

assessment. Box B describes five levels of literacy that correspond to measured ranges of scores achieved. These levels, explained in more depth in Annex A, are used in this report for analytical purposes.

Box B. Five Levels of Literacy

- **Level 1** indicates persons with very poor skills, where the individual may, for example, be unable to determine the correct amount of medicine to give a child from information printed on the package.
- **Level 2** respondents can deal only with material that is simple, clearly laid out, and in which the tasks involved are not too complex. It denotes a weak level of skill, but more hidden than Level 1. It identifies people who can read, but test poorly. They may have developed coping skills to manage everyday literacy demands, but their low level of proficiency makes it difficult for them to face novel demands, such as learning new job skills.
- **Level 3** is considered a suitable minimum for coping with the demands of everyday life and work in a complex, advanced society. It denotes roughly the skill level required for successful secondary school completion and college entry. Like higher levels, it requires the ability to integrate several sources of information and solve more complex problems.
- **Levels 4 and 5** describe respondents who demonstrate command of higher-order information processing skills.

Data Collection

The data presented in this report were collected by the countries participating in successive cycles of data collection between 1994 and 1998, using nationally representative samples of the adult population aged 16-65. The survey was conducted in people's homes by experienced interviewers. Annex B describes in more detail the design used for the IALS. This combined educational assessment techniques with methods of household survey research. Also included in this annex is a description of the quality control measures implemented throughout the course of the IALS in order to ensure that high-quality data would be obtained. It also describes the enhanced measures taken to further improve data quality and comparability during the subsequent cycles of the survey. Specific issues concerning validity, reliability and comparability of the data are addressed in Annex C.

In brief, respondents were first asked a series of questions to obtain background information about them, *e.g.* demographic details, work history, etc. Once this background questionnaire was completed, the interviewer presented a booklet containing six simple tasks. If a respondent failed to complete at least two of these correctly, the interview was adjourned. Respondents who completed two or more tasks correctly were then given a much larger variety of tasks, printed in a separate booklet. The assessment was not timed, and respondents were urged to try each exercise. Respondents were thus given maximum opportunity to demonstrate their skills.