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Harnessing the Potential of Openness for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning

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Speakers:

Ms. Airina Volungevičienė, Immediate Past President of European Distance and E-Learning Network, Director of Innovative Studies Institute, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

Mr. Martin Weller, Director of OER Hub, Open University UK

Ms. Vasudha Kamat, Former Vice Chancellor, SNDT Women's University and Member, Drafting Committee for National Education Policy 2019, India

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Open education can ensure flexibility and inclusivity of teaching/learning systems that contribute to the acquisition of the competences and skills needed for active participation in social life and adequate engagement in dynamically changing labour market. The concept of openness in higher education and lifelong learning may be considered from different perspectives, for example:

- openness of mindsets and culture of knowledge sharing
- openness of content and licensing
- openness of education delivery
- openness of pedagogy and teaching/learning tools and practices
- openness as absence of restrictions in access to education
- openness in recognition of learning outcomes

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Can Open Educational Resources Contribute to the Achievement of SDG4?

Svetlana Knyazeva
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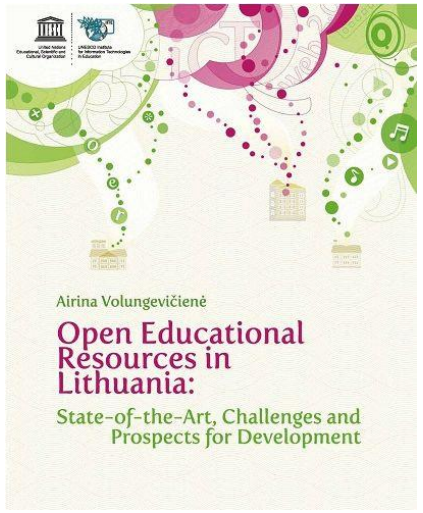

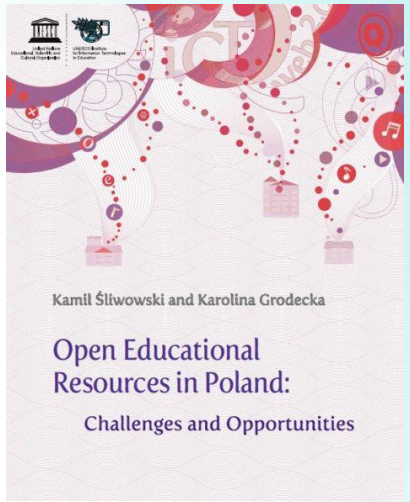

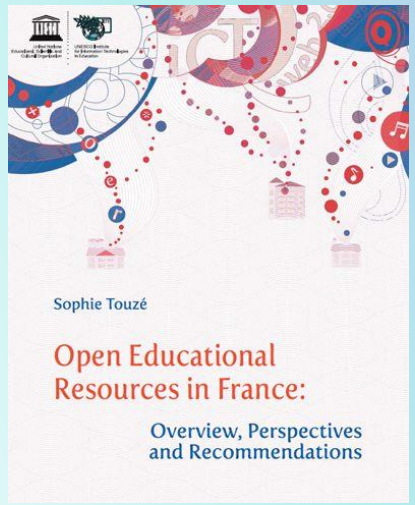

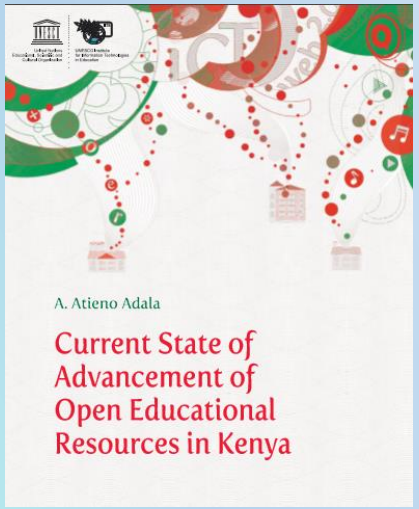

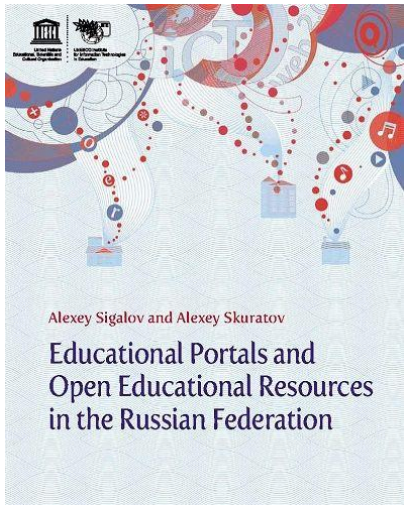

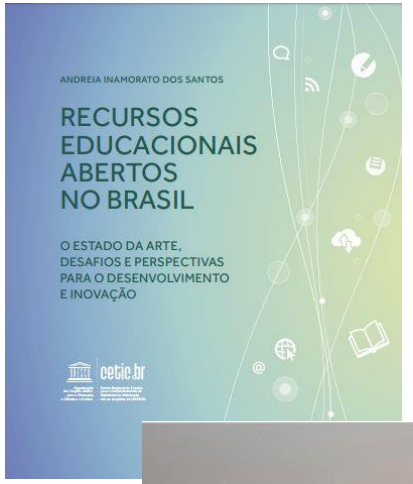

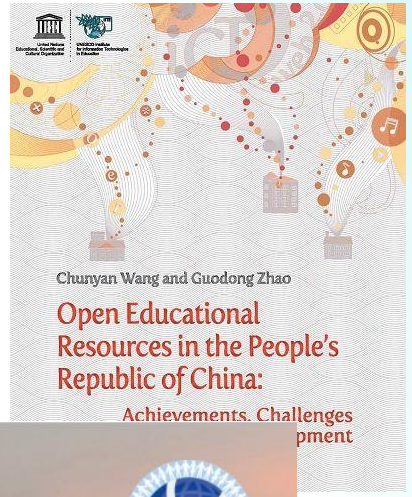

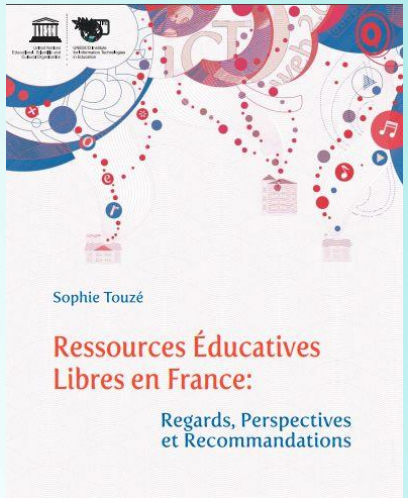

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OER and SDG4

It is generally recognized that OER can and shall support the Sustainable Development Goal 4 “ensure equal opportunity in access to education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” through its Target 4.3 – Ensuring expanded and equitable access to all forms of post-basic education and training.

The Horizon Report 2015 postulated the proliferation of OER as a key trend accelerating technology adoption in higher education, but the Horizon Report 2017 stated “While emerging technological developments such as digital courseware and OER have made it easier to engage with learning resources, significant issues of access and equity persist among students from low-income, minority, single-parent families, and other disadvantaged groups.” Despite many efforts made to promote OER and its use, OER still largely remains on the margins in education systems.

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Understanding the impact of OER

To assess how the educational potential of OER is being realized the UNESCO Institute for Information Technology in Education and OER Africa surveyed the situation with the mainstreaming of OER

Australia	Brazil	**Canada**	**Nigeria**	Tunisia
China	Chile	Germany	**South Africa**	
Mongolia	Mexico	Slovenia	**Tanzania**	
New Zealand		**United Kingdom**		

Countries are at various stages of OER adoption: many still need to focus on raising awareness about OER and their potential benefits.

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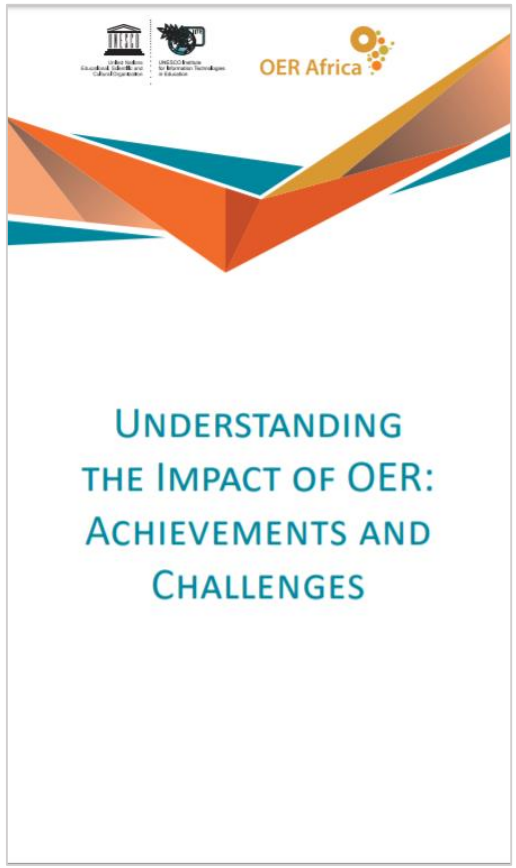
Understanding the impact of OER



- Understanding of the concept of OER
- Policy commitments
- **OER adoption**
- **OER financing and sustainability**
- Diversity and inclusion
- Research on educational impact and effectiveness of OER

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OER adoption obstacles

- Lack of full understanding of the resources, and therefore inability to effectively reuse them
- Lack of pedagogical skills to reuse resources
- Lack of necessary skills to make informed judgements about how to use technologies
- Insufficient digital literacy/lack of ICT skills
- Lack of understanding of open licences and how they work
- Difficulty determining the value and quality of OER
- Lack of awareness regarding possibilities for OER use
- Lack of technical capacities to repurpose OER material for teaching and learning needs

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Financing

OER efforts are primarily funded by donors, governments and institutions.

Institutions are either developing their own, internal budgets to accommodate OER or attracting funding from donors, particularly in contexts where there might not be direct national policies or government funding for OER.

The available funding for OER differs according to country context, although increasingly governments are supporting initiatives either through grants or operational budgets. Often OER policies, strategies and guidelines contain little or no mentioning of funding mechanisms to ensure sustainability.

The overreliance on external funding makes OER initiatives vulnerable in terms of sustainability.

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Conlusions

Despite the efforts made by numerous donors and intergovernmental organizations, governments and education institutions, OER appears to remain on the margins in education systems.

While governments may have expressed commitment to policies in support of OER, this has not necessarily translated into action or funding. Policy is not a pre-condition for a context supportive of OER, although it appears to bolster OER efforts, but it appears to yield more significant benefits than just the presence of policies.

The challenge of the digital divide continues to impact on OER use in the Global South and underserved areas in the Global North. Nevertheless, there is evidence of OER allowing for greater inclusion within countries, particularly in those with adequate digital infrastructure.

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Questions for discussion

What are possible ways of mitigating the challenges in OER promotion?

What are some alternate approaches to mainstreaming OER?

What recommendations should we be making to countries to stimulate growth of OER?

How do the different forms Open education help to widen access to education?

What is the problem you want to solve with open?

How much Openness can open?

What are the boundaries of Openness in Higher Education and Lifelong learning?

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

All data included in this presentation were provided by the national experts commissioned to complete the survey within the joint UNESCO IITE – OER Africa project

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