Reflections: Young women researchers from three countries come together to reflect, share, and inspire!

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Building the Asia Pacific agenda on education, skills, and empowerment of marginalised young women

A regional meeting of partners in youth-led action research was held to, amongst other things, engage the youth in education policy and programmes.

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Strengthening support to communities for sustainable development through community-based learning

An expert meeting of the UNESCO project, ‘Promoting Community-Based Education for Sustainable Development’, reviewed a learning module to support Community Learning Centres and community organisations in the Asia Pacific.

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Australia panel discussion calls for urgent need to address education financing gap

A panel discussion featuring Alice Albright, CEO of the Global Partnership for Education, was organised by ASPBAE and several of its members focusing on the financing gap in education, especially for women and girls.

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Sub-Regional News and Views

A global call to advance STEM Education for Girls

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Member of the Month

Indian Dreams Foundation (IDF)

The Indian Dreams Foundation (IDF) is dedicated to educate, empower, and develop underprivileged communities by creating awareness on pressing issues such as importance of education and health. After IDF was established as an NGO in January 2005, it has worked in the spheres of education, health, and women’s empowerment in underprivileged communities. IDF strongly believes in the power of education as a tool of empowerment and uses it to break taboos and stereotypes. Its flagship programmes involve working with children in underprivileged communities with a view to enrol them in formal, informal, or vocational education. Click [here](#) to know more about IDF.

Photo of the Month

International Youth Day was celebrated on 12 August 2017 with the theme *Youth Building Peace.*

ASPBAE Lens

ASPBAE would like to dedicate a space in the Bulletin to showcase photos its staff have taken. We want to feature their perception of life around them, the interesting things they see, inspiring moments they observe, and beautiful imagery they capture that reflect education and lifelong learning in a myriad different ways and forms, all left to be interpreted in our own unique ways. In this edition of the Bulletin, we feature a photo taken by Cecilia “Thea” Soriano, ASPBAE’s Programmes and Operations Coordinator.

Cecilia “Thea” Soriano
Programmes and Operations Coordinator
This section of the Bulletin is dedicated to highlighting news and events from each of ASPBAE’s sub-regions – South and Central Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific. A different sub-region will be featured in each issue. For this edition, we highlight the launch of UNESCO’s first ever global report on Girls’ Education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), entitled ‘Cracking the Code’.

A global call to advance STEM Education for Girls
28-30 August 2017, Bangkok, Thailand


The event, co-organised by UNESCO in collaboration with the Institute for the Promotion of Science and Technology at the Ministry of Education of Thailand, brought together some 350 participants from over 70 countries to understand the factors fuelling gender disparities in STEM, share positive experiences in bridging the gap and chart the way forward. It was generously supported by the CJ Group.

Opening the event, the Director-General asserted that, “the Sustainable Development Goals call upon every society to harness scientific talent to find solutions, to improve health, nutrition, resource management, environmental protection… We need the talent of girls and women to search, to discover. This is a matter of progress and social inclusion in all countries, and it is why this Conference is so important, to understand, to share experiences and to launch new avenues of action and cooperation.”

Noting that only 17 women have won a Nobel Prize in physics, chemistry, or medicine compared to 572 men, Irina Bokova said that, “such deep inequalities are the result of a wide range of factors, starting with social, cultural, and gender norms that influence how girls and boys are brought up, how they learn and interact with family, friends, teachers, and the wider community, which shape their identity, behaviour, and choices. This disempowers girls and women and throws a shadow over entire societies, placing a break on progress to sustainable development.”

To address the complex factors that are holding girls back from pursuing a STEM vocation, she emphasised the need for research, partnerships, and policies to support them from their earliest years in school right through their careers.

In his opening remarks, Vice Minister of Education of Thailand, Sophon Napathorn, underlined his country’s commitment to integrate STEM subjects across the curriculum and to prepare all citizens to contribute to sustainable development through innovation and creativity. He noted that Thailand is the first country in the Asia Pacific region to pilot the UNESCO ‘STEM and Gender Advancement’ project to identify gaps, develop indicators, and promote successful policies. He also informed about plans to launch a regional centre for STEM education through the South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO).
In a keynote, Aditi Prasad, Chief Operating Officer of Robotix Learning Solutions, based in India, shared her inspiring mission to educate young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds to learn to code and become innovators. Starting in a girls’ orphanage, the Indian Girls Code to bridge the gender gap in STEM has extended to many children across South India. She also emphasised the importance of encouraging boys and girls to work, learn, and create together on technology, so that they become genuine equals.

This was followed by a ministerial panel, facilitated by BBC anchor Zeinab Badawi, during which challenges, lessons, and best practices from Ghana, Jamaica, Senegal, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates were shared. These have involved a range of interventions from curricula reform and project-based teaching and learning strategies to national contests in STEM subjects for girls, career counselling and mentoring through female role models.

Click here to know more about the event.

This write-up is a reproduction of an article appearing on the UNESCO website. [BACK]

Building the Asia Pacific agenda on education, skills, and empowerment of marginalised young women

Regional youth-led action research meeting
18-21 August 2017, Chiang Mai, Thailand

A regional meeting of partners in youth-led action research was held in Chiang Mai. The meeting was an opportunity for young women researchers from India, Indonesia, and the Philippines to meet each other face-to-face. ASPBAE also invited to the regional meeting its members who have embarked on doing youth action research projects independently, such as those in Nepal, Mongolia, and Myanmar.

The objectives of the regional meeting were -

- To discuss the findings and recommendations from the youth-led action-oriented research from the three countries and draw up an Asia Pacific agenda
- To share reflections of young researcher's success and challenges in implementing a youth-led action-oriented research
- To generate lessons learnt and document the components on youth action research as a process for engaging marginalised youth in education policy and programme development at the community, sub-national, and national levels

The meeting included a session on tracing back what the young women did to implement the action research in their respective communities. They reflected on the challenges and perceived changes within themselves after going through the action research. The participants also focused on the lessons learnt in doing youth-led action research. NGO mentors, also a part of the meeting, reflected on
the building blocks in helping the youth in doing action research. At the conclusion of the meeting, the researchers presented the findings and recommendations from the 3 countries which were then used to build the Asia agenda on education, skills development, and empowerment of marginalised young women in the region.

The young women appreciated the workshop as they were able to listen and learn from the situation of girls and young women in different countries and make the connections between their experiences as women.

The NGO mentors agreed on the next steps in documenting the whole youth-led action research. The major outputs will be – (1) Country reports on the research findings (2) Country documentation of the youth action research process (3) Manual on the process and how to do youth action research, lessons learned (4) Regional advocacy paper on findings and recommendations from the youth action research in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines (5) On-line compendium of resources in implementing the youth action research, and (6) Illustrative guidebook on how to do youth action research for the use of Member States (UIL) and practitioners (management, mentors, etc.).

In terms of regional-level spaces for advocacy, the youth agenda will be given prominence in the CONFINTEA 6 Mid-Term Review conference to be held in Korea in October 2017; its approach and outcomes will be shared in SEAMEO Innotech's 15th International Conference on Inclusive Education, ‘Thriving in the Margins’, March 2018 and inform ASPBAE’s advocacy within the SDG-SDG4 processes and with sub-regional bodies such as ASEAN and SAARC..

Reflections: Young women researchers from three countries come together to reflect, share, and inspire!
18–21 August 2017, Chiang Mai, Thailand

By Sakhi Nitin Anita, Feminist Researcher, India

ASPBAE hosted a Regional Meeting for partners in its Youth-led Action-Oriented Research (YAR) on basic skills education for young women. The purpose of the meeting was to share insights, findings, and recommendations from an action research conducted by ASPBAE’s partner organisations in three countries – India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Young women from these countries were invited to share their experiences of leading the action research. The meeting was a unique opportunity for the young women to interact with their counterparts from other countries and engage in a process of collective sharing, reflecting, and co-learning.

After participating in the Regional Meeting, I would like to share three learnings from it. Before I proceed however, allow me to contextualise and ‘embody’ this report with some information about myself! I am a young feminist researcher from India. After completing my post-graduation in Women's Studies, I started working with an education and livelihoods programme for young women in Mumbai. Although not involved directly with the YAR, I have had the opportunity to be associated from a distance, observing and occasionally assisting Abhivyakti – the
YAR partner in India – in the research analysis and reporting. I was invited to the Regional Meeting to support the young women researchers from India in their presentations, as well as to help them navigate a foreign land and language. From this unique vantage point of a participant-observer, here are my three reflections -

Prioritising the ‘How’ – The Importance of Process

While each of the three country groups shared findings from the YAR that were distinct and significant, equal significance was given to the process of doing the action research. All the groups shared that the process was both transformative and empowering. One of the features of action research is that there is no difference between the researcher and the researched. As the young women were inquiring into their own lives, they could simultaneously take action and find collective solutions to problems identified through the research. Through the YAR, youth researchers developed the capacities of critical thinking, teamwork, and problem solving, leading to their personal growth as confident and active young women leaders in their communities.

This transformation was not only on a personal level, but also led to changes in their local communities. An example of this was given by the researchers from India, who call themselves ‘Shodhinis’ or women seekers. While surveying the girls in their villages, the Shodhinis found that most girls liked to read but, due to lack of reading spaces and the unavailability of books, very few girls in their village had actually read anything apart from school textbooks. As a result, they decided to start ‘Shodhini Libraries’ exclusively for girls and women in their villages, with Abhivyakti’s support. Libraries were initiated in one of the Shodhinis’ homes, and continue to be operated from there. Further, these libraries became safe spaces for girls and young women to come together, share, and build a collective identity.

Reclaiming the ‘Who’ – Young Women’s Critical and Creative Voice

The significance of the youth-led action research was underscored not only in the process, but also the way in which the youth shared the findings. The data they had collected was made more nuanced by their annotations in the form of questions and critical insights. As the data they had collected was linked to their own lives, the young women analysed it more critically, pointing out discrepancies and connections. The youth researchers brought their creative and critical energy to the meeting. Their narratives were rich and were often accompanied with colours, pictures, and illustrations.

In addition to this, the youth researchers brought their creative and critical energy to the meeting. Words are quite drab and insufficient to illuminate the richness of their narratives, which they often accompanied with colours, pictures, and illustrations. This ability to express creatively was so infectious that it seeped into the adults’ presentations as well!
Reimagining the ‘What’ – The Need for Cross-Cultural Dialogue

Many findings and experiences from the YAR were shared across distinct cultural contexts: the gendered nature of domestic work, for instance, and its resultant pressures on young women. It was heartening to experience these commonalities across cultures as it gave us a sense of solidarity of struggle. However, certain aspects of the young women’s narratives were very different, which led to interesting exchanges. For example, the researchers from India were shocked to find out that a youth researcher from the Philippines was a single mother. In their quest to know more, the Indians went to the Filipino researcher and enquired about the whereabouts of her husband. “I don’t have one!” she replied, stunning her Indian friends into a complete loss for words and exhausting the possibility of a further line of questioning!

For the young women from India, the realisation that a girl “like us” could get pregnant, have the baby, and continue to live with her parents without having to marry or be socially ostracised was ground-breaking. It changed the way they saw society and the boundaries it had drawn around girls and women. Perhaps, it even led them to expand the realm of what was possible in their own lives.

Young women speaking for themselves and narrating their own stories not only brought out the truth of their lives, but sharing it in a cross-cultural space allowed this truth to be unpacked further – expanded, questioned, and reimagined. For the young women researchers, listening to each other and understanding the other’s contexts made them realise there were other ways of thinking, learning, living – even loving! – that were beyond the fixed confines of the familiar, but definitely possible.

Finally, the ‘Why’

Even though I was asked to share reflections on the Regional Meeting, I believe the journey to Chiang Mai – the venue – was just as significant! After the meeting, on our way back to the airport, I asked one of the young women from India what the highlight of the trip was for her. She said there were quite a few, but the biggest one was the day she left for Thailand. As she was the first person to visit a ‘foreign’ country from her village, a great number of people had gathered to see her off. She said she had never received that kind of attention and admiration before, and felt as if she was being “married and sent off”. Except that in this case, she was happy that her parents were proud of her, and wished that more girls got the opportunity to leave her village, not for marriage, but for something they had achieved on their own.

The YAR was aimed at building recommendations from the grassroots to improve policies for inclusive and gender-responsive education. However, the strength of the youth-led action research methodology has been in the transformative potential of its each step. Thus, even the Regional Meeting became an empowering experience for the young women, bolstering their recognition in their own communities and enhancing their negotiating power at home and in their villages. [BACK]
Decree for a lifelong learning policy underway in Lao PDR
9 August 2017, Vientiane, Lao PDR

By Uwe Gartenschlaeger, DVV International, Regional Office for South and Southeast Asia, Lao PDR

More than 60 participants from Line Ministries, Departments of the Ministry of Education and Sports, and various other stakeholders attended a high-level workshop, with the theme ‘Towards a Lifelong Learning Policy in Lao PDR’, on preparing a Prime Minister’s Decree on Lifelong Learning (LLL) Policy. The workshop aimed to inform participants about the global and regional developments around the concept of LLL, and present the existing draft of the Decree for a LLL Policy, developed by the Department for Non-Formal Education with the support from DVV International and UNESCO Bangkok. For the first time, the Decree will provide a legal framework for implementing the LLL approach in the Lao education system.

In her opening remarks at the workshop, Sengdeuane Lachanthaboune, Minister of Education and Sports, stressed the importance of a lifelong learning policy for the further development of the education system in Laos. Ichiro Miyazawa of UNESCO Bangkok explained the concept of lifelong learning as a guiding principle for all constituencies involved, e.g. primary and secondary schools should be responsible for teaching children how to learn independently, and interventions should make the transfer between formal and non-formal education easier.

In his presentation, Le Huy lam, Director of the SEAMEO Center for Lifelong Learning (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam) explained the efforts and success of the Vietnamese government in building a learning society. It is seen as a joint project, including various ministries, various organisations, the media, as well as the national and local administration.

In his closing remarks, Ka Saleumsouk, Director General of the Department of Non-Formal Education, informed the participants about the next steps and announced the intention of the Ministry of Education and Sports to get the Decree approved by the end of 2018.

ASPBAE Australia members highlight implementation of SDGs related to education, gender, and decent work
9-10 August 2017, Melbourne, Australia

By Elaine Butler, Women in Adult and Vocational Education, Inc. (WAVE), Australia

The 2030 Agenda heralds a new era for women’s rights and gender equality. The ‘leave no one behind’ principle at the agenda’s heart rests on the collective belief that the benefits of development must be shared by all, shifting the agenda from equality of opportunity to equality of outcome.
Gender equality and inequality concern how people live their daily lives, their relationships, choices, decisions, and the freedom they do or do not have to live a life they value. Gender equality is a matter of social justice and human rights. It drives development progress. It is vital for achieving peaceful, inclusive, resilient, and just societies (Global Education Monitoring Report 2016. Gender review. Creating sustainable futures for all).

ASPBAE’s Australian member organisations, Women in Adult and Vocational Education, Inc. (WAVE) and Adult Learning Australia (ALA), co-organised a series of events in Melbourne to highlight the financing and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that focus on education (SDG4), training for women and girls (SDG5), and pathways to decent work (SDG8).

The targets of the stand-alone gender goal, SDG5, are central to achieving gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment – a condition for achieving all the SDGs, including SDG 4, inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, which includes a target focused on gender equality in education, and SDG 8, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all.

Three events were designed to take advantage of the visit to Australia by Alice Albright, CEO of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and April Golden, GPE’s Donor Relations Officer, Asia Pacific, and focussed on education and development. The events brought together members and friends of ACED – Australian Coalition for Education and Development.

An event for ACED members included a presentation by Alice Albright with a focus on the organisation, priorities, and work plan of GPE, and issues around Overseas Development Aid (ODA). This was followed by a Q&A session in which a number of participants raised questions and comments about the need for GPE to consider also prioritising out-of-school education, training, and lifelong learning. They also reiterated the importance of the full scope of SDG4 being included in GPE dialogue, along with matters relating to the Australian government’s involvement in the shared agendas of civil society.

A public event that shifted the focus to SDG4 (Education) and SDG5 (Gender) was organised at RMIT University under the banner of ‘The financing gap and the challenges of achieving the goals for women and girls in education’. The event was co-organised by the Master of International Development Programme at RMIT University, WAVE, ALA, ASPBAE, Pascal's Friends Association (PIMA), and ACED.

At the recent G20 meeting, Julia Gillard, GPE Chair, observed that “education financing is down”. This is alarming when 61 million girls continue to miss out on primary and lower-secondary school and 758 million adults lack any literacy skills, two-thirds of whom are women. If education is to contribute to addressing the urgent issues of poverty, conflict, and climate change, the question was asked - what can be done to mobilise the will and resources needed to ensure the right of every person to access high quality affordable education and training?
While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of each and all of the 17 SDGs. Countries have the primary responsibility for the follow up and review of the progress made in implementing the SDGs, which will require quality, accessible, and timely data collection. Regional follow up and review will be based on national-level analyses and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level.

While the above events focused on issues related to education in development, a public forum - *Making the SDGs real in Australia’s adult and vocational education* - was organised on 10 August to focus on the SDGs in general, and specifically on what is happening (or not) around SDG4, SDG5, and SDG8 from a lifelong learning adult education and training perspective in Australia. The event was held in partnership with WAVE and ALA, with the support of the European Union (EU) Centre at RMIT University.

Australia, as one of the 193 UN members who signed onto *Agenda 2030*, is expected to report on policies and progress towards these goals and their targets nationally as well as contributing through its aid programmes. To date, there has been very little information in the wider public arena about the SDGs. There is a perception that the SDGs only relate to DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). Furthermore, both the Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Adult and Community Education (ACE) sectors continue to operate under pressure. There is little, if any, awareness of the relatively new *UNESCO Strategy for TVET 2016-2021* and its 3 Pillars of Priority Areas, including the central pillar of gender.

For these reasons, WAVE organised an educative and participative forum with the aim of getting information about the SDGs out to the wider adult and community education, vocational education and training, and lifelong learning sectors to bring to the forefront a focus on gender and decide what might be done by civil society (and by the government) to get things moving in Australia.

WAVE organised a forum to get information about the SDGs out to the wider adult and community education, vocational education and training, and lifelong learning sectors to bring to the forefront a focus on gender and decide what might be done by civil society (and by the government) to get things moving in Australia.

A public forum - *Making the SDGs real in Australia’s adult and vocational education* - was organised specifically on what is happening (or not) around SDG4, SDG5, and SDG8 from a lifelong learning adult education and training perspective in Australia.
recognise the need to be organising and organised about what, if anything, is happening along with consulting about issues in Australia. Robbie Guevara participated in the forum and explained the evolution and intent of the SDGs and ‘Education 2030: The Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action’. ASPBAE’s Bernie Lovegrove spoke of ASPBAE’s regional civil society-SDG4 experiences, linking Australia and the Asia Pacific region in SDG4-related advocacy. Elaine Butler of WAVE considered the possibilities for feminisation of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET); how progress can be made towards gender equality and women’s economic empowerment through the SDGs. Sally Moyle, Chief Executive of CARE Australia, spoke of gender issues relating to the negotiation and agreement of the SDGs, their significance, and Australia's responsibilities.

Information about the Forum, the programme, and some presentations are available on ALA’s website.

While the above events focus on WAVE and ALA, given the complexity and size of this agenda, we recognise well the need to work collaboratively, to share information and efforts with ASPBAE’s Australian members, with like-minded civil society organisations, and with colleagues and friends who are engaged in promoting the outcomes we all wish to see in Australia as well as regionally and globally. [BACK]

Australia panel discussion calls for urgent need to address education financing gap
9 August 2017, Melbourne, Australia

ASPBAE’s Australian member organisations – RMIT University, Adult Learning Australia (ALA), and Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) – along with Pascal’s Friends Association (PIMA) and the Australian Coalition for Education and Development (ACED) - collaborated to hold a panel discussion on ‘The Financing Gap and the Challenges of Achieving the Goals for Women and Girls’ Education’. The Panel Discussion was held at RMIT University and featured Alice Albright, CEO of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

In addition to Alice Albright, the panelists included Sarah Goulding, Assistant Secretary, Global Development Branch, Multilateral Development and Finance Division, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Bruce Wilson, Director European Union (EU) Centre, RMIT University; Susan Hopgood, President of Education International (EI) and Federal Secretary of the Australian Education Union (AEU); and Elaine Butler from WAVE. Associate Professor at RMIT University and ASPBAE’s Immediate Past President, Jose Roberto (Robbie) Guevara, moderated the event.

Some of the key common messages that emerged from discussions were -

- The education financing gap is real, large, and needs to be addressed urgently if we are to meet the targets of SDG4 (the education goal in the Sustainable Development Goals) by 2030.

Discussions emerging from the panel focussed on urgent need to address the gaps in education financing and new strategies to bridge the education financing gap.
The current GPE replenishment drive is an important process to galvanize support from donor countries to increase funding to GPE, the most important global pool of funds for education. Additionally, as part of the education financing process, all governments are called upon to increase their national budget allocations to education, and to find ways to increase the national tax base that can be allocated to education.

- Millions of women and girls are disproportionately missing out on education at primary and lower secondary school, while two thirds of the 758 million adults that lack any literacy skills are women.
- Education is a fundamental requirement to achieve all the other SDGs.
- New strategies and concerted collective effort and advocacy is required by all stakeholders to bridge the education financing gap, to mobilise the will and resources needed to ensure the right of every person’s access to high quality affordable education and training.

Participants were invited to share their own experiences related to the content and process of community-based ESD to understand and formulate a relevant framework.

Strengthening support to communities for sustainable development through community-based learning
22-23 August 2017, Bangkok, Thailand

To further strengthen its support to communities in the Asia Pacific in their pursuit of sustainable development through community-based learning, UNESCO Bangkok, in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), DVV International, ASPBAE, and other partners, initiated the project ‘Promoting Community-Based Education for Sustainable Development’. The aim of the project is to develop a learning module to support Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and community organisations in the Asia Pacific in translating their education for sustainable development (ESD) commitments into action.

The first expert meeting for this project was held in November 2016 in Bangkok to articulate the objectives of the project, define the focus and the scope of the module to be developed, and plan the work ahead. The outcome of the first meeting was a work-plan of the project which included the review of existing materials relevant to the project as well as an outline of the proposed module.

The second expert meeting for this project was organised in Bangkok to review the modality, structure, and approach of the proposed module, elaborating the elements of the different components of the module. Representatives from UIL (Rika Yorozu), DVV International (Uwe Gartenschaleger), RMIT University (Jose Roberto “Robbie” Guevara), Okayama University (Kiichi Oyasu), Centre for Environment Education, CEE, India (Santosh Sutar), and Non-Timber Products Organisation, Cambodia (Vansak Vay). UNESCO Bangkok, led by Usio Miura, hosted and moderated the meeting. ASPBAE was represented by Cecilia Soriano in the first meeting and Anita Borkar in the second expert meeting.

A moment of silence was observed at the start of the meeting to pay tribute to the work of the Director of UNESCO Bangkok, Dr. Gwang-Jo Kim, on his recent demise.
All participants were invited to share their own experiences related to the content and process of community-based ESD to understand and formulate a relevant framework. Fumiko Noguchi, the consultant assigned to draft the module, made a presentation of the broad sketch of the module based on her search and review of the available literature on community-based ESD. Participants offered their comments and feedback on the various aspects of the draft module.

The deliberations led to an agreement on the articulation of the overall objective of the project - “Develop a learning module for community and non-formal educators aimed at enhancing their capacities to support communities in embedding learning in their pursuit of sustainable development by bringing the whole community together to reflect on and address their issues and concerns from perspectives of sustainable development.”

The expert group also agreed on the building of four capacities through this project – (1) Understanding ESD; (2) Adapt and apply the understanding of ESD; (3) Advance the understanding of ESD as an on-going practice; and (4) Educate others to recognise the understanding of ESD.

The participants agreed to explore avenues where the module could be piloted, including ESD networks (Kominkan Society, the National Federation of UNESCO Associations of Japan, CEE India and ASPBAE) and UNESCO country offices in the Asia Pacific. Ideas for mobilising funding resources through the CLC networks and institutional partners were also shared. The meeting concluded with a plan for a face-to-face meeting early in the year 2018, prior to piloting the module.

Participants agreed to explore avenues where the module could be piloted. They also shared ideas for mobilising resources through community learning centre networks and partners.

The experts group agreed on a project objective primarily focusing on developing a learning module for community and non-formal educators aimed at enhancing their capacities to support communities to address their issues and concerns from a sustainable development perspective.

‘Alliance of CSOs in Tajikistan for Education’ formed in Central Asia!
27 August – 1 September 2017, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

ASPBAE’s Helen Dabu and Susmita Choudhury visited Tajikistan to facilitate the formation of an education coalition with a core group of civil society representatives that have formed an “Initiative Group”. Six organisations are part of the group – Vocational Education Training (VET), ASTI, Microinvest, AEAT, Ishtirok, and the Association of Parents with Disabled Children.

A 2-day coalition strengthening workshop was held followed by bilateral meetings with group member organisations. The workshop, organised for civil society members of the education alliance in Tajikistan, was held from 27-28 August 2017 in Dushanbe. The main objective of the workshop was to lend clarity to the concept of an “Initiative Group” in the formation of a coalition. The sessions included concept setting, prioritising national-level education issues, and developing plans of action.

A lively discussion was held on the notion of a coalition, on education policy advocacy, and on the importance of working in partnership in advancing policy issues. Helen Dabu facilitated a session explaining the process of setting a vision for a coalition, building an advocacy strategy, and planning coalition activities.
Participants identified priority education issues in the country. The four main areas identified were - access and inclusion in education, quality education, education budget, and governance and management. It was agreed that the group would address the issues based on the principles of the Right to Education and link them with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4 – the education goal).

Group members agreed to name the coalition **Alliance of CSOs in Tajikistan for Education**. They also drafted the goals of the alliance and identified the following four policy targets -

1. Promote the Right to Education in the country and advocate for the implementation of SDG4.
2. Push for civil society engagement to increase the education budget and ensure its proper implementation.
3. Advocate to improve the quality of education in Tajikistan.
4. Strengthen the Alliance as an institution for education advocacy.

With support from Helen Dabu and Susmita Choudhury, participants categorized advocacy strategies to address policy targets.

At the end of the workshop, a detailed plan of action till 2018 was developed. It was also agreed that the group would conduct a strategic planning workshop in 2017 to develop the vision and mission of the Alliance.

The workshop was followed by meetings with individual alliance members to further set the tone for the future of the Alliance, discuss the political context in the country, and determine commitment of members.

The ASPBAE team visited two organisations - Vocational Education Training (VET) and Ishtirok. They also met representatives of Microinvest and ASTI from Khujand province to discuss Alliance activities and strategies to strengthen its presence at the national level.

Recognising the role of young people in building and sustaining peace

**International Youth Day**

12 August 2017

The theme of International Youth Day 2017 was Youth Building Peace. There is growing recognition that as agents of change, young people are critical actors in conflict prevention and sustaining peace. International Youth Day 2017 was dedicated to celebrating young people’s contributions to conflict prevention and transformation as well as inclusion, social justice, and sustainable peace.

The United National recognises that the scale and challenges of sustaining peace requires partnerships between stakeholders, including youth organisations. It also reaffirms the important role youth can play in deterring and resolving conflicts, and are key constituents in ensuring the success of both peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.
Young people’s inclusion in the peace and security agenda is key to building and sustaining peace. The process of social inclusion for youth, including participation in decision-making as well as access to quality education, health care, and basic services, promotes their role as active contributors to society and affords young people with opportunities to reach their potential and achieve their goals. When youth are excluded from political, economic, and social spheres and processes, it can be a risk factor for violence and violent forms of conflict. Therefore, identifying and addressing the social exclusion of young people is a precondition for sustaining peace.

This write-up contains excerpts from an article appearing on the United Nations website. [BACK]

Announcements

Accelerating Workforce Reskilling for the Fourth Industrial Revolution: An Agenda for Leaders to Shape the Future of Education, Gender and Work


The goal of the Dialogue Series was to bring together leaders to develop a common vision on emerging issues. As a key output of the learning created by the discussion, the White Paper draws upon submissions by leaders and experts who engaged in the dialogue, as well as the latest thinking from international organisations, think tanks, businesses and other stakeholders. It provides a common narrative on the new context for emerging issues, identifies priorities for leaders, and supports the development of policy roadmaps. It also lays out key pathways for change and illustrates successful examples of implementation to inspire broad-based transformation.

This write-up draws from information available on World Economic Forum website. [BACK]

Right to Education Initiative to launch page on adult education

The Right to Education Initiative (RTE), a human rights organisation promoting legal accountability of the right to education, launched a page on adult education on the RTE website. The page aims to clarify adult education and its various components from a human rights perspective and seeks to explain the human rights framework as applied to adult education. [BACK]

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ASPBAE mourns demise of Dr. Gwang-Jo Kim, Director of UNESCO Bangkok

Dr. Gwang-Jo Kim, Director of UNESCO Bangkok, passed away in South Korea on 11 August 2017. Below is the message of condolence sent by ASPBAE to the family and colleagues of Dr. Gwang-jo Kim –

We write on behalf of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), a long-standing regional NGO network advancing the right to quality education and lifelong learning for all.

It was with great sadness that we received the news of Dr. Gwang-Jo Kim’s untimely passing.

With GJ’s demise, we have all lost a strong, very able and committed champion of the right to education.

ASPBAE has worked closely with GJ in the years of his leadership of UNESCO Bangkok. We collaborated in various Asia Pacific meetings, drafting committees, projects, policy dialogues, workshops – as we jointly strove to shape an enabling environment that better secures quality education and learning opportunities for all, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalised in our region. We will miss his competence, clarity and dedication – his ability to listen and forge consensus that celebrated and respected diversity. We will remember how he ably steered the Asia Pacific regional processes that contributed strongly to defining the new education agenda post 2015; and the mechanisms that set the roll out of this new, bold ambition in place. And we will remember a kind, generous, joyful human being – ready for a quick chat even through his busy schedules, always game for a song, and who can forget the guitar playing at the end of a hard day’s work of debating and planning, even disagreeing?

He made UNESCO Bangkok a place where all perspectives and opinions mattered; where we were welcome and had voice.

Thank you for sharing him and his life with us.

We also share your deep loss.

Please accept our profound sympathies and condolences.

Click here to read UNESCO’s own tribute to Dr. Gwang-Jo Kim. [BACK]