



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
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pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

The UNESCO International Literacy Prizes

Since 1967, UNESCO has awarded International Literacy Prizes to outstanding and innovative efforts to promote literacy and non-formal education. Over the years, UNESCO's prestigious literacy prizes have rewarded over 450 projects and programmes undertaken by governments and NGOs around the world.

The UNESCO International Literacy Prizes

The 2009 prizes have been awarded to innovative literacy projects in Burkina Faso, India, Afghanistan and the Philippines. A programme in Bhutan received an Honourable Mention. The laureates were proclaimed by the Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura, on the recommendation of an international jury. The Award ceremony takes place at UNESCO Headquarters on the occasion of International Literacy Day (8 September).

Burkina Faso

One of two awards of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize, supported by the Republic of Korea, goes to the Tin Tua Literacy Programme in eastern Burkina Faso. The NGO's name means "let's help ourselves develop" in the Gulimancema language. It has achieved excellent results by using participants' primary language, producing reading material locally, and focusing on gender and sustainable community development.



Award-winning literacy journalists © Nirantar

India

The second award of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize is made to the NGO Nirantar's project "Khabar Lahariya" - "news waves" - in Uttar Pradesh, northern India. It has created a rural fortnightly newspaper entirely produced and marketed by "low caste" women, distributed to more than 20,000 newly literate readers. Its well-structured method of training newly literate women as journalists and democratizing information production provides an easily replicated model of transformative education.

Afghanistan

One UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy, supported by the People's Republic of China, is awarded to the Pashai Language Development Project implemented by SERVE Afghanistan. The community-owned initiative provides meaningful literacy, livelihood, public health and nutrition education to about 1,000 Pashai ethnic minority men and women annually. Despite Afghanistan's conflict situation, the project has managed to maintain its emphasis on education, especially for women and girls. Participants learn to use written material in their local language and in Pashto, one of the country's two official languages.

Philippines

The other UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy goes to the Municipal Literacy Coordinating Council, Municipality of Agoo, La Union, Philippines, for its Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning Programme, which makes available a vast array of education and training opportunities to the entire population, including the neediest. The municipal authorities' leadership in coordinating activities is a key factor in eliminating illiteracy and sustaining lifelong learning in the area's 49 villages. The jury commended the project's joint funding by the government, NGOs, the private sector and international donors as exemplary.

Bhutan

The Non-Formal and Continuing Education Programme of the Ministry of Education of Bhutan was awarded an Honourable Mention by the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for its holistic approach to literacy and its success in reaching remote

The UNESCO International Literacy Prizes

Previous Literacy Prizes

- The **Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Prize**, established in 1967 and awarded until 1978 through the generosity of H.I.M the Shahinshah of Iran
- The **Nadezhda K. Krupskaya Prize**, established in 1969 and awarded until 1991 through the generosity of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
- The **International Reading Association Award**, established in 1979 and awarded until 2006 through the generosity of the International Reading Association.
- The **Noma Literacy Prize** established in 1980 and was awarded until 2003 through the generosity of the distinguished Japanese publisher Mr. Shoichi Noma.
- The **Iraq Literacy Prize** established in 1981 and awarded until 1991 through the generosity of the Government of Iraq
- The **Malcolm Adiseshiah International Literacy Prize** established in 1998 and awarded until 2001 through the generosity of the Government of India

areas. The Jury welcomed the programme's emphasis on literacy as an integral part of the country's "Gross National Happiness", as well as its focus on adults and out-of-school youth, particularly women and girls.

The Jury

The selection of prizewinners is made by an International Jury appointed by UNESCO's Director-General, which meets in Paris once a year. The members of the Jury are high profile practitioners and academics in the field of education, appointed for three years by the Director-General. Candidates can be submitted by Member States or by international non-governmental organizations maintaining formal official relations with UNESCO.

Former members of the International Literacy Prize Jury include the late Brazilian educator and influential theorist of critical pedagogy Paulo Freire and other eminent personalities.

Currently the International Jury is composed of five international experts in the field of education: Ms Un-Shil Choi (Republic of Korea), Mr Zhou Nanzhao (China), Mr Norbert Nikiema (Burkina Faso), Ms Sylvia Schmelkes (Mexico) and Mr Abdelwahid A. Yousif (Sudan).

42 years of Literacy Prizes

The UNESCO International Literacy Prizes are the oldest UNESCO prizes in the field of education. Since 1967, UNESCO has rewarded over 450 successful and innovative literacy programmes with the aim of recognizing excellence and inspiring experiences in the field of literacy throughout the world.

The UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy and the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy are the current awarded Prizes.

The UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize

was established in 1989 thanks to the generosity of the Government of the Republic of Korea in honour of the outstanding contribution made to literacy over 500 years ago by King Sejong (1397-1450 A.C.), through the creation of the 'Hangul' alphabet. It awards two Prizes of US\$ 20,000 each, a medal and a diploma.

The UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy

was established in 2005 thanks to the generosity of the Government of the People's Republic of China in honour of the great Chinese scholar Confucius. It awards two Prizes of US\$ 20,000 each, a medal and a diploma. The two winners of the Confucius Prize are also offered a study visit to literacy project sites in China.

International Literacy Day

The International Literacy Prizes have been awarded yearly since 8 September 1967, when International Literacy Day was established to remind the international community of the status of literacy and adult learning globally.

Despite many and varied efforts, literacy remains an elusive target: some 776 million adults lack minimum literacy skills which means that one in five adults is still not literate; 75 million children are out-of-school and many more attend irregularly or drop out. This year, International Literacy Day puts the spotlight on the empowering role of literacy and its importance for participation, citizenship and social development

Contact: Margarete Sachs-Israel

email: literacyprizes@unesco.org

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