



## What lies ahead for marginalised youth in Education 2030?

The long preparations for education post-2015 finally culminated in the World Education Forum (WEF) 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 19-22 May 2015. Now called Education 2030, the target “towards inclusive, equitable and quality education and lifelong learning for all” is Target 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its Draft Framework for Action was the focus of debates amongst Member States, civil society organisations, multilateral institutions, and other education partners during the WEF.

How does the marginalised youth agenda fare in Education 2030? What global commitments aimed at equalising education opportunities for the youth, denied an education, have been articulated and that will be agreed upon in the UN General Summit in New York this coming September?

Keeping these questions in mind, ASPBAE has been tracking the discussions around three key targets -

**Target 4.4** - By 2030, increase by x% the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.

**Target 4.5** - By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal

access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.

**Target 4.6** - By 2030, ensure that all youth and at least x% of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

While it can be argued that other targets, such as Target 4.1 that aims for equitable access to quality secondary education, also cater to marginalised youth who are still in school, ASPBAE has specifically looked at education targets and strategies for those youth who have been pushed out of school or never been to school. While there has been an increase in secondary enrolment in the Asia Pacific since Dakar, the Global Monitoring Report 2015 shows a significant number of adolescents (17-19 year olds) not in school -- 11.9% in East Asia and the Pacific and 36.5% in West and South Asia.

Education as a strategy for youth development in the Asia Pacific becomes even more urgent given the deteriorating jobs outlook. The number of unemployed youth (15-24 years old) globally has reached 75 million in 2012; 45% of them from the Asia Pacific.

Ensuring the commitment of Member



Education programmes for the youth must address multi-dimensional aspects that can empower them to transform their situations.

States to Targets 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6 will reap significant benefits to marginalised youth when translated in to global implementation standards and country education sector plans. Therefore, it is important to continue putting pressure at the global level until the UN General Summit agrees on four SDG targets in September and when they build consensus on education indicators until March 2016.

A meticulous watch on the indicators is very important in influencing the attitude of or motivating Member States to abide by specific target/s. The indicators are measured by which countries will be asked to report on at different periods of implementation of Education 2030. The indicators will provide a scorecard of how governments/countries are faring in their commitments to Education 2030. Looking at the indicators for Targets 4.4 through 4.6 that are to be debated and worked on by governments, civil society’s advocacy must increase its intensity to

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ASPBAE has specifically looked at education targets and strategies for those youth who have been pushed out of school or never been to school.

ensure quality and effective education programmes for marginalised youth. The targets are comprehensive but the measures by which countries will be monitored globally are limited -

**Target 4.4**

- Percentage of youth/adults skills by type of skills

**Target 4.5**

- Parity index (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/up wealth quintile) for all indicators
- Percentage of countries which have an explicit formula-based policy reallocating education resources to disadvantaged populations
- Percentage of total education expenditure borne by households
- Percentage of total aid to education allocated to low income countries

**Target 4.6**

- Percentage of youth/adults proficient in literacy skills
- Percentage of youth/adults proficient in numeracy skills
- Youth/adult literacy rate
- Participation rate of illiterate adults in literacy programmes

While education specialists have time and again argued the need to integrate literacy and numeracy to livelihoods and other functional literacy skills, the indicators for Target 4.6 lead Member States to only measure their success in terms of access to literacy and numeracy. Such indicators provide a limited way of measuring progress in meeting quality education provision for marginalised youth.

Apart from indicators, it is critical to challenge the dominant perspective of “skills for work” in framing education for youth. While it is admitted that work enables the youth to become productive, developing their skills towards work only misses out the other

necessary components of education interventions appropriate for the youth. These components include guidance counseling, coaching / mentoring, communication skills, leadership/team work/participation skills, and health education - abilities for them to build their confidence in pursuing not only work but multiple challenges in life.

Most education advocates and practitioners believe that influencing the global targets for marginalised youth (children and adults) will not deliver results if not buttressed by strong advocacy at the national and local levels in countries. But having civil society engaged at the global level not only demystifies and challenges the centers of debates, it also puts at the core of discussions what civil society already practices but never gets into country policies and programmes and may well be important to argue at the global level - That education programmes for the youth must address the multi-dimensional aspects that can empower the youth to transform their situations - civil society programmes working with marginalised youth need to be scaled up; That youth participation, institutionalised in all aspects of education governance, is key towards quality education provision, and; That strategically, education systems must be reformed towards making public education more accessible. This necessitates multiple pathways to learning where varied forms of education, especially non-formal and informal education, is provided to reach out to marginalised youth.

Through the year 2014, therefore, ASPBAE was actively involved in ensuring a strong civil society voice in the ongoing policy debates on the post-2015 development and education agendas at national, regional, and global levels. National and sub-regional consultations to broaden public debate on the evolving agenda were organised by ASPBAE and its members in several countries throughout the Asia Pacific. While actively participating in the official EFA review processes, ASPBAE members have also been developing alternative civil society reviews on the EFA experience – to ensure that the discussions on the future agenda are informed strongly by the lessons from EFA and its unfinished business.

The Festival of Learning was conceived as a space to bring these different conversation strands together as the

global education community prepares to agree on a new global education agenda and framework of action during the World Education Forum in May 2015 in Incheon, Korea. The Festival of Learning was a space to strategise Asia Pacific civil society coordinated action in this important global policy space - defining civil policy asks and advocacy strategies on the proposed goals, targets, indicators, the financing, governance, planning, and monitoring modalities and the role of civil society organisations. It was a platform to deliberate on the overall context and policy climate that define education and lifelong learning work in the region - especially as they interact and respond to the outstanding challenges of poverty, massive unemployment, inequity and continuing disparities, conflict, climate change, and privatisation of education, to name a few.

The Festival was also an arena to showcase the rich work of ASPBAE and its members on adult education and learning, reflecting on how the lessons from this deep practice bear on future work and indeed, the emergent development and education agendas.

With the evolving education agenda adopting a more solid lifelong learning framework, civil society contributions in this field of work, especially to address the learning needs of marginalised groups and communities, will help deepen and concretise the new policy frameworks from a human rights and social justice perspective.

The Festival also offered an occasion for ASPBAE and its members to honour ASPBAE’s 50 years of work and collectively define its vision ‘beyond 50’ - one that persists in advancing adult education and lifelong learning that empowers citizens and communities to transform their lives and conditions. In essence, the Festival of Learning was a convergence of education practitioners and advocates sharing their histories and innovations as they continue to pursue dialogues and actions towards transformative education. It was a coming together of current and emerging leaders of movements who harness the power of education in helping create a better and greener future for all in the Asia Pacific.

This issue of Ed-lines is devoted to documenting the important conversations that transpired during ASPBAE’s Festival of Learning.

EDITORIAL

## Engaging the youth in education governance

By Peter Clinton Foese, ACE Aotearoa

*“If the structure does not permit dialogue, the structure must be changed”*

- Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator and philosopher

Take some time to consider the following. A young person in New Zealand will spend at least 18000 hours in school between the age of 4 and 18, 6000 hours doing school related work, 4680 hours playing sports or involved in a school activity. This may not seem like much until you understand that within that 15 years (131040 hours) they will spend 49140 hours sleeping, 16380 hours eating and 10920 hours body care. If they spent the five hours that they have remaining each day with their family, they will still have spent more time participating in school based education. My point here is our young people are spending most of their lives in formal education, and if you ask me how much influence they have in regards to how education is administered, taught and received my answer is - nowhere near enough.

I have been involved in schools for nearly five years, two years as a youth worker and three years in Boards of Trustees (BoT) which are responsible for governing the school. BoT have full authority over the strategic direction of a school; while they may not be able to make operational decisions, such employ staff or interfere in day to day school business, they make all the decisions that affect these functions and activities. New Zealand embraces quality youth participation in the governance of schools, the Ministry of Education directs every BoT to have a student representative as a member to provide the students voice in the running of their school. I have witnessed some amazing work done by these students, they often join with aspirations to be real advocates for their peers, ready to help make positive changes to empower all students to achieve.

Each month they attend the meeting, have read their papers, and sit prepared to engage a table of parents and professionals with the voice they were told they have. They get to introduce themselves and share their ideas at the first meeting, then over the next few meetings they are given a spot here and there to talk, usually asked what students think about the cafeteria or uniform, rolling out of surveys, or which classrooms are most comfortable. However this is the limit, eventually they attend meetings only to sit and listen, and then their year is up and another student begins the journey. For others the outcome is worse, they become disillusioned and disengaged, and the most enthusiastic eventually burn out.

There are a few issues with this model of participation. The burden is placed on one student to attend meetings and be the voice for their whole student body, the logistical nightmare

of representing hundreds of teenagers from diverse backgrounds and ages scares even me. They must also attend and participate in an environment which suits the adults, engage in dialogue and thinking that the adults around the table have had years to get used to. The term for this student is often one year, so that's roughly ten meetings to get use to a system and then work in that system.

Probably the biggest challenge is they are usually there as advisors, meaning they give feedback on topics the adults have deemed important, therefore they are not empowered to have autonomy and authority as the student representative.

As someone who strongly supports youth participation in school governance (especially since they spend most of their youth here) I believe that having one representative is not enough, in fact I believe having a student council is not enough either. Instead I believe every student should be empowered through their education to participate in designing their environment of learning. Where they are taught to love learning and to use knowledge, rather than what to learn. In doing this students become equals with their teachers and the learning is mutual, and furthermore they are able to engage in what education is rather than just be a product of it. Maybe this is extreme but I feel that it is not enough to have students come to an adult table to voice their views about their schools, we should be doing our best to engage them at their tables in their classrooms.

*Peter Clinton Foese is an alumnus of ASPBAE's Basic Leadership Development Course (BLDC), 2013, focused on youth, and was an active youth participant of the Festival of Learning held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in November 2014.*



Peter Clinton Foese,  
ACE Aotearoa



Every student should be empowered through their education to participate in designing their environment of learning.

## Creating spaces for young women to determine their own lives

By Nitin Paranjape,  
Executive Director,  
*Abhivyakti: Media for  
Development*

Her feet have never climbed the steps of a school, but experience has been her biggest teacher. All of twenty-six, Maya Khudve (or Mayatai, as she is respectfully called) is a role model for many women in her community. Mayatai used to work as a scrap-collector in the municipal landfill in Nashik (Maharashtra, India). Circumstances did not allow her to go to school, but that did not deter her from being curious about the world around her, and enthusiastic to transform her situation. In 2009, she participated in a community video-making workshop facilitated by Abhivyakti, an organisation based in Nashik. This gave Mayatai the opportunity to learn the skills of filmmaking as well as a space to articulate her problems in front of various stakeholders.

The concept of non-traditional livelihoods for women focuses on three core principles - first, the urgent need to create more spaces and opportunities for young women to achieve financial independence and become active determiners of their own lives; second, to redefine traditional gender role-based skills and occupations, especially those which have been male-dominant, so as to allow equal employment opportunities for both women and men; and finally, to facilitate transformative processes that empower young women into leadership roles in their communities and engender a robust and active citizenship.

Throughout India, many different organisations, as well as state institutions, are engaged in creative



Abhivyakti's 'community video' programme aimed to engage with marginalised groups and train them in film making.

programmes that facilitate women into non-traditional and dignified livelihoods. Azad Foundation is a prime example, with its initiative in training women drivers and operating a radio-taxi service for women and children in the city of Delhi. Another shining example, from my own city, is the Nashik Division of the State Electricity Board, which is the first to recruit women to be trained in-service as 'wiremen' or technicians who repair electricity poles and meters in the district. The sight of young women, smartly dressed in uniform, navigating a taxi in the busy streets of Delhi, or deftly climbing onto a pole to fix an electricity problem in Nashik, is wonderful to behold!

In a similar vein, Abhivyakti, the organisation I work with, initiated a 'community video' programme a few years ago. The idea was to engage with groups that were marginalised in society, whose voices were not been given priority in the mainstream media, and train them in film-making. The groups would be encouraged to produce 'community videos' which are then disseminated in a collaborative effort to start dialogues in the public sphere.

The first community we worked with were the waste-worker women in Nashik. Maya Khudve was among them, and the first to be motivated. She encouraged her fellow women and together they decided to learn filmmaking and produce a community video. Their main issue was the stigma attached to their work, and the attitudes of people, even authorities, towards them. Their experience of shooting a film on their work was no different. The police rounded them

up for questioning, accusing them of stealing the camera! However, in the process of filmmaking and then disseminating it, they learnt many new skills such as goal-setting and effective communication. These, along with their newly-found confidence, empowered them to approach the police officials from whom they had to face the most trouble, and were able to start a dialogue with them about their work and identity.

For many women, having a skill such as videography has allowed them to have an alternative, not to mention exciting, source of work. Mayatai herself is now a skilled videographer, and is planning to make more films, along with her community, on other issues such as corruption in the public distribution system and slum demolitions. Pushpatai of Kharwal village near Nashik is another example of how a woman learnt filmmaking and used this skill to document the prolonged issue of drought and corruption in her village. She faced innumerable threats but she learnt to deal with them with increasing self-assurance. She and many other women now talk of village issues and are readying themselves to demand accountability from the government for service delivery.

Women have traditionally been marginalised and kept away from leadership positions and decision making. But the community video project has shown us that women, if equipped with the skills and perspectives, can play a major role as change-makers in their communities, and their leadership is a crucial aspect of the wheels of development. In learning video and other media, in shaping its content, and in taking it to the public, marginalised young women discover their inner voice, confidence, and leadership skills. This becomes a transformative journey of gaining a livelihood, more independence and control over their choices, as well as offering something back to the community for a larger cause. Ultimately, they have the potential to challenge and change the contours of popular livelihoods populated by men!

## Youth and students lead in the struggle for democratic reforms of education in Burma

By Dr. Thein Lwin, National Network for Education Reform (NNER), Burma

As a result of the government's denial of public opinion and civil society participation, students in Burma protested against the national education law. The students and their supporters were brutally beaten and sent to prison. Currently 78 students and supporters are still in prison.

The National Education Law was approved by the President in September 2014. It was widely criticized as an undemocratic way of drafting the law and promoting a highly centralised education system. According to the law, there is little room for academic freedom. It is a violation of language rights and is socially unjust. In November 2014, student unions organised an emergency students' meeting and boycotted the law. They called for a four-party dialogue among the government, the parliament, the National Network for Education Reform (NNER), and the students' boycott committee to amend the law within 60 days. But no response came from the government.

The students started a march of 400 miles from Mandalay to Yangon on 20 January 2015 demanding democratic reform of education. Along their way, people supported them by warmly welcoming them, giving them food, and providing them accommodations for the night. Day by day, the number of supporters increased to several thousands. After a week of their marching, the government offered a four-party dialogue. The students and members of NNER were happy to attend the dialogue and hoped for a democratic reform of education.

The four-party dialogue started on 1st February 2015. Then it was postponed for ten days. The students' marching continued until it reached a small town called Latpadan in Bago Division. The second day of the dialogue happened again on 11 February 2015. The four parties agreed to the 11 points that the students demanded to amend the law. On the third day of the dialogue, 14 February 2015, the four parties drafted the amendment

of the National Education Law. The draft was submitted to the parliament the next day.

While the draft was being processed in the parliament, the students were brutally beaten by the police and sent to prison on 10 March 2015. The government broke the four-party agreement that the students who boycotted the National Education Law and their supporters would not be arrested.

### Civil Society and Student Demands

The students are demanding – (1) citizen participation in the process of education reform; (2) decentralisation of education; (3) autonomy and school-based management; (4) independent student unions and teacher unions; (5) active learning and critical thinking teaching strategies; (6) formative assessment and self-determination for the university entrance; (7) mother-tongue based multilingual education; (8) equal opportunity, inclusive, and quality education for all; (9) transitional justice for those students who got punishment for their participation in the democratic movement; (10) 20% of the national budget for education; (11) and at least nine years of compulsory education.

The National Network for Education Reform (NNER) has played its own role in education reform in Burma. It organised 25 education seminars all over the country attended by teachers, university students, parents, and other stakeholders interested in education reform. NNER held a national education conference in Yangon. Recommendations for the national education policy were submitted to the parliament as a result of the seminars and conferences. However, the recommendations were rejected by the Parliamentary Education Committee.

A Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) was conducted under the Ministry of Education. It is considered that CESR prevented the participation of local civil society groups such as NNER, student unions, and teacher unions in



Students in Burma who protested against the national education law were beaten and sent to prison, where many still remain.

the process of education reform. The President's Office created the Education Promotion and Implementation Committee (EPIC). Meetings were held between NNER and EPIC to exchange ideas on national education law. At the end, NNER's recommendations were turned down by EPIC.

The students and NNER proposed a delegated decentralised education system. The proposed system suggests an Education Quality Assurance (EQA) led by independent scholars and experts. They also suggested autonomous universities and school-based management systems. Regarding the school curriculum, NNER suggested to draw national curriculum guidelines. However, schools and regions have autonomy to create a contextualised curriculum. Respecting the language rights and supporting students' learning, NNER proposed mother-tongue based multilingual education, preferring that Ministry of Education play a supporting role rather than centralised control.

Although students were brutally beaten, arrested and sent to prison, the impact of their struggle was immense. Their movement was supported by people around the country providing participation, supporting statements, financial donations, and moral support. There is hope that the country will get future leaders with the skills and commitment to build a democratic nation.



Amongst other things, the students are demanding citizen participation in education reform and decentralisation of education in Burma.

## Arts-based approaches by the youth engaging communities in good governance models

By Sashi Kiran Charan, Director, Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development (FRIEND)

**A**rts, music, storytelling and plays have been traditional modes of communication. FRIEND Youth Governance team is now utilising these same methodologies for mass community engagement.

*“The basic idea behind using performing arts approaches is to engage with communities and draw them into dialogues for sustainable community development,”* says FRIEND Programme Team Leader, Anare Lewanavanua.

Using various forms of theatre, music, visual arts, imagery, and other creative approaches, a group of 12 youths between the ages of 20-30 have been developing platforms to engage communities on participatory good governance models.

*“After almost a decade, Fiji has had democracy restored. Since 2006 we have had a military government, and prior to that there was a coup in 2000. Many of the youth grew up in this era of insecurities and confusion. It is really interesting for us to learn about participatory governance and we are excited to take these to the communities”*, says one of the artists in the group.

The youth have been trained and are being mentored by Babu Ayindo, a Kenyan Peace Builder and Trainer who is renowned internationally for using creative art approaches in peace building. Mr. Ayindo is currently undertaking his PhD in New Zealand.

The youth are well aware that to have meaningful dialogue processes work in the communities, there needs to be a marriage between traditional and new practices and they have to respect existing traditional protocols to engage the elders, gain their trust, and be able to enter communities comfortably and build a sustainable relationship.

The first performance is conducted usually in the evening so the entire community can engage. The group performs on key themes and facilitates discussions on the need for consultation, planning, and building a strong foundation for any project undertaken. Once the whole village decides they wish to continue with the process, the youth group is invited back to the village to conduct a series of workshops with women, youth, and men, first separately to ensure maximum participation, and then the whole group engages with each other.

*“The response we have had is very encouraging. We have found people are able to speak out and communicate*



Anare Lewanavanua, Programme Officer, FRIEND Fiji, lead artists in engaging the community through theatre.

*better in comparison to our previous approaches”*, says programme officer, Anare Lewanavanua.

The traditional Fijian system has a strong hierarchy where only ‘those of who have a voice’ can speak, explains Dr. Jone Hawea, programme director. The elders have a voice and generally the youth feel disenfranchised. Using these processes, the youth have been able to look closely at the importance of planning, budgeting, and implementation processes and have had their voices heard in important platforms. Dr. Hawea explains that the pilot has been taken into four indigenous villages and is being documented in detail to see the impact of using art-based approaches to community governance before the process is taken to other villages. In order to make the process work, a few meetings with elders were held to ensure everyone in the hierarchy was respected and allowed to voice their rightful concerns and, whenever possible, their queries answered.

*Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development (FRIEND) is a development NGO founded in Fiji in 2001. The organisation reaches out to rural and marginalised communities through social, health, and economic empowerment initiatives in the quest for poverty alleviation in the country. With a population of approximately 850,000 people, an estimated 45% of them are believed to be living below the poverty line. Fiji’s economic difficulties have been compounded by its uncertain political scene over the last three decades.*



Repeka, a theatre artist practises her guitar.

## Ensuring youth participation in ASPBAE's work in the Asia Pacific



ASPBAE aims to bring forward young people, especially marginalised youth, in existing programmes which will further help in identifying youth leaders to advocate on issues of life skills and education for the young population.

UNESCO defines 'youth' as a "period of transition from dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community". It refers to 'youth' as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, cognisant of its member states having their own definitions.

The core of Education for All (EFA) Goal 3 on learning and life skills programmes for youth was the understanding that learning needs of young people and adults, if met, are vital for their life and work. The need for greater attention to the education and learning needs of young people has become more acute in the recent times with youth bulges in several countries in the developing world. Young people around the world are more numerous than ever. Over 60% of the world's youth, or more than 750 million young women and men aged 15-24 years, live in Asia and the Pacific. Of these, almost 50 million young people are looking for jobs. Lacking economic and social opportunities, many are forced into high-risk and vulnerable forms of employment.

The World Development Report 2007, Development and the Next Generation, argues for policy attention to five transitions of youth to adulthood - learning for life, transitioning to work, healthy adolescence, forming families, and exercising citizenship. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012 thus argued for foundational skills, technical skills and transferrable skills for youth to meaningfully equip young people in their different life transitions. Governments,

however, have failed to deliver on these, especially neglecting programs for the marginalised youth. Yet, there is strong evidence that education oriented towards needs and aspirations of marginalised youth will lift countries out of poverty and boost the economy.

Similarly, marginalised youth voices have not been heard in education planning and programme designing. In the education post-2015 processes, there had been varied efforts to reach out to the youth. However, much remains to be done in engaging marginalised youth. There should be more venues in dialogue with them, efforts to synthesise their collective agenda for education and translate these into powerful messages to inform education policies, priorities and programs at the district, national and global levels.

Cognizant of these challenges faced by the youth, ASPBAE's 6th General Assembly held in 2012 identified 'youth and life skills' as a priority agenda. Soon after, in 2013, ASPBAE formed a Working Group on Youth, Literacy, and Life Skills at the regional level composed of marginalised youth leaders and NGO workers who work closely with marginalised youth. The Working Group helped in defining and participating in ASPBAE's work on youth and skills organised around –(1) Building consensus on a regional agenda for youth literacy and life skills for advocacy within the post-2015 education agenda setting processes and other regional platforms; (2) Giving prominence to marginalised youth voices in regional platforms by proactively seeking out strategic opportunities for them to speak or participate; (3) Enhancing capacities of youth leaders in effectively participating in regional policy platforms; and (4) Supporting country-level constituency-building and advocacy with the youth.

In 2015, ASPBAE will continue its efforts in building a youth constituency within the organisation by supporting young adults in shaping the adult education and lifelong learning agenda that best serves their needs.

A mapping exercise is envisaged within the ASPBAE membership on exploring the work on youth being carried out by members and in the process identifying



ASPBAE will work towards providing opportunities to marginalised youth to articulate their perspectives on education policy and practice, especially at regional and global platforms.

youth leaders, especially those from marginalised groups, who can be mobilised to advocate on issues of life skills and education for the young population. ASPBAE will work towards providing opportunities to marginalised youth and those who work with them to articulate their perspectives on education policy and practice, especially at regional and global platforms.

ASPBAE's will work with education campaign coalitions who do not currently work on youth issues to encourage them to have youth representation and agendas in their advocacy work. Regular dialogue with the coalitions will be held to build youth forums within the coalitions and include young voices in their advocacy demands.

Another area of work for ASPBAE is to facilitate opportunities for young people towards developing leadership skills and youth capacities in education policy advocacy and adult education programme development. This will be done by making conscious efforts to ensure that there is youth representation in ASPBAE's programmes such as the BLDC, the Study Exchange, the Regional Facilitators Programme, and other such capacity-building activities.

ASPBAE will continue its association with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) on youth and skills work, following the release of its joint publication in 2014, "Youth driving community education: Testimonies of empowerment from Asia and the Pacific". In 2015, it will collaborate on an action research involving organisations of marginalised youth and NGOs working in this sector to better understand how young people, specifically young women with low literacy skills, learn and transition into other avenues of education and learning towards their empowerment.

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ASPBAE aims to develop the capacities of member organisations and their youth organisations to employ Action Research as an approach to mobilise young women and build their confidence, individually and collectively, towards taking actions to transform their life situations. The starting theme will be on literacy and skills for work and life. Strategically, ASPBAE hopes that its members will institutionalise this approach in their community-based education programmes and advocacy. The outcomes of this research are

envisaged to inform better practice on education provisioning for young women and to likewise influence policies on skills building for youth. It is further envisaged that this action research be pursued in the different sub-regions of the Asia Pacific, starting in 2015 with South East Asia where opportunities exist to influence the emerging policies of the ASEAN Economic Community 2015 on skills and youth and the policy debates around the new post-2015 education agenda.

ASPBAE will continue its collaboration

with DVVI International and the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) in common efforts in promoting skills for youth building on the outcomes of the 2014 Workshop on Youth Education and Inclusive Citizenship.

ASPBAE looks forward to more initiatives involving the youth in its programmes throughout the Asia Pacific and to working with its members to ensure that young people and young voices are an integral part of their work at the global, regional, and national levels.

## Bridging learning gaps for marginalised youth

By Rika Yorozu, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

The Belém Framework for Action, adopted at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2009, re-emphasised the need to meet the learning needs of all young people and adults through appropriate learning and life skills programmes in a holistic and comprehensive system of lifelong learning. Since then, the mission of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) to promote the recognition of prior learning and create the conditions for the exercise of the right to education and learning through lifelong learning has introduced young people as a priority group. Among them, UIL identified young people with little or no experience of schooling as a target group for research and policy dialogue, with the aim of increasing the group's participation in second-chance learning programmes and other forms of learning.

In the initial phase of research, UIL undertook a desk study on policies and programmes for vulnerable young people in 15 developing countries. The research findings were further discussed in regional policy forums in Bamako and Cairo in 2011, followed by an international policy forum in Jakarta in 2013, where government, civil society and youth representatives met to discuss policy directions to improve second-chance education for

young people. To share good practices in education policies and programmes for marginalised young people, UIL published the results which emerged from this policy dialogue as a policy brief and a journal article. One of main messages was that programmes designed for a specific group of young people and integrated with vocational and skills training are more effective in responding to young people's learning demands than conventional adult education programmes. To advocate young people's potential in promoting community education, UIL and ASPBAE have published a collection of testimonies of empowerment by seven young people.

From these activities, UIL has learned the benefits of giving space and support to young people to participate in policy dialogue concerning them and that the adult education sector needs to learn how to design meaningful educational interventions for specific groups of young people by involving them in the process. UIL is currently applying the three axes of the UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth 2014–2020 in its activities:

- **Axis 1:** participation of young people in the formulation and review of the learning cities policy. A special event with young professionals is planned during the 2nd International Conference on Learning Cities (Mexico City, September 2015).

UIL also supported the development of an African virtual network for vulnerable youth, Zankey Faba.

- **Axis 2:** capacity development is starting with youth-led research on identifying gaps in learning and development programmes and activities for young women. ASPBAE is UIL's partner implementation agency for the Asia-Pacific region.

- **Axis 3:** to promote civic engagement, democratic participation and social innovation, UIL is compiling testimonies of empowerment by young people from marginalised backgrounds. An online platform with testimonies from Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region, co-published with ASPBAE, is expected to be launched soon.

By strengthening and expanding partnerships with a variety of stakeholders, such as municipal governments, UIL expects to contribute to bridging learning gaps for young men and young women and build their appetite for lifelong learning.

### More information

- **Youth matters: equipping vulnerable young people with literacy and life skills (UIL 2013)**
- **Community matters: fulfilling learning potentials for young men and women (UIL 2014)**
- **Youth driving community education: testimonies of empowerment from Asia and the Pacific (UIL & ASPBAE 2014)**
- **Zankey Faba (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 2014)**

<sup>1</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001877/187789m.pdf>  
<sup>2</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002230/223022e.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11159-014-9419-z>  
<sup>4</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002294/229499E.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002271/227150e.pdf>  
<sup>6</sup> <http://zankeyfaba.gtenf.org/>

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