

# Reading the Past, Writing the Future

*" The world has changed since 1966 – but our determination to provide every woman and man with the skills, capacities and opportunities to become everything they wish, in dignity and respect, remains as firm as ever. Literacy is a foundation to build a more sustainable future for all. "*

UNESCO Director-General

This year marks the 50th anniversary of International Literacy Day and UNESCO is celebrating it under the banner "Reading the Past, Writing the Future". International Literacy Day 2016 celebrates and honours the past five decades of national and international engagement, efforts and progress made to increase literacy rates around the world. It also addresses current challenges and looks to innovative solutions to further boost literacy in the future.

Fifty years ago, UNESCO officially proclaimed 8 September International Literacy Day to actively mobilize the international community and to promote literacy as an instrument to empower individuals, communities and societies.

Now International Literacy Day is celebrated worldwide, bringing together governments, multi- and bilateral organizations, NGOs, private sectors, communities, teachers, learners and experts in the field. On this day also International Literacy Prizes are awarded to people with outstanding solutions that can drive literacy towards achieving the 2030 Education Agenda.

This year the focus is on innovation.

This is the first year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context the vision of literacy is aligned with lifelong learning opportunities with special focus on youth and adults. Literacy is a part of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". The target is that by 2030 all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy (SDG Target 4.6).

The International Literacy Day will be celebrated all around the world. The main global celebration of the day will take place at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris in the form of a two-day conference on 8 - 9 September, the highlight of which will be the awarding of the Literacy Prizes. At the same time the Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL) will be launched, a new and ambitious initiative to make all major stakeholders pull together to promote literacy as a foundation for lifelong learning.