

Regional meeting: Lifelong learning for sustainable solutions in Arab learning cities

Background

Cities around the world are confronted with critical challenges such as rapid urbanization, climate change, economic slowdown, and inequalities. According to [UN Habitat's recent World Cities Report](#), the world will continue to urbanize over the next three decades – from 56 per cent of the global population living in urban environments in 2021 to 68 per cent in 2050. The expansion of urbanization is also expected in the Arab world, where more than two-thirds of the population will reside in cities by the middle of this century. In 1950, just two cities of the region had population of a million people or more; This is expected to reach 31 by 2025 ([UN Habitat, 2020](#)). Given such a remarkable increase, targeted lifelong learning interventions at the local level are seen as essential to ensure cities' immediate and long-term sustainability.

Lifelong learning (LLL) – with its comprehensive concept and flexible learning modalities – can play a central role in providing youth, adults and older people with the knowledge and skills needed to address present-day challenges and build a resilient future.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) through its flagship activity, the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), supports cities from all over the globe to promote lifelong learning for all by mobilizing the city's resources, revitalizing learning in families and communities, facilitating learning for and in workplace, extending the use of modern learning technologies, enhancing the quality of learning, and fostering a culture of lifelong learning. The UNESCO GNLC promotes the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 4 ('Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all') and SDG 11 ('Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'). The network also improves the practice of lifelong learning in the world's cities by promoting policy dialogue and peer learning among member cities, forging links, fostering partnerships, providing capacity development and developing instruments to encourage and recognize progress made in building learning cities.

As of today, 26 cities from nine Arab countries are members of the UNESCO GNLC¹, and other cities have expressed their interest in adopting the concept of lifelong learning and become a learning city. To support these endeavors, UIL – together with the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), UNESCO Doha Office, UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut, [the Ministry of Cultural, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Saudi Arabia](#) and the Yanbu Industrial

¹ <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/members>

Learning City, Saudi Arabia – will organize a regional meeting on learning cities to promote inclusive lifelong learning in Arab cities and promote their efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Objectives

- Promote the learning city and lifelong learning as key concepts and paradigms for education in Arab cities.
Present the work of UNESCO GNLC thematic clusters to support Arab cities to join and contribute to advancing activities according to their needs.
- Encourage cities to develop their own strategies and improve practices for lifelong learning by promoting a culture of peer learning and engaging all stakeholders, as well as empowering local communities.
- Share international and regional experiences and practices on lifelong learning in cities.
- Facilitate the discussion on the development of a regional network for learning cities in the Arab States and agree on a regional declaration, the *Yanabu Regional Declaration for Arab Learning Cities*.

Partners

- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
- the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS)
- UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut
- UNESCO Doha Office
- Yanbu Industrial Learning City, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Ministry of Cultural, UNESCO National Commission in Saudi Arabia

Participants

- Mayors, local authorities, cities focal points, UNESCO national commissions, and relevant stakeholders.

Language

- The conference will be held in Arabic with simultaneous interpretation in English.

Date and venue

Date: The meeting, which will follow a hybrid modality, takes place from 10–11 May, in Yanbu Industrial City.

Venue: King Fahad Cultural Center, Yanbu Industrial City, Saudi Arabia



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Learning Cities

Tentative agenda

Day 1: 10 May 2023

08:00	Pick up from the hotel
08:15 – 09:15	Breakfast at the conference venue
09:15 – 09:30	Welcome and registration
09:30 – 09:45	<p>Keynote speech (each speaker 3 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: media presenter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Khaled Bin Mohamed AlSalam, The Head of Royal Commission of Jubail and Yanbu • Mr Abdulrahman Al-Asmi, Director-General of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) • Mr Jamal Bin Huwaireb, Governing Board member of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) • Ms Farida Aboudan, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Office for Gulf States and Yemen in Doha
09:45 – 09:50	Video of Yanbu Industrial City (5 minutes)
09:50 – 10:00	<p>Structure of the workshop. Its objectives and expected outcomes (5 minutes)</p> <p>Ms Samah Shalaby, Education Specialist, UIL</p>
10:00 – 10:20	<p>Session 1: The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) (20 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a leaning city: From vision to action UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities? <p>Presenter: Mr Raul Valdes, Team Leader, UIL</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Samah Shalaby, UIL</p> <p>Q&A</p>
10:20 – 10:40	<p>Regional perspective: Lifelong learning in the Arab cities (20 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of lifelong learning and the importance of working on the local/city level to achieve SDG 4 in the new perspective of the transformative education agenda <p>Presenter: Mr Fadi Yarak, Senior Regional Education Adviser, UNESCO Office in Beirut</p> <p>Moderator: Media presenter</p> <p>Q&A</p>

<p>10:40 – 11:40</p>	<p>Session 2: Mayors’ roundtable / panel (60 minutes)</p> <p>Discussion on the regional trends in learning cities in the Arab States</p> <p>The way to joint efforts: Regional network for learning cities – Yanbau Regional Declaration</p> <p>Moderators: Ms Samah Shalaby, Education Specialist, UIL & Mr Abdulsalam Aljoufi, Adviser ABEGS</p>
<p>11:40 – 11:50</p>	<p>Break</p>
<p>11:50 – 12:40</p>	<p>Session 3: Local sustainable solution: Climate change education (40 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Farida Aboudan, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Office for Gulf States and Yemen in Doha</p> <p>Panel discussion (each speaker 7 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panelist 1: Mr Abdel Hadi Khamies Abdulrahman, Director of Public Affairs Department, Al Wakra city, Qatar • Panelist 2: Mr Mohamed Al-Soufiani, Mayor of Chefchaouen learning city, Kingdom of Morocco • Panelist 3: Mr. Dhar Khaled Al-Kheresha, Director of Investment and Development department, Al-Muaqqar, Jordan. • Panelist 4: Mr Jurgen Forkel Schubert, Representative of Hamburg Learning City, Germany (online participation) <p>Guiding questions for the moderator and the panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can cities and communities promote green skills through learning to contribute to inclusive climate action? • Please specify the main strategic actions in your city geared towards efficient youth and adult non-formal and informal learning to address climate change? <p>Q&A</p>
<p>12:40 – 13:20</p>	<p>Session 4: Inclusive learning to leave no-one behind</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Samah Shalaby, UIL,</p>

	<p>Panel discussion (each speaker 7 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panelist 1: Ms Mervat El-Samman, Coordinator of Aswan learning city, Egypt • Panelist 2: Mr Ahmed Al-Khazaali, Mayor of Al-Ramtha learning city, Jordan • Panelist 3: Mr Dawoud Salahat, Mayor of Bethlehem learning city, Palestine • Panelist 4: Mr. Luis González, he is secretary General of the Mexican association of Learning Cities (online participation) <p>Guiding questions for the moderator and the panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can lifelong learning in cities and communities be articulated to 1) ensure gender equality in learning and 2) provide, particularly the most vulnerable, equal access to quality learning opportunities? Please specify a practical example from your city, on an initiative/ programme to make learning more inclusive. <p>Q&A</p>
<p>13:20 – 13:30</p>	<p>Break</p>
<p>13:30 – 14:20</p>	<p>Session 5: Lifelong learning in cities for inclusive economy</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Abdulrahman Almedaris, Director of the Regional Centre for Quality and Excellence in Education (RCQE)</p> <p>Panel discussion (each speaker 7 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panelist 1: Mr Ahmed Zaid ALHUSSAIN, CEO at Royal Commission for Jubail Learning City, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia • Panelist 2: Ms Manal Awad, Mayor of Damietta learning city, Egypt • Panelist 3: Mr Abdul Haq Bin Khaled Geto, Yanbau Industrial City, Saudi Arabia • Panelist 4: Ms Khadija Bouhrachi , Deputy Mayor Marrakech learning city, Kingdom of Morocco • Panelist 5: Ms Choi Un Shil, Professor, Ajou University, Graduate School of Education, Republic of Korea <p>Guiding questions for the moderator and the panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In light of the continuous change in the required job skills and competencies, which role can learning cities play to build a resilient and competitive workforce? And how can learning cities support creating inclusive economies that provide opportunities to all?

14:20 – 15:20	Lunch
15:20 – 15:50	<p>Session 6: The role of technology/AI in promoting lifelong learning in cities</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Abdulsalam Aljoufi, ABEGS</p> <p>Panel discussion (Each speaker 7 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panelist 1: Mr Mansour Agran Aboualannin, Head of Doha learning city, Qatar • Panelist 2: Ms Rashah Al-Shawarba, Director of Queen Rania Parks and UNESCO Learning Liaison Officer- Amman learning city, Jordan • Panelist 3: Mrs Bahia El Youssoufi, President of Benguerir learning city, Kingdom of Morocco <p>Guiding questions for the moderator and the panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI and digital technologies are key to building a smart learning city. The use of technology played a key role in cities at the time of COVID-19 pandemic to support the continuation of learning. To have a better understanding of the potential of AI in learning, the session will discuss the benefits and challenges of implementing AI to promote lifelong learning in learning cities. <p>Q & A</p>
15:50 – 16:00	<p>Wrap up of day 1:</p> <p>Ms Samah Shalaby, Education Specialist, UIL</p>
Day 2 : 11 May 2022	
08:00 – 12:00	Field visit
12:00 – 12:20	<p>Interactive exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your city best known for? (Innovative, historic, entrepreneurial, sustainable, cultural, agricultural, cultural, etc.) (Please specify only 1 characteristic). • Which SDGs does your city work toward achieving? Please highlight key five SDGs? <p>Moderator: Ms Samah Shalaby, Education Specialist, UIL</p>
12:00 -13:00	Session 7: Health and well-being in learning cities

	<p>Moderator: Ms Farida Aboudan, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Office for Gulf States and Yemen in Doha</p> <p>Panel discussion (each speaker 7 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panelist 1: Mr Gabar Hassan Gabar, Head of Al-Rayyan learning city, Qatar• Panelist 2: Mr Maged Bourhan Al-Zydan, Director of the Control Department of Al-Shahaniya learning city, Qatar• Panelist 3: Mr Hani Bin Abdul Rahman ,Yanbu Learning City• Panelist 4: Mr Didier Jourdan, Professor at the UNESCO Chair Global Health and Education, Head of WHO Collaborating Center for Research in Education and Health, France (Online participation) <p>Guiding questions for the moderator and the panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The importance of well-being in building a culture of lifelong learning and motivating learners to keep on track in their learning and development.• How can lifelong learning promote healthy and resilient cities? And What kind of strategic actions can place learning for health at the heart of the learning cities agenda, with reference to the Yeonsu Declaration for Learning Cities? <p>Q&A</p>
<p>13:00 – 14:00</p>	<p>Session 8: Partnership for continuous efforts in learning cities</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Mahra Hilal Al Mutaiwei, General Director of the Regional Centre for Educational Planning</p> <p>Panel discussion (each speaker 7 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panelist 1: Mr Hamad Gomaa Almanaa, Head of Al-Shamal Learning City, Qatar• Panelist 2: Mr Abdullah Nassar Al Nayenmi, Office Manager of the Mayor of Al Daayen Learning City, Qatar• Panelist 3: Mr. Abdulsalam Al-Emeri, Head of the Special Commission of Ifrane Learning City, Kingdom of Morocco• Panelist 4: Denis Barrett, Cork Learning City Coordinator, Cork City Council (Online participation)

	<p>Guiding questions for the moderator and the panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why is the partnership in establishing learning cities vital in responding to the needs of learners and ensuring that efforts towards creating lifelong learning culture is continual? Which mechanisms should put in place to ensure effective partnership for resource mobilization?</i> <p>Q&A</p>
14:00 – 14:15	Break
14:15 – 14:45	<p>Session 9: The way forward</p> <p>Agreeing on the Yanbu regional declaration</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Abdulsalam Aljoufi, Adviser, ABEGS, and Ms Samah Shalaby, UIL</p>
14:45 – 15:15	<p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Fadi Yarak, Senior Regional Education Adviser, UNESCO Office in Beirut • Mr Raul Valdes, Team Leader, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning • Mr Abdulrahman Almedaris, Director of the Regional Centre for Quality and Excellence in Education (RCQE) • Mr Abdulrahman Al-Asmi, Director-General of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS)
15:15 – 16:30	Lunch