This depends on the governance structure of a particular country. The concentric circles represent each sphere of governance and imply so-called ‘vertical integration’, meaning links and feedback loops between each level. If the scope and definition of ALE have an integrated nature, which considers services such as functional adult literacy combined with non-formal skills training, etc., (‘horizontal integration’) these ALE services are understood to be collectively delivered across the same tiers/spheres of governance (macro-meso-micro).

### Elements and building blocks of the approach

For a fully functional adult education system, four main elements (or components) are needed, namely:

- **An Enabling Environment:** This refers to policies, strategies, directives, and programme implementation guidelines, etc., that provide an enabling environment for programme implementation. Although the enabling environment usually emanates from the national level and the role-players responsible for formulating policies, strategies, and guidelines, etc., (e.g., national ministries), these documents have to be interpreted at lower government levels and ultimately implemented at community level. Therefore, the link between the levels needs to be maintained.
- **Institutional Arrangements:** A functioning system implies that stakeholders take responsibility at each level as per their mandate to ensure ALE services are delivered at community level (as per the scope and definition in the country). Institutional arrangements refer to the arrangements within an institution, e.g., the organogram and other structural arrangements, staffing, job descriptions, as well as coordination and integration structures between sectoral institutions such as coordination bodies, technical committees comprised of different sector offices to plan, implement and monitor jointly. It also considers partnerships with civil society and other non-state actors and the roles and contributions that they can play and make.
- **Technical Processes:** Refers to the core business of ALE as per the definition and scope within the country’s context. It includes processes such as curricula design, material development, and training of trainers, etc., i.e., all required processes to ensure adult learning and education services are delivered.
- **Management Processes:** Refers to the support processes/functions without which technical processes cannot take place, e.g., planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, and coordination/cooperation processes.



**VERY IMPORTANT!**

Note that the lines in the conceptual framework between these four elements are not solid, indicating that processes flow between the four elements in both horizontal and vertical directions. Furthermore, each element plays across all levels of governance and considers the definition of ALE and all sectors/stakeholders involved in the delivery of services.

Each system element has several building blocks that should be in place for the system to function. The toolkit identifies five prioritised building blocks within each

element, but there may be more. The selection of five building blocks per element makes the process manageable. Since we are referring to a system with interrelated and interdependent links, it should be understood that the elements and building blocks do not operate in silos, but are linked to each other through several processes. Processes enable institutions to function. Processes consist of a range of activities linked to each other that turns inputs (people, information, and money, etc.), into outputs (services delivered), to meet policy and operational objectives. The building blocks within each system element are:

System Elements				
Enabling Environment		Institutional Arrangements	Management Processes	Technical Processes
Building Blocks	ALE Policy	ALE Implementation Structures	Participatory Planning Processes	Localised Curricula
	ALE Strategy	Human Resources	Appropriate Budget and Resource Allocation	Clear ALE Programme Design & Methodology
	ALE Programme Implementation Guidelines	Leadership & Management	M&E System	Capacity Development at all Implementation Levels
	Qualifications Framework	Accountability Mechanisms	Management Information System	Material Development
	Legal Framework	Partnership Structures between State/Non-state Actors	Coordination and Cooperation Processes	Learner Assessments

*All the elements and building blocks are interconnected and interdependent with feedback loops.*

**Note that:**

The elements and building blocks primarily refer to the system put in place by the government as the main service provider and responsible duty bearer of national ALE services. The emphasis is on a sustainable system that can deliver services to all ALE learners in the country in the same manner that a health system, or a general education system, etc., would do. It is understood that the government alone cannot fulfil this role. As explained in the booklet on Phase One – Consensus Building, different forms of stakeholder relations may exist that influence the design and operations of an ALE system in a country.

Therefore, the ALESBA acknowledges that different stakeholder structures, roles, and responsibilities may exist, e.g., NGOs and other non-state actors can play a role on behalf of or complementary to government. Provision is made for specific building blocks to acknowledge the roles played by non-state actors – see Institutional Arrangements and Management Processes. The contribution of smaller projects to the national system is also acknowledged in the building block reflecting the partnership structures (Institutional Arrangements) as well as whether these contributions are acknowledged in the M&E system, MIS, and during planning processes (see the system assessment questions that mainstream the role of non-state actors).

Based on the outcomes of the consensus building processes in Phase One, each country will determine their interpretation of the ALESBA conceptual framework, elements, and building blocks within the context of the overall objective of the approach – namely to build sustainable ALE systems that can deliver services to all ALE learners in a country. Therefore, the stakeholder(s) responsible for this service will be the main focus of the system assessment, diagnosis, and processes in the remaining phases, while also acknowledging and incorporating the roles and contributions of other stakeholders within the system. The alternatives analysis and design (Phase Three) may even lead to new stakeholder formations and structures to deliver ALE services in the country.

The system building blocks are described in more detail below:

### Enabling Environment

- **A policy** that addresses the ever-changing needs of learners in a participatory manner with a financing mechanism and well-defined roles of stakeholders. The ALESBA refers to public policy, meaning a series of patterns and related decisions to which many circumstances and people contributed over time. It culminates in a formally articulated document with a goal that the government intends pursuing with society or with a societal group. It is a comprehensive framework of action. (Cloete, 2006).
- **A strategy** that captures the definition and focus of Adult Learning and Education and contributes to policy implementation at all levels of implementation. It is an action plan to achieve the long-term goals described in the policy and other key national development plans.
- The existence of clear **ALE Programme Implementation Guidelines** for all stakeholders and role-players based on the definition and focus of the ALE programme. The guidelines would describe the scope of ALE, unpack the types of ALE learning methodologies (e.g., Functional Adult Literacy, REFLECT, and Integrated Approach, etc.), benchmarks and standards for quality programme implementation, steps in implementation, M&E system and indicators, etc. It is a practical document that translates the strategy into implementation steps for all stakeholders.
- **A qualifications framework** that addresses minimum competencies, curricula assessment, equivalence, and transfer directives. It is an instrument for the development, classification, and recognition of skills, knowledge, prior learning, and competencies along a continuum of agreed levels. It is a way of structuring existing and new qualifications which are determined by learning outcomes. (Bateman and Giles, 2013). Some countries may not have a national qualifications framework and rely on national directives that stipulate the acknowledgement of qualifications (including non-formal) and the access path for further learning and education opportunities.
- Existence of **an enabling legal framework** for the implementation of Adult Learning and Education programmes. This refers to laws and a regulatory framework for providing ALE services. Having a regulatory framework strengthens the right to ALE services. Some countries may have an education law that incorporates ALE.



### Institutional Arrangements

- Existence of effective **ALE institutional implementation structures** considering all ALE stakeholders. This implies across all tiers and sectors of governance e.g., organograms, hierarchies, division of labour, and lines of command. It implies having for example an ALE directorate within a Ministry or an Agency with the necessary structures at local government levels. It could also refer to the structures involving non-state actors playing different roles in national ALE service delivery, depending on the system in each country. Note the emphasis is on large scale, sustainable ALE service delivery, and the implementation structures that can deliver such services.
- **Sufficient and qualified human resources** available to implement the ALE programmes at all levels of implementation, especially within government structures. The ALE human resource positions should be approved by an official body in the public sector such as the Civil Service with job descriptions, salary scales, and regulations about qualifications and experience. The same would apply to non-state actors that play a service delivery function on behalf of or complementary to government.

- **Leadership & management** that gives direction, mandate, and instruction related to the implementation of the ALE. This refers primarily to the government, but also other service providers that have a role in large-scale ALE service delivery.
- **Accountability mechanisms and procedures** related to the allocation of responsibilities and follow-up on tasks completed up to the expected result. It includes reporting guidelines, and formats, etc. Accountability is about taking responsibility for performance and results and taking action when tasks are not completed to the expected level. Accountability is also necessary within the partnership of system building. It can be achieved through clear roles and responsibilities and monitoring the achievement of milestones, objectives, and goals over time.
- Existence of **effective partnerships and networking structures** between government and different non-state actors for the implementation of ALE programmes and delivering services. This building block explores the existence and the type of structures, while the activities/coordination and cooperation processes are explored under the element of Management Processes. It may, for example, take the form of an NGO Committee that officially meets with and is acknowledged and consulted by the government or an international NGO donor working group, etc.

### Management Processes

- **Regular planning in a participatory manner** to achieve objectives and milestones. This includes strategic planning, and annual planning, etc., within government structures – considering the different government sector offices involved, national to local levels, and networking and partnerships with non-state actors, e.g., joint annual planning processes with all ALESBA partners.
- Existence of **appropriate and sufficient budget and resource allocation**. It refers to budget allocation by different sectors, national and local government, and other contributions by NGOs, and donors, etc. For long-term sustainability, the budget allocation by the government takes high priority in this building block. It can also consider government funding/supporting non-state actors to deliver services on its behalf.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system** that collects and analyses data and information regularly. It should have indicators and differentiate between monitoring activities, finances, outputs, and evaluating outcomes and impact. It should have options to collect data and information from all stakeholders.
- **Management Information System (MIS)** that stores data and information collected through monitoring and evaluation and allows access to information to track and analyse programme progress for the improvement of ALE services.
- **Coordination and cooperation processes** for internal communication/coordination within an institution as well as external communication/coordination with other sectoral structures and stakeholders. It refers to the types of coordination and cooperation process. Differentiation can be made between simple meetings informing each other to stronger coordination processes that can strengthen integration and co-operation, e.g., joint M&E, planning, and material development, etc.

### Technical Processes

- **Localised curricula** that are relevant to the interests and needs of the ALE target group/learners. It could be developed by staff at the lower government level of implementation who have context and information about the learners' needs and interests. It also considers the contextualisation of the national curriculum at a local level as is the case in some countries. Non-state actors can successfully contribute at this level. It provides an opportunity for collaboration between ALESBA partners. The emphasis is on curricula that are relevant to the ALE learners' needs and interests and the process to develop and update this curriculum/framework.
- **Clear ALE Programme Design and Methodology** to meet the needs/interests of the learners. This refers to a) the different components or scope of the ALE programme, e.g., is it an integrated programme with Adult Literacy, or Livelihood Skills Training, etc. It also refers to b) the methodology used to facilitate ALE in an integrated manner with learners (e.g., Functional Adult Literacy, REFLECT, and Family Literacy, etc.) The programme design will determine the kind of materials that have to be developed, training contents of manuals for trainers, and facilitators, etc.
- **Capacity development** at all implementation levels would, for example, include training of trainers, and supervisors, community facilitators as well as staff responsible for planning, budgeting, and M&E, etc., within the system framework. The benchmarks for training should be stipulated, e.g., a minimum of two weeks of training for facilitators, etc. Ideally, an ALE programme should have a capacity development strategy that can cater to the professionalisation of all adult educators within the system starting from pre-service training to higher education levels.



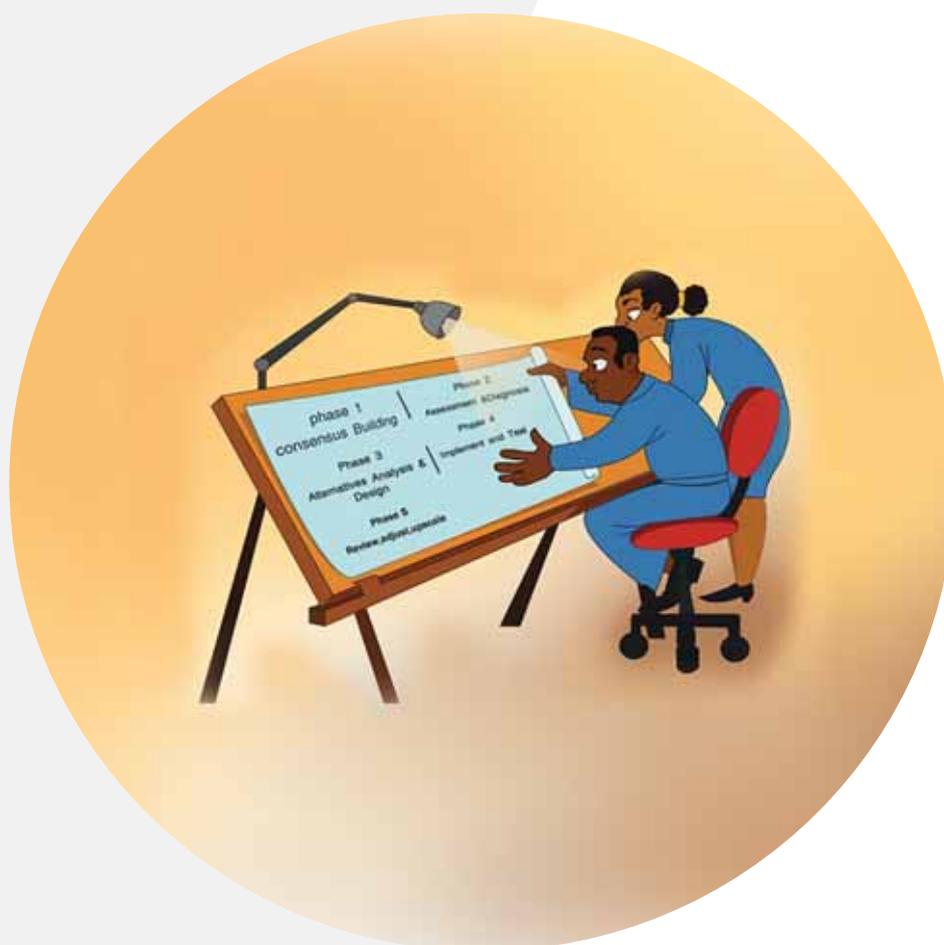
- **Material development** refers to all materials needed to implement an Adult Learning and Education programme, e.g., trainers' manuals, facilitators guidelines, supplementary reading materials for learners, business skills manuals, and M&E manuals, etc.
- **Learners assessments** should be conducted at the beginning and end of the programmes as well as on a quarterly/annual basis to track the progress of learners. They should be well documented and analysed as part of the M&E system. Learner assessments should focus on all components of the ALE programme, e.g., to assess literacy and numeracy, the LAMP and numeracy scales, among other instruments, may be used.



## 7.2 Phases in the implementation of the approach

The ALESBA is not only about assessing the status of the adult education system rather it is a long-term approach aimed at building a sustainable adult education system over time. Depending on the status of the system at the time of assessment it can take anything from six to 12 years or more to establish a fully functioning system that can deliver needs-oriented adult education services. The ALESBA consists of five phases as described briefly below. Each phase considers all the elements and building blocks as per the ALESBA Conceptual Framework across different levels. The framework also takes into consideration

the definition of ALE and cross-sectoral programmes. Although the phases follow one after the other, the process is not necessarily linear. For example, consensus building is an ongoing process and the assessment of the status of the system (Phase Two) can be repeated after implementation has started (Phase Four) to determine what progress has been made. Stakeholders often need to see the results of the assessment (Phase Two) to understand the urgent need for system building – and therefore, Phase Two can contribute to consensus building. Each phase is covered in detail in the series of booklets in this toolkit.



**Phase One: Consensus Building**

Before embarking on a long-term process of ALE System Building, all stakeholders need to agree on a common interest, vision and the necessity to improve the adult education system for optimised adult education service delivery. They should reach consensus regarding the scope and definition of the ALE system to be improved, and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the process. This phase also can include a preliminary visioning exercise.

**Phase Two: Assessment and Diagnosis**

Phase Two consists of two parts.

**Part One: ASSESSMENT**

The first part of Phase Two involves assessing the existing ALE system. This process can be described as 'taking the vitals of the system' – or, in other words, determining the key status and issues of the system according to the system building conceptual framework. The assessment tool provides qualitative information for further analysis and quantitative information in the form of a scoring tool that indicates the system's status through a score. This can serve as baseline data.

**Part Two: DIAGNOSIS**

Once the assessment has been carried out, several challenges will have been identified in the system elements. These system challenges or blockages need to be further analysed using diagnostic tools and studies to determine the underlying root causes for system failures. This is the second part of Phase Two– diagnosis of the system.

**Phase Three: Alternatives Analysis and Design**

Once a clear picture of the system has been generated through the assessment and diagnostic studies, stakeholders can begin to identify alternative options to unblock challenges, ease process flows, and change implementation structures, etc. These alternative options have to be weighed against the time required to implement them, the costs involved, and the resources available. The ideal is to find alternatives and entry points that can provide

the most leverage, this means identifying entry points and system changes that will have a catalytic effect on other system elements and building blocks. This phase concludes with a new design to be piloted in selected areas (taking into consideration the holistic system conceptual framework).

**Phase Four: Implement and Test**

The newly designed system can be implemented over three to six years during which the functionality of the system should be closely monitored and recorded. Ideally 'on the spot' corrective actions should be taken – and these should be tested and recorded as well. The assessment tool described in Phase Two can be used at any time to track progress and changes. It is recommended that tools such as, 'quality circles' composed of all stakeholders, be used regularly to keep an eye on the implementation and effectiveness of the newly designed system.

**Phase Five: Review, adjust and up-scale**

The tested system should be reviewed at the end of either three or six years (again using the assessment tool described in Phase Two) and compared with the baseline data of the first assessment, conducted during Phase Two. The changes made during the testing period and their impact also should be considered. Additional changes should be made and a final design should be agreed on before up-scaling the improved ALE system in more districts, regions, provinces or at the national level. This should be captured in official documents, guidelines and directives, as the official version of the ALE system in a particular country. Since systems are dynamic and interact with the external environment, they should be continually monitored and the necessary adjustments to be made over time. Systems are not a goal in themselves, but a means to improve service delivery.

## 8. GUIDELINES FOR USING THE TOOLKIT

### 8.1 Structure of the toolkit

The ALESBA toolkit consists of a series of booklets. The booklets follow one another sequentially and are arranged in the following order:

Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach: Toolkit for Implementation	
Booklet	Contents
Introduction to the Approach and Toolkit	The first booklet provides a comprehensive overview of the approach, how and why it was developed, underlying principles, theoretical framework and key concepts. It lays the foundation by introducing the main conceptual framework that guides the approach with its elements, building blocks and phases. It is the starting point for the following booklets.
Phase One – Consensus Building	This booklet explains the process of consensus building among stakeholders with practical tools for visioning exercises, stakeholders' analysis, and partnership models, etc.
Phase Two – Assessment and Diagnosis Part One: Assessment Part Two: Diagnosis	This the largest booklet in the series and comprehensively describes parts one and two of Phase Two. Part One gives detailed guidelines on how to conduct an assessment on the status of an existing ALE system through a peer review methodology resulting in both qualitative and quantitative data (a scoring mechanism) on the system. These findings and reports are further analysed through diagnostic studies (Part Two) to identify the root causes of system weaknesses and blockages in ALE service delivery. Assessment tools for both the supply and demand-side of service delivery are included in the booklet.
Phase Three – Alternatives Analysis and Design	This booklet describes how to use the findings generated during Phase Two. It describes the process and tools that can be used to analyse the findings and conduct an alternatives analysis to find the best entry points that can have a catalytic effect on improving the system. It explains the steps to design a new system that can be tested in a pilot phase.
Phase Four – Implement and Test	This booklet recommends tools and processes to be followed during the pilot implementation/testing of a potentially improved system. These tools include action-learning and self-reflection methods, and quality circles, etc. The tools ensure the pilot activities gather the necessary information for learning and adjustment for Phase Five.
Phase Five – Review, Adjust and Up-scale	This booklet shares tools on how to review the pilot (using once again the peer review tools from Phase two combined with others), make recommendations for adjustment and list the considerations to up-scale an improved system nationally.

Each booklet describes the contents of and steps in the process as well as practical tools and case studies as examples. The DVV International digital platform for Africa hosts all information on the ALESBA, including further tools, PowerPoint presentations and training/facilitation aids.

## 8.2 Before using the approach and toolkit

Organisations and stakeholders interested in using the approach have to discuss and reach consensus on the context, scope, stakeholders involved and commitment to start the process of ALE system building. Any organisation interested in using the ALESBA should be aware that the approach is not meant for use only by one institution. It addresses the need for an ALE system within a country and therefore involves multiple stakeholders and role-players. Organisations need to decide on the role they wish to play when using the approach. Any organisation can initiate the use of the approach, bring stakeholders together to discuss the proposal, and agree to start with Phase One. The initiating organisation may start the process by inviting selected stakeholders to attend an initial meeting, but the stakeholder analysis exercise in Phase One provides the opportunity to analyse who should be involved in the rest of the process.

The ALESBA is extensive and requires training in the approach and contextualising the contents to suit a country's situation before starting the application. The implementation of the approach should be the responsibility of all stakeholders and joint ownership of the findings, plans and learning insights contributes to the success of the approach. Therefore, all key stakeholders should receive training in every phase of the approach over time and apply the tools and methods themselves.

Using the approach implies a long-term commitment and stakeholders may wish to sign a memorandum of understanding. The completion of all five phases of the ALESBA can take six to 12 years, depending on the status of ALE in a particular country. The process requires funds and the use of the approach has to be incorporated into existing donor proposals, government budgets as well as potentially raising additional funds. In the case of the Africa continent the DWV International proposal to the donor BMZ was based on the principles and phases of the approach, thereby securing funds for system assessments, etc. Note that the phases of the approach are not new in adult education and development activities and funds earmarked for planned evaluations can be used to conduct assessments on the status of the system. Attention should be given to promoting the benefits of the approach and the potential for long-term sustainability to donors and governments.

The use of the approach affects working modalities. Annual planning and budgeting processes should make provision for activities in each phase. The monitoring and evaluation system can be strengthened by incorporating the elements and building blocks with both the qualitative and quantitative scoring tools. Organisations may also prefer to use selected elements of the ALESBA depending on their situation and circumstances. The details of these activities are further explained in the series of booklets in the toolkit.

# Glossary

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## **The ALESBA toolkit acknowledges and refers to ALE terminology in the following publications:**

- Towards an operational definition of Lifelong Learning:  
UIL Working Papers No.1 (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2015c)
- European Adult Learning Glossary, Level 2:  
Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector  
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### **DVW International**

DVW International is the Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV), the German Adult Education Association. DVW represents the interests of the approximately 900 adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) and their state associations, the largest further education providers in Germany. As the leading professional organisation in the field of adult education and development cooperation, DVW International has committed itself to support lifelong learning for more than 50 years. DVW International provides worldwide support for the establishment and development of sustainable adult education structures and systems for youth and adult learning and education. To achieve this, DVW International co-operates with civil society, government and academic partners in more than 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. DVW International finances its work through funds from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Federal Foreign Office, the European Union as well as other donors.

The Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach (ALESBA) is a product of DVW International that can assist countries in building sustainable Adult Learning and Education (ALE) systems that can deliver a variety of ALE services to youth and adults. The ALESBA toolkit covers the conceptual framework of the approach with guidelines and practical tools to implement the approach across five phases.

#### **The toolkit consists of the following books:**

1. Introduction to the Approach and Toolkit
2. Phase One – Consensus Building
3. Phase Two – Assessment and Diagnosis
4. Phase Three – Alternatives Analysis and Design
5. Phase Four – Implement and Test
6. Phase Five – Review, Adjust and Up-scale

#### **For further information visit:**

[www.mojaafrica.net](http://www.mojaafrica.net)  
[www.dvw-international.de/en/ale-toolbox](http://www.dvw-international.de/en/ale-toolbox)