Vocational Literacy Programme (VOLIP) for Poverty Reduction

**About the ISFD**

The Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD) is a public agency created under Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group. It is a primary vehicle for the following activities in IDB Member Countries:

- Fighting poverty and hunger and promoting pro-poor growth;
- Providing financial support to enhance the productive capacity and sustainable means of income generation for the poor;
- Capacity building (cross-cutting theme);
- Human development (education, health, water and sanitation);
- Agricultural and rural development;
- Basic rural infrastructure development;
- Non-agricultural non-farming income-generating activities;
- Eradicating poverty and hunger and promoting pro-poor growth.

**What is the VOLIP?**

The Vocational Literacy Programme (VOLIP) is an ISFD initiative to provide the poor with functional literacy competencies and notional skill development that will enable them to obtain employment, preferably in organised groups, to foster solidarity and collaborative entrepreneurship.

**Key Outcomes of the VOLIP**

1. The VOLIP has reduced illiteracy by providing a second chance to children, adults, and women who did not have the opportunity to go to school.
2. It has trained several thousand teenagers, young adults, and women with technical and vocational skills to enhance their productivity, as well as, employability in the local job market.
3. It has contributed to the reduction of unemployment and poverty, and increased employability in the local job market.
4. It has enhanced governments’ ability to hire skilled labour for its development programmes.
5. It has assisted women to upgrade their core skills.
6. More importantly, the VOLIP has brought hope to the poor with functional literacy competencies and notional skill development that will enable them to obtain employment, preferably in organised groups, to foster solidarity and collaborative entrepreneurship.

**Outcomes of the VOLIP**

- About 60 percent of the trainees will be assisted with micro-finance for self-employment, preferably in organised groups, to foster solidarity and collaborative entrepreneurship.
- They can now have an easy access to finance to start their own small businesses.
- The VOLIP has significantly reduced child dropout rates, and more than 400,000 individuals have learned new skills and developed competencies.
- Women workers groups: The objective of this sub-programme is to provide 500,000 women workers with on-the-job functional literacy competencies, and improve their job skills on specific line of work; 50 percent of the women, profitably in groups, will have access to working capital or light business equipment to help modernising and increase their productivity.
- Teenagers and Young Adults (between the ages of 16-24 years): The focus in this category is to improve the employability, earning capability and economic dependency on their families and increase opportunities for young people.
- Out of School Children (between the ages of 9-15 years): This will facilitate their integration into the local and national labour market, to upgrade their core skills. It is expected that 400,000 teenagers, young adults, and women who did not have the opportunity to go to school.
- Adult Groups: The set of Interventions aims to benefit one million people, mainly in the rural and marginalized urban areas, with the objective of providing adult functional literacy in countries with large illiterate populations.

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5. More importantly, the VOLIP has brought hope to the poor with functional literacy competencies and notional skill development that will enable them to obtain employment, preferably in organised groups, to foster solidarity and collaborative entrepreneurship.
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The Framework

The Vocational Literacy Programme (VOLIP) was established in line with the recommendations of the 3rd Extraordinary Session of the OIC Islamic Summit held in Makkah Al Mukarramah, in December 2005 (Dhul Qadah 1426H), which mandated the Fund to reduce poverty through the eradication of illiteracy, building capacities and skills. The VOLIP is among the first programmes launched under the Strategy of the ISFD, and is also consistent with the IDB 1440H (2020G) Vision and constitutes a powerful tool for the implementation of the IDB Policy Paper on Poverty Reduction adopted in April 2007.

Illiteracy in the OIC Member Countries

Illiteracy is widespread in the OIC Member Countries where one out of every three people is illiterate. Adult illiteracy is 41 percent, and is more pronounced among females constituting 24 percent of the total. Among the 57 OIC Member Countries, 24 are lagging behind in achieving the education MDG, 18 of which are OIC Member Countries. Moreover, out of the 29 countries in the world with the lowest Education Development Index (EDI, 2008) 18 (62 percent) are OIC Member Countries. The average primary education net enrolment in Sub-Saharan Africa is barely 64 percent, while Northern Africa records 94 percent. Sub-Saharan Africa is also home to an estimated 40 percent of the out-of-school population (with girls representing 60 percent of the total), a similar figure for South Asia, compared to 15 percent in the Middle East and North Africa. In other words, most of the out-of-school children in the World live in the OIC Member Countries. With regard to youth literacy, it is estimated that more than 36 million youth aged between 15 and 24 in OIC Member Countries are illiterate. 63 percent of this segment are females.

Objectives of the VOLIP

The main objective of the Vocational Literacy Programme (VOLIP) is to reduce poverty in the rural populations, particularly among women, by equipping them with relevant functional literacy competencies and national skills, and by giving them access to microfinance resources to help increase household’s income. The Programme will contribute to the attainment of the education component of the MDGs.

The VOLIP emphasises vocational literacy training, rather than academic, to help people improve their skills and capacities in practical ways, leading to an increase in their productivity (not just job opportunities) for the jobless.

To complement the provision of knowledge in the form of literacy training and also to provide incentives to get benefit from the training, the VOLIP facilitates training in, and access to, microfinance programmes for teenagers, young adults, and women workers.

Beneficiaries of the VOLIP

The main beneficiaries of the VOLIP are the poor and vulnerable groups in the OIC Member Countries. The Programme is expected to reach more than 2 million people, 25 percent of whom will have the access to micro-finance. The VOLIP focuses primarily on those children and adults (men and women) who would have otherwise “missed the boat” in terms of conventional educational programmes. Secondly, it combines a package that aims to benefit the whole family, create synergy and add intra-family incentives to learn.

Sub-Programmes and Target Populations

The VOLIP is implemented in partnership with bilateral, regional and international development institutions, local communities, NGOs, organised groups, associations, and other stakeholders. It is reaching out to more than 2 million people, 25 percent of whom will have the access to microfinance.