UNESCO Bangkok hosted its Regional Policy Seminar in partnership with the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI).

With this year’s theme of *Education Development and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: Shifting Dynamics, Increasing Collaboration*, the seminar brought together a wide range of stakeholders from Ministries of Education in the region, academia, international organisations, regional/sub-regional organisations, NGOs, and the private sector, with over 40 country participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

The seminar explored the theme through diverse perspectives on topics such as Official Development Assistance (ODA), South-South cooperation, knowledge sharing and exchange, benchmarking, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), capacity development, as well as regional and international normative frameworks.

The main outcomes of this seminar included reflections on the post-2015 education and development agenda. Seminar participants affirmed the importance of consultation from the ground up, the need for national targets as well as global goals, integrating a broader perspective of education in these goals while integrating both a human rights perspective and economic development perspective at the same time.

Dr. Jong-Hyoek Yoon, Director-General of the Global Education Research Division at KEDI, noted that the seminar was fruitful in developing key messages for all stakeholders: “It is important to share common development goals within the Asia Pacific region to coordinate education development cooperation among different stakeholders and development partners”.

Other participants noted that the seminar had generated consensus on issues to be taken forward in the post-2015 development agenda. Dr. Heribert Hinzen, Regional Director for South and South East Asia at *dvv international*, felt that the issue of lifelong learning had to be included in dialogue on the future education development framework.

“*What we have seen in terms of the development agenda has been very much focused on primary schooling. I very strongly advocate that we need to look at the whole life cycle, at lifelong learning for all. ‘All people’ refers to children, youth and adults, and they all need to contribute to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are not for governments only. They have to be owned by the people as well. They will never be implemented by governments alone. We need the golden triangle of government, civil society, and the private sector to achieve this; it can only be done together,*” Dr. Hinzen emphasised.

Rene Raya, ASPBAE Lead Policy Analyst, attended the seminar and made a presentation on ASPBAE’s core programmes and framework for cooperation and partnership. He emphasised that financing remains a persisting concern that impacts most especially on the marginalised groups. He raised critical concerns related to public private partnerships in education based on actual experiences in Asian countries. At the same time, Mr. Raya noted ASPBAE’s openness to cooperating with the private sector based on a shared commitment to address inequity in education and a resolve to reach out to the poorest and most excluded.
The theme of the seminar is becoming increasingly important in an era of rapid globalisation, regionalisation, and benchmarking between countries as well as recognition of the commonality of many of the challenges faced by education systems. This is particularly true in the Asia Pacific, a region of great diversity in which the dynamics of sub-regional integration (e.g. formation of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015) and other factors are driving many different forms of cooperation in education. While some of this is not new (for example, there have always been cross-border exchanges between students, academics, and universities), concerns about the more strategic ODA and the emergence of new donors and PPPs in the region are notable.

Since 1995, UNESCO’s Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, in co-operation with the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), have hosted annual policy seminars to discuss key issues affecting educational development in the region. Topics of the seminars have ranged from aid effectiveness in education to assessments to decentralisation. Click here for more information on past seminars.

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