

“Better ALE data for better ALE governance and policy” for the Arab States



Key Insights from the Regional Workshop – Tunis, 28–29 January 2026

Tunis, 30 January 2026 – The regional workshop dedicated to improving data for better governance of Adult Learning and Education (ALE), held on 28 and 29 January 2026, marked a key milestone in the preparation process of the Sixth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 6), scheduled for publication in 2027.

The discussions helped consolidate a shared understanding of regional challenges, draw concrete lessons from national experiences, and identify strategic directions aimed at strengthening governance, coordination, and data quality in the ALE sector.

A strengthened common foundation of international references and commitments

The exchanges were grounded in a reference framework aligned with international commitments related to adult learning and education. Participants recalled that, despite its essential role in employability, resilience, civic participation, and social cohesion, ALE remains insufficiently recognised and underfunded in many countries.

The workshop reaffirmed the need to treat ALE as a policy priority and a strategic investment, in line with the Marrakech Framework for Action adopted at CONFINTEA VII and with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4. Special attention was also given to gender-sensitive approaches and to contexts of marginalisation, conflict, and forced displacement.

Strong messages delivered during the opening session

During the opening session, **Esther Hirsch**, Interim Director of DVV International, highlighted the importance of moving beyond a simple diagnosis of the sector’s challenges to engage in deeper reflection on the production of higher-quality data. She stressed the need to link evidence-based

knowledge generation with the concrete needs of stakeholders – public institutions, civil society organisations, and other actors – in order to build more coherent and effective ALE systems.

Isabell Kempf, Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), welcomed the diversity and quality of participation, seeing it as evidence of sustained regional commitment and a shared belief in the transformative role of lifelong learning. She recalled that GRALE 6 is not merely a data collection exercise, but a strategic foundation for guiding public policies and long-term investment.

For her part, **Sara Rarhibo**, Communication and Projects Officer at the African Foundation for Lifelong Learning, presented the foundation's mission and areas of intervention. She underlined the importance of the workshop as a space for regional dialogue, experience-sharing, and capacity-building in support of the preparation of GRALE 6.



GRALE 6: clarified expectations and a shared vision of the role of data

The first thematic session, dedicated to framing GRALE 6, strengthened the shared understanding of the report's objectives and requirements. **Samah Shalaby**, from UIL, presented the main pillars of the report and the different categories of data mobilised – strategic, diagnostic, and advocacy-related. She highlighted the central role of quality indicators in ensuring equity, transparency, and accountability in ALE policies.

From a complementary perspective, **Refaat Sabbah**, representing the Arab House for Education and Development (AHAED), brought the civil society viewpoint on monitoring adult education within the framework of the 2030 Agenda. He recalled that more than 700 million people worldwide remain deprived of basic education and skills, the majority of whom are women, and that lifelong learning remains inaccessible to large segments of the population. He emphasised the need to strengthen the role of civil society and to promote innovative approaches to reduce persistent inequalities.

Key lessons from national experiences: convergence and contrasts

Group work focusing on national experiences in ALE governance and data collection for GRALE 6 revealed a wide diversity of situations across the Arab region.

Discussions identified contexts characterised by weak institutional coordination and limited civil society involvement, leading to challenges in data collection, reliability, and sharing. Other

countries display forms of ad hoc cooperation, marked by the absence of sustainable mechanisms and by administrative constraints that hinder the strategic use of data.

Conversely, some national experiences stand out for the existence of more structured cooperation frameworks involving public authorities, civil society organisations, universities, and, in some cases, the private sector. These dynamics support the production of more robust data, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, and their use for planning, monitoring, and advocacy.

The case of Palestine received particular attention, illustrating the fundamental role of adult learning and education in a context of war and occupation. There, ALE emerges not only as a development tool but also as a means of resilience, protection of life, and reconstruction of social cohesion, despite extremely limited resources and severe structural constraints.



Strengths, vulnerabilities, and levers collectively identified

The discussions highlighted several structural weaknesses, including a lack of trust among stakeholders, the absence of clear institutional and legal frameworks, and insufficient intersectoral coordination, all of which undermine data systems and limit the effectiveness of ALE policies.

At the same time, participants emphasised the sector's strengths: programmes closely linked to learners' everyday realities, flexible and inclusive in nature, promoting rights, citizenship, and social cohesion. In crisis and conflict contexts, ALE was recognised as an essential tool for psychosocial, economic, and community resilience.

Strategic directions and emerging recommendations

Among the key strategic takeaways of the workshop are:

- the recognition of the central role of civil society in the collection, validation, and use of ALE data, with a proposal to allocate it a structured contribution within GRALE 6-related mechanisms;
- the explicit integration of a human rights-based approach into adult learning and education policies and programmes;
- the need to harmonise concepts, methodologies, and data collection tools in order to strengthen data comparability and regional experience-sharing.

The second day of the workshop, held on 29 January 2026, allowed participants to further explore these directions through focused work on the GRALE 6 survey and to lay the groundwork for operational recommendations aimed at sustainably strengthening ALE governance and data systems in the Arab region.

Strong media visibility and marked institutional interest

The regional workshop also benefited from extensive media coverage, reflecting the growing interest in adult learning and education issues in the Arab region. A large number of national and regional media outlets followed the event, with several on-site interviews conducted with organisers and participants. Numerous press articles were published following the workshop, alongside radio broadcasts and television coverage, contributing to increased visibility of the key messages conveyed during the event.