



Training for Transformation

By Dominic D'Souza, ASPBAE Executive Council Member and Associate Director of Laya, India

From my long experience in designing and facilitating training processes in the indigenous communities for 'adult' school drop outs, and also my participation in ASPBAE's training for transformation (Tft) processes as a learner and facilitator, I can vouch for the key outcome of Tft as a 'life changing experience'. This is because learners are encouraged to be more reflective, critical thinkers and to engage as part of their daily living with a range of situations in society. They are empowered to challenge their assumptions, prejudices and biases; and their feelings and emotions are touched.

HOW HAVE WE COME TO THIS STAGE?

The history of ASPBAE is a testimony of a steady evolution of training for transformation: from a clear focus on adult education and continuing education in the 1960s to a more emphatic response by the 1990s to the felt learning needs of those left out or denied access to education. This

coincided with ASPBAE's evolving into a network of organisations, institutions drawn from backgrounds in a variety of teaching-learning processes.

In 2000, the General Assembly acknowledged that ASPBAE has done well 'as a network and a movement for transformative and empowering adult education' and that 'the values and philosophy of a transformative adult education are now more entrenched' in ASPBAE. Also it mandated a much stronger emphasis on ASPBAE's policy advocacy role, which led to alliance and coalition building efforts, especially in the context of Education for All. In 2005, the General Assembly re-asserted the commitment to the transformative function of adult and basic education, especially to promote the learning interests of the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

In 2006, it was recommended to integrate the two streams of transformative education in ASPBAE: thematic and holistic transformative



Gender is a cross-cutting theme in ASPBAE's training programmes like the Basic Leadership Development Course

training and policy advocacy. This process has been slow but there is a growing convergence. This is indicated through efforts that began much earlier with gender as a cross-cutting theme and post-2008 with Education for Sustainable Development (a thematic option in the 1990s) now reintroduced as an attempt to rethink education in a climate changing world. Both of these are now integrated in the key training for transformation processes of ASPBAE: the Basic Leadership Development Course (BLDC), NeXT1, NeXT2, and capacity building activities associated with the thematic programmes, and with the Education for All Campaign.

To address the issue of quality in adult education, ASPBAE initiated a participatory process to arrive at 'Benchmarks of Quality Adult Education' drawn from the experience

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Dominic D'Souza, ASPBAE Executive Council Member

of its members and applied them to Indigenous People's Education and Women's Education.

The key achievements of training for transformation for ASPBAE have been - Scaling up the competencies of trainer-facilitators in adult education; building an expanded pool of trainers

in the region, especially through NeXT1 and NeXT2; strengthening the middle-level leadership of its member organisations, especially through the BLDC; offering linking and learning exchange platforms in different areas in adult education and lifelong learning to adult education practitioners in the region; and helping to build and strengthen 14 national campaign coalitions in developing countries of the region to advance the right to education and learning through effective policy advocacy.

The overall outcome has been the broader acceptance and practice within the membership of the values, philosophy, and practices of transformative adult education that is strongly context-based and

participatory.

The way forward for training for transformation in ASPBAE

There is a need to respond to the changing contexts and evolving and expanding needs in the Asia Pacific. More specifically to use a rights-based, gendered, and transformative lifelong learning framework in the context of a changing climate that threatens sustainable development and survival.

More important, the last Executive Council meeting mandated the articulation of a holistic and integrated perspective of transformation of training. This issue of Ed-lines is the first step in stock taking of our experience, quality benchmarks, and posing an integrated framework for the future.

EDITORIAL

Transformation and learning in the Australian context: Addressing perceived 'wicked problems' and inequities

-By Professor Barry Golding, University of Ballarat;
President, Adult Learning Australia; Patron, Australian Men's Sheds Association



Barry Golding, President, Adult Learning Australia

There is no doubt that the world of learning in Australia is very topical, and like Australia itself, is changing very quickly. Australia, despite its relative economic national wealth, has a very inequitable school funding system. With increasing and intractable gaps between private and public student outcomes, schools are currently undergoing a necessary but painful and politically contested review. As schools are set to receive more government funding, funding for

vocational education and training are right now being cut and further moved towards the 'market'.

The relatively small amount of funding adult and community education tends to get is being further reduced and made contestable. Governments in Australia responsible for all public education sectors have been moving away from state funding towards market-based, individual, user-pays mechanisms in all sectors of education. Changes in web-based training have made more things *theoretically* possible online, but wrecked business models associated with very effective local, face-to-face teaching still preferred by most learners and absolutely required for the most vulnerable learners with limited information and communications technology (ICT) skills and literacies.

In recent generations, inequity in educational outcomes for Australians of all ages has increased, but arguably not been properly addressed in any post-compulsory sector, even as the

need for lifelong learning for those adults who 'fell through the cracks' at school has increased, and as older people live longer beyond paid work.

Indigenous Australians continue, on average, to be well behind all other groups in Australia in terms of most social indicators including education and employment outcomes. As in many other nations, most Australians who do well in school and further education move to the cities, leaving those with less work and life options, plus older people, in rural and remote regions. With high levels of immigration, Australian cities are highly multicultural but also divided geographically by ethnic background and socio-economic status. Climate change is making natural disasters (droughts and bushfires, floods and storms) more frequent.

It is remarkable that in a nation with so much apparent opportunity, close to one half

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Indigenous Australians continue to be well behind all other groups in Australia regarding education and employment outcomes

of adults currently in work in Australia have not completed any formal qualification post school, and close to four in ten Australians are functionally illiterate when benchmarked internationally on standard international literacy and numeracy scales.

While changes in ICT are affecting all aspects of Australian work, education and life, many older adults (who are living much longer) are completely out of the ICT loop. Not surprisingly, with a narrowing of opportunity of access to adult education and training and increasing educational equity, Adult Learning Australia's mission is simple: lifelong and lifewide learning for all.

In this broad and fairly depressing national context, there is an increasing need for adult education

and training to transform work and address these obvious, often intergenerational inequities by location, ethnicity, age, and income. Its economy, while superficially strong, is an unstable mix, characterised by a high Australian dollar, a booming mining sector highly dependent on Asian (mainly Chinese) economies, a faltering manufacturing sector, and an agricultural sector increasingly vulnerable to climate change.

At the level of neighbourhood and community there is some good news about grassroots transformation. Despite the difficulties outlined above, some community-based providers of adult education, language, and literacy programmes do heroic and important transformational work with migrants, women, and refugees. Older men beyond work in Australia now have men's sheds in community settings, an Australian invention and movement (with 900+ sheds across Australia; see separate article on ASPBAE's website at www.aspbae.org), which has proliferated rapidly also to New Zealand, Ireland, and the UK and transformed lives and communities across Australia. Many farmers self organise around the Australia Land Care concept to together seek more sustainable farms.

The trend in Australia towards 'treating' adults who are learning as students, clients, customers, and even patients as individuals through

market-based, service provision at arms length from governments is at best only a partial solution. At worst it is totally ineffective, patronising, inequitable, and inappropriate for addressing the many 'wicked problems' with which we are faced.

"Wicked problem" (Wikipedia) 'is a phrase originally used in social planning to describe a problem that is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise'.

Not only are we faced with increasing inequity in education as a wicked problem resistant to resolution within Australia, but also by national inequities of trade, economics, and resources within and beyond our region and the world.

If there was ever a time for critically reflecting on, learning from, and transforming this situation, it is now. If transformative learning is to work in practice, several roles need to be transformed: in particular those of the educator and the learner. The educator and learner are together responsible not only for transforming lives and communities, but also for transforming and reversing currently inappropriate moves towards a wholesale marketisation of educational systems.

ASPBAE's framework on Quality Adult Education

Based on a synopsis of a framework document by ASPBAE President, Robbie Guevara



ASPBAE's Quality Adult Education framework is grounded in its commitment to adult education for transformation within a larger vision of lifelong learning

The Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) revealed serious challenges in advancing the case for the *right to learn*. It has been a challenge to define what constitutes adult learning and adult education in the vast differences in learning contexts of the world; more so in defining what "quality" adult education and learning means.

These difficulties in arriving at common understandings, or frameworks of understanding, had blunted efforts of adult education advocates to argue against the predominant tendency to push adult education as the "poor quality education option for the poor". Efforts to argue for greater funding for adult education that is meaningful have also been challenged by the inability to

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provide robust evidence of what constitutes “quality” adult education.

ASPBAE’s quality framework was formulated to be used by adult education practitioners and advocates within civil society in advancing both the practice of and the advocacy for adult education as a basic human right. The core of the Framework is grounded on ASPBAE’s commitment to education as a right, adult education for transformation, and adult and basic education as integral and inter-connected components of the vision of lifelong learning.

EDUCATION AS A RIGHT: ASPBAE’s fundamental purpose is to advance and defend the right of all people to learn and have equitable access to relevant and quality education and learning opportunities throughout their lives, enabling them to cope, survive, and transform their conditions and define their own destiny.

ADULT EDUCATION FOR TRANSFORMATION: Surrounding the core element of a rights-based approach to education is ASPBAE’s commitment to the principles of gender justice and empowerment as critical to achieving the transformative function of adult and basic education, especially to promote the learning interests of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

ADULT AND BASIC EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING: ASPBAE further asserts that basic education and adult education are critical to each other’s advancement. Universal quality primary and secondary education cannot be achieved in the absence of safe, enabling learning environments for girls and boys in their homes and communities that literate, critically-aware parents can provide. The potential for meaningful ‘learning throughout life’ for all citizens rests on a strong basic education foundation.

The four key characteristics of quality adult education identified are Relevant, Effective, Efficient, and Equitable and Inclusive. From ASPBAE’s perspective, **effective** adult education involves engaging adult learners to use their experience and learning as the foundation for individual and social transformation. Three key elements contributing to this quality characteristic are effective teaching and learning practice, achievement of and contribution of outcomes, and monitoring and evaluation of achievements and outcomes. **Relevant** is a characteristic that acknowledges that learning occurs within a socio-economic, cultural-political, and historical context. From ASPBAE’s perspective, there are three key elements that contribute to relevant adult education - learner-centred, context-based, and responsive to issues.

Efficient has become an additional characteristic within quality frameworks as the problem of limited resources has had an increasingly significant impact on the quality



ASPBAE is committed to promoting the learning interests of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups

of education. From ASPBAE’s perspective, there are four resource-related elements, namely - human resources, financial and material resources, local resources, and organisational resources. For ASPBAE, **equitable and inclusive** are characteristics that are integral to achieving its core commitment to education as a fundamental human right. From ASPBAE’s perspective, there are two policy-related elements, namely - governance and advocacy.

ASPBAE has identified 16 benchmarks of quality adult education. They are –

- (1) Rights-based Commitment to Education
- (2) Adult Education for Transformation
- (3) Adult Education Within a Lifelong Learning Framework
- (4) Learner-Centred Adult Education
- (5) Contextualised Adult Education
- (6) Responsive Adult Education
- (7) Effective Teaching and Learning Practice
- (8) Achieved Outcomes
- (9) Monitoring, Evaluation, and Integration of Lessons Learned
- (10) Efficient use of Human Resources
- (11) Efficient use of Financial Resources
- (12) Efficient use of Local Resources
- (13) Efficient use of Organisational Resources
- (14) Access to Adult Education Programmes
- (15) Governance of Adult Education
- (16) Advocacy for Adult Education

While frameworks are essentially conceptual, it is important to emphasise that this particular framework has been developed from years of adult education practice by the ASPBAE programmes and members in the region. It is this living link between concept and practice that we need to acknowledge and to encourage the on-going development of our own praxis as adult educators.

Learning advocacy through Real World Strategies

Developing campaigning skills to influence education policy and practice

THE CHALLENGE: Translating the Education for All (EFA) Dakar Declaration into concrete commitments was in full swing. To help governments prepare their country plans, UNESCO convened the EFA Coordinators to present the guiding principles behind the six goals and important strategies. It was in an EFA Coordinators' Meeting in 2006 when UNESCO asked ASPBAE to present 'Civil Society's Role in EFA'. Governments and institutions were grappling with the EFA strategy to "ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of strategies for education development." What do civil society organisations have to offer education that governments could not do on its own? How can civil society work with governments in a seemingly neutral agenda as EFA? Many posited the question, albeit in small circles, how can civil society organisations rigorously intervene in education when they are not educationists? The opportunity presented a challenge to civil society.

LEARNING IN ACTION: To be a major player in education, civil society had to be organised or strengthened depending on the existence (or absence) of civil society players in country. To gain credibility in policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring, civil society had to learn the ropes of advocacy and campaigns beyond rhetoric. Amidst these needs, the Real World Strategies (RWS) was conceived. RWS broke the norms of conventional trainings where participants learn in structured settings some concepts, acquire a set of tools, and then apply these in their work and community. Instead, RWS facilitated a "real-world process of planning a national campaign" with education advocates and coalitions. The campaign/s became the fulcrum of capacity building that developed and nurtured both the abilities of civil society to consolidate its ranks internally --- where a broad range of diverse stakeholders learn to collaborate, analyse education situations (challenges and opportunities) and build consensus on its analyses, agenda, and advocacy strategies. RWS also mentored civil society organisations to develop and enriched their abilities to engage externally

--- employing a menu of strategies to challenge and engage governments to act on EFA commitments from evidence-based advocacy through Education Watch to legislative work to participatory budgeting in education.

DEMAND-DRIVEN MENTORING, CROSS LEARNING, REGIONAL SOLIDARITY

The design of capacity building for coalitions under RWS was driven by the demands of coalitions based on how they wanted to engage in-country challenges to and opportunities for EFA. While coalitions focused, deepened, and broadened their country campaigns (and learning), they learned a lot from other coalitions through regional workshops and exchanges. The coming together of coalitions from the Asia Pacific provided an opportune time to "show and tell," reflect and evaluate EFA advocacy, generate theory from practice, and explore new ways of working through the frameworks and tools offered by different practitioners. Beyond the concept and skills, the regional engagements enabled advocates/activists to build camaraderie and create solidarity for a movement, sharing an ethic of working for EFA beyond the confines of each country. Indeed, ethical values can only be shared through practice and engagements --- venues that RWS deliberately provided for advocacy and learning.

From RWS, the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) employed the same learning in advocacy approach and more. By now, it can be said that the powers in education have been demystified as structures for decision-making have become more visible in country and internationally. Through capacity building, civil society moved on to understand how bureaucracy and governance work (or not) for the poor and marginalised.



The Real World Strategies programme enabled a "real-world process of planning a national campaign" with education advocates and coalitions

In RWS and CSEF, importantly, civil society organisations, learners, and communities are at the core of articulating, lobbying, and engaging to affect policy and programme changes. The people may not be trained as educationists, but they can become educationists and are the best proponents for education reforms.

Leadership in action – marching on with adult education in the Asia Pacific



An annual program since 1993, the BLDC is designed to build leadership skills of ASPBAE's members to advocate for adult education practices

One of ASPBAE's foundational interventions has been its strategic effort in building capacities of its membership to advance adult education practice and policy advocacy work in the Asia Pacific region. It is premised on ASPBAE's commitment to build and expand the leadership resources in the region to secure the right of all to learn and promote the learning needs and upholding the interests of

“Everyone can be a part of global change”

Nasiba Mirpochoeva, Specialist on Social Impact, LLC MDO Arvand, Tajikistan

I was lucky to be a participant of the BLDC 2010 in Baguio city, Philippines. Before my participation in the training I had no idea about global events and campaigns like Education for All, Education for Sustainable Development, the Global Campaign for Education, and others. My life has changed since that time because I was able to understand that everyone can be part of global change even at the local level.

marginalised groups in the region.

A network, as an organisational form, needs to be attentive to the learning needs of its membership to be relevant and effective. Furthermore, for the network to be sustainable, it requires an intention to continually invest in its membership for identifying and nurturing emergent leadership. ASPBAE has been able to integrate both these efforts into its long-term, multi-level strategy to build and expand regional leadership. The Basic Leadership Development Course (BLDC) is a steadfast expression of this strategy. An annual programme since 1993, the BLDC is designed to build leadership skills of its member organisations to strengthen and advance adult education practices at the national and regional level.

Over 350 individuals representing ASPBAE member organisations have participated in the BLDC since it was first held in 1993. Evidence indicates that BLDC graduates continue to be engaged creatively in their on-going adult education work within their organisational and national contexts after completing the BLDC. ASPBAE has



The BLDC has created a rich resource pool of adult education practitioners within the ASPBAE membership

“The BLDC has helped me understand the adult learning process”

Bipasha Roy, Programme Associate, Sahbhagi Shiksha Kendra (SSK), India

I participated in the BLDC in 2011 in Medan, Indonesia. It was a great opportunity for me to brush up my leadership qualities. I am able to better manage a team and more effectively plan and implement projects.

“I have started to be more attentive to people's contexts”

Charlie Razo, Librarian/Researcher, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM)

The skills and knowledge I gained from the 2011 BLDC in Medan, Indonesia, strengthened my leadership and mentoring capacity and has benefitted my approach to leadership and adult education. As a young leader, I have started to be more attentive to people's contexts. I strive to create a work culture that is conducive to people's vision, which inspires them, and harnesses their abilities.

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A recently concluded external evaluation of the BLDC indicated that “the BLDC is a unique leadership capacity building endeavor at the regional level which has been able to

sustain itself for over two decades.”

The standing examples of leadership in action in the Asia Pacific region are derived from the live experiences of BLDC graduates from different

countries and contexts who have been engaged in transformative adult education practice, and enabled and strengthened by the BLDC learning process.

“I learnt about the power of partnerships”

Anne Pakoa, National Capacity Development and Advocacy Support Officer, Vanuatu Education Policy Advocacy Coalition (VEPAC)

I learnt the secret to taking local education coalitions further through the BLDC training in Medan, Indonesia, in 2011. I learnt all about the power of partnerships, engaging, networking, and linking with other civil society organisations to have a stronger and stabilised coalition.

Reality Bytes

How technology can inform, reform, and transform

By Robert Francis B. Garcia, Oxfam GB, Philippines



Bobby Garcia

I used a typewriter in college.

Quite a relief the compact type was already around by then, easy enough to lug about and use in cramming term papers and propaganda materials. (I was also a student activist then, but that’s another story.) The portable computer was convenient especially compared to the humongous types we had at home – which were so

Promoting mobile phones for literacy

The Bunyad Foundation, a Lahore-based NGO working on literacy and education of rural women and children, along with UNESCO Islamabad and Mobilink Pakistan (the largest mobile phone company in the country), joined hands to start the Mobile-Based Post-Literacy Pilot Project. The main objective of the project is to develop a mobile-based, distance post-literacy programme where new literates receive post-literacy materials as messages in a mobile phone for them to read and respond to.

heavy we joked that the unfortunate thief that would attempt to steal one would inevitably suffer from a hernia. Also existent then was an even better innovation: the electric typewriter – for which we no longer needed considerable finger strength to type. It was the ‘soft touch’ of the time.

Computers did not rule yet.

I’m more than four-and-a-half decades old and I can say I stood witness to technological innovation – nay, revolution – as it unfolded. ‘Snail-mail’, fax, e-mail, and e-groups, all seem obsolete now with the advent of ‘social media’. Disasters get reported and updated in real-time via Twitter (along with the latest celebrity angst). Social upheavals and the overthrow of governments are incited through Facebook.

Is this a good thing?

One of my tasks when I was working with ASPBAE was to lead the writing of a book on information and communication technology (ICT), which led to the publication of Divide and Connect: Perils and Potentials of Information and Communication Technology in Asia and the Pacific in 2004. That was a mere seven years ago, but the book now seems somehow

outdated – for it didn’t even mention YouTube (which was created in 2005). The evolution of technology is simply so mind-boggling.

Technology has definitely altered the way we learn as well. For one, the internet has radically changed the modality of research. Before, visits to the library were inevitable. We had to rummage through card catalogues, walk aisles, and curse vandals for torn pages. Now, we just Google. Yes, it’s much faster to acquire information nowadays – though of course that does not necessarily translate to more profound knowledge and wiser humans. Sometimes what we gain in breadth we lose in depth; what we gain in volume we lose in focus.

The advent of the digital age ushered no realignment of fundamental power relations; we now just have information haves and have-nots who are still divided along the same economic and political lines. Nevertheless, we can still argue that ICT has become a kind of equalizer and an effective tool in the democratisation project. It has encouraged erstwhile subdued voices and amplified them. It has facilitated

Empowering communities in video advocacy

Abhivyakti, an India-based organisation that works to strengthen media communication resources of NGOs and activists, works with communities and trains them in scripting, shooting, and editing videos. One such video was made by women rag-pickers who were branded as thieves. When civil society members, including the police, saw the film, there was an intense dialogue where the women rag-pickers were able to advocate their plight and the authorities were compelled to take action.

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engagement and discourse among diverse actors and communities and helped invent new ways of interacting and advocating. It has enabled fisherfolk in some rural

Indian communities to know weather predictions in advance. The poorest of vendors and farmers can now own mobile phones and transact.

I say that is empowerment and it is nothing short of revolutionary. Technology is good. Now that's original! Let me post it on my Facebook page.

Using the web to bring education practitioners together

PRACTICE IN PARTICIPATION is a web-based portal that is both a digital resource and a forum to contribute and access field-based knowledge on participatory practices. An initiative of the Society of Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), the portal focuses on knowledge building, synthesis, and creating platforms for exchange of ideas through documents, case studies, videos, and photographs on various themes. The portal has 361 members across Asia, Latin America, USA, Europe, and Australia.

FLASHBACK - With ASPBAE's 50th anniversary approaching in 2014, Ed-lines will look back at 50 years and feature articles commemorating important moments in ASPBAE's life and history in each issue in 2013-2014. Keep watching this time capsule for more...

Mayhem and Magic in Darwin: December, 1996

(Extracts from "The Road Less Traveled, The Story of Gender Mainstreaming in ASPBAE")

- by Lalita Ramdas, ASPBAE 2006

"For many of us who were in Tagaytay (ASPBAE's 1st General Assembly) and then in Darwin (ASPBAE's 2nd General Assembly), each experience represented a landmark in taking forward a process which had been set in place over years with careful planning and thought. We could see the continuity and the slow but steady progress towards certain goals."

"...If somebody should put a date and the time on significant events along the journey, then for me it's the Darwin General Assembly of 1996. That was the time when gender really moved centerstage and I think that it startled everybody. The women worked as a caucus and the men who were with us worked along side." - Vasanth Kannabiran

There was a strong reaction to the fact that the statements at the opening Plenary of the Darwin Assembly touched superficially on issues such as poverty, gender inequality, marginalisation in society, and the need for a radicalised education agenda. The ferment created by this reaction carried on through several days and nights of discussion and found its way into the drafting room. As some of us sat around the table, bleary-eyed through lack of sleep, others crowded around us, agitatedly discussing the core issues and why they needed to be incorporated into the Darwin Declaration.

To quote Vasanth again,

"There was a big ferment and that ferment was reflected in the whole series of discussions. And there we were suddenly talking about gender training and all the issues of gender. Then came the drafting of the statement. I remember you (Lalita - did you sleep at all? You seem to have spent three days and nights at the drafting table!) were there and all of us were sitting in the room trying

to see that the important issues were incorporated into the statement. As we spoke, many important things came up and we began to shape that document in certain ways. We worked for two nights drafting that document and immediately the

document became something that was alive and vital. The process of its becoming alive and vital was not because of only the gender issue, but that the whole issue of alternate discourses and disempowered groups was central. And then I began to see the whole thing as a political possibility."

...Eventually the final shape and thrust of the now famous Darwin Declaration was the product of three all-night sessions by a small intrepid group led by Murray Thomson and me, Lalita Ramdas! This is the stuff of which dreams and visions are built and it is important to keep the memories alive in some way for future generations to share. A visit to the Darwin Declaration on the ASPBAE website might be a useful exercise. It was in the framing of the vision and mission statement, as well as in the energetic implementation by the empowered agencies such as the executive, the secretariat, and the women's programme, that a new life and energy became available for gender mainstreaming.

...What Darwin achieved in a dramatic way was to bring to the forefront many from the regional women's movements who till then had always felt skeptical about the ability of adult education groups to 'deliver' on hard core feminist or gender concerns. In many ways this marked another watershed in the journey."



Lalita Ramdas, educator and activist

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