

Strengthening capacities of Asia Pacific coalitions in advocacy for SDG4/Education 2030

Asia Pacific Education Coalitions' Consultation Meeting
9-11 October 2017, Hanoi, Vietnam



The primary aim of the Asia Pacific education coalitions' consultation meeting was to strengthen capacities of Asia Pacific coalitions in advocacy work towards SDG4/Education 2030 implementation and monitoring.

ASPBAE's members and partners met in Hanoi for an Asia Pacific education coalitions' consultation meeting. The meeting, organised by ASPBAE and hosted by the Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA), was held to – (1) Strengthen capacities of Asia Pacific coalitions in advocacy work towards SDG4/Education 2030 implementation and monitoring, within the wider SDG processes; (2) Share key updates and advocacy plans of Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and regional partners towards greater complementation and collaboration of advocacy work at global, regional, and national levels; (3) Strengthen coalition engagement with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), especially on improving local education groups, engaging with civil society representatives on the GPE Board to inform GPE

replenishment campaign; and (4) discuss Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) reporting, learning exchange processes, and future plans.

President of the Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA), Tran Xuan Nhi, welcomed the participants to the meeting and reflected on the formation of VAEFA in 2009. He highlighted the support and important role of CSEF in its inception and informed that the coalition had since grown to include 50 members working in the areas of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), education for the deaf, advocacy for better access to education of disadvantaged groups, and adult education by strengthening Community Learning Centres (CLCs).

In a panel discussion chaired by ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, entitled - *Implementing SDG4: A snapshot of global, regional, and national education trends and challenges that inform our advocacy work* – several speakers, including Laura Giannecchini, CLADE (Latin American education campaign network), Refaat Sabah, Arab Campaign for Education (ACEA), Wolfgang Leumer, GCE, and ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano, spoke about key regional education issues and trends. Some of the concerns raised focussed on the fact that there seem to be two types of education for different people, one for the poor and one for the wealthy, where very often the poor are unable to get access to higher education, a privilege reserved for the wealthy. Brazil was cited as a good example in mobilising local resources for education, however much is to be learnt from the Brazil experience where the resources never made their way towards improving education in the country.



ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, chaired a session on global, regional, and national education trends and challenges.

Laura Giannecchini of CLADE highlighted some of the key issues and challenges in Latin America including the weakening of democracy and rise of authoritarian governance; poor public education

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systems; shrinking spaces for civil society participation in policy debates on education; increased privatisation of education, religious fundamentalism, and censorship in education; and a decrease in diversity, inclusivity, and democracy in public education. Highlighting that 100 million people remain illiterate in the Arab Region, ACEA's Refaat Sabah spoke of challenges in the Arab education system including low teacher salaries, infrastructure that is unsuitable for children with disabilities, low academic achievement, and conflict in the region. Highlighting that 20% of urban Africa does not have access to early childhood care and education opportunities and that 30 million children remain out of school, Wolfgang Leumer of GCE spoke of obstacles in the education system in Africa. Some of them include challenging political environments, capacity depletion in coalitions, inadequate funding and accountability in public education systems, and insufficient networking and information sharing.



Laura Giannecchini of CLADE (2nd from right) highlighted key issues and challenges in Latin America, and the Arab Region's Refaat Sabah (extreme right) spoke of challenges in the Arab education system.

ASPBAE's Thea Soriano detailed out important elements of education in the other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and addressed education challenges in the Asia Pacific. Some of the statistics pointed to a disheartening reality of education in the region - over 51% of the global out-of-school children and youth live in the Asia Pacific (136 million); 11 out of the 32 countries in the world with the lowest number of trained teachers are in the Asia Pacific, including in Cambodia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines. With over half of the world's population living in the region (almost 50% residing in urban areas), the Asia Pacific remains one of the most underdeveloped in terms of its education systems. As Thea stressed in her presentation, several key issues contributing to this are poverty, undernourishment, gender discrimination, vulnerable employment (54%), climate change and environmental hazards, and inadequate education financing. Some of the steps she proposed were policy coherence in SDG implementation and identification of indicators, and capacity building for governments in terms of knowledge exchange, technical assistance, and overcoming political agendas.



ASPBAE's Thea Soriano (left) detailed out important elements of education in the other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and addressed education challenges in the Asia Pacific.

In a panel discussion on *Challenges and opportunities in advocating for equitable and inclusive education*, the Hanoi Association of the Deaf (HAD) and VAEFA presented a summary of Vietnam's education context and the coalition's experience in advocating for the right to education of deaf people in the country. With only a very small percentage of the education budget allocated for adult education (2.8%), no specific teacher training for non-formal education, and with only 5% of community learning centres functioning adequately, clearly, youth and adult non-formal public education in the country suffers marginalisation. With a lack of education policies for ethnic minorities and education challenges for the differently

abled (90% of children with disabilities are out of school according to UNICEF), VAEFA's advocacy work primarily focuses on equity and inclusion in education. Programme priorities include a push for the right to education for the deaf and for children with autism, advocacy for a sign language course on national television and sign interpretation on the daily news, and expansion of sign language class in

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continuing education centres for deaf adults and their families. Some of the achievements for VAEFA include the initiation of the first college course in sign language, and the piloting of a primary course through sign language at the National College of Education with deaf teachers running the course. VAEFA National Coordinator and ASPBAE Executive Council Member for South East Asia, Nguyen Thi Kim Anh chaired the session and shared as well, the lessons from VAEFA's advocacy efforts on inclusive education.

Representatives of the Middle East and Arab Region (Hebah Khouli) and of the Afghanistan National Education Coalition, ANEC (Naseer Ahmad Bayat), spoke of education advocacy in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Speakers from NNER Myanmar (Hawng Tsai) and CAMPE Bangladesh (Enamul Hoque) shared their reflections on pursuing cross-national advocacy in solidarity with the Rohingya and responding to their humanitarian crisis. Some of the suggestions emerging from the presentations included strengthening engagement with concerned government agencies regarding SDG4, and the need to ensure education remains a priority in emergency responses, in comprehensive approaches to displacement on account of conflict and how education can play an important role in preventing conflict, building social cohesion and promoting respect for diversity and tolerance.



Representatives from the Arab Region (Hebah Khouli seen in the photo), and Afghanistan spoke of education advocacy in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.



Representatives from CAMPE Bangladesh (Enamul Hoque seen in photo) and NNER Myanmar shared their reflections on pursuing cross-national advocacy in solidarity with the Rohingya and responding to their humanitarian crisis.

In her presentation, ASPBAE's Thea Soriano addressed the neglected education agenda of non-formal youth and adult learning and education. She underscored the importance of youth and adult education to meet the access and equity objectives of the SDGs: universal primary and secondary education will not be achieved if public education systems continue to ignore the learning needs of those pushed out of the system and focus only on the performance of those within the (formal) system of education. She also emphasised the value of adult non-formal education in the achievement of other SDGs – health and dignity, poverty eradication, decent work, sustainable development and peace.

Thea highlighted ASPBAE's collaboration with the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL) on the youth-led action research on education for girls and women conducted in India, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The action research aims to empower young women by enabling them to explore and gather facts to understand the education needs and change existing situations in their communities, develop communication skills, initiate

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Asia Pacific Education Coalitions' Consultation Meeting
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community actions, and advocate for learning opportunities with local and national governments.

In the session on *Challenges and opportunities in financing SDG4/Education 2030*, ASPBAE's Rene Raya highlighted the trends and threats in education financing. Stressing the need for a dramatic increase in aid, Rene underscored that there needs to be a 500% increase in aid to education in order to reach the new education targets in developing countries by 2030. The fall in education aid over the years has paved the way for an increase in the push for education privatisation and a growth in private school enrolments, especially in countries that are not spending enough on education (Nepal-27%, Philippines-20%, Indonesia-41%, India-30%, Pakistan-34.1%). With this, there has also been a rise in low-fee private schools, expansion of public private partnerships, emergence of corporate chain schools, and increasing segregation in schools based on socio-economic status, location, gender, and student performance.



ASPBAE's Rene Raya highlighted the trends and threats in education financing. He stressed that the fall in education aid has paved the way for an increase in the push for education privatisation and a growth in private school enrolments.

According to studies done by ASPBAE and its coalitions, by other advocates and academics, and findings of UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies, private sector participation in education has had a very patchy, even poor, record in fulfilling the right to education with their encouragement of school fees, segregation in education, promoting competition – all with adverse impact on equity, inclusion and free education. Rene stressed the need to define solutions based on country contexts and have collective action to push the reform agenda on increased public investment in education, reforms in the tax system to thwart illicit capital flight which would have expanded public revenues for wider investments in public education and social service systems,



Emily Laurie (centre) of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) reiterated that domestic financing is essential for long-term sustainability and predictability of sector financing and that GPE drives greater attention to domestic expenditures on education through Education Sector Plan Implementation Grants.

In a session on sharing good practices in advocating for stronger public financing for education, Zehra Arshad presented on PCE Pakistan's experience in budget tracking, monitoring, and advocacy, and Laura Gianecchini of CLADE presented an overview of the monitoring system for the right to education financing in Latin America and a country example from Dominican Republic.

Emily Laurie of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) gave a presentation on the GPE Replenishment Campaign 2018, highlighting the GPE Strategic Plan 2020, campaign context and goals for Replenishment 2020, domestic financing and pledge process for Developing Country Partners, and GPE approach of advocacy and campaigning.

GPE is aiming for scaled up resources to US \$2 billion a year by 2020 and US \$4 billion a year by 2030. With new donor investments from 2018 to 2020, GPE will support 89 developing countries to drive

Strengthening capacities of Asia Pacific coalitions in advocacy for SDG4/Education 2030

Asia Pacific Education Coalitions' Consultation Meeting
9-11 October 2017, Hanoi, Vietnam



Henry Malumo of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) highlighted the “4 S” approach to financing Education 2030 - increasing the SHARE of the budget spent on education; increasing the SIZE of the budget; increasing the SENSITIVITY of the budget (equity); and increasing the SCRUTINY of the budget.

improved quality and access to education for 870 million children and youth; provide 67 developing countries with education plan implementation grants to cover 64% of out-of-school children; and support 30 developing countries in developing new plans for education, covering 40% of out-of-school children. Laura reiterated that domestic financing is essential for long-term sustainability and predictability of sector financing and that GPE drives greater attention to domestic expenditures on education through Education Sector Plan Implementation Grants. Regarding the Developing Country Partner (DCP) Replenishment Pledge, she informed that DCP governments will be invited to officially announce their country pledges and that GPE will monitor progress through 2020.

Stressing the importance of domestic resource mobilisation to meet education financing targets, Henry Malumo of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) said that to meet Education 2030, the International Commission

on Financing Global Education estimates that financing for education in low and middle-income countries needs to steadily increase from the current US\$1.2 trillion to US\$3.0 trillion by 2030. It is estimated 97% of these resources must come from domestic sources. He also highlighted ActionAid International, Education International, & GCE’s “4 S” approach to financing Education 2030 - increasing the SHARE of the budget spent on education; increasing the SIZE of the budget; increasing the SENSITIVITY of the budget (equity); and increasing the SCRUTINY of the budget (oversight, data availability, tackling inefficiency, and role of CSOs). He stressed that real commitment will come from governments at the country level and made the case for digital advocacy and on-line activism. He concluded by saying, *“Education financing has become low priority due to the lack of political will and not the lack of resources. World leaders have said great things about the transformative role of education and its positive impact on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, sadly this acknowledgement has not been matched by the desired investment”*.

While brainstorming on the GPE Replenishment Campaign in their sub-regional groups, participants reflected on and shared potential GPE replenishment action points. They committed to researching and analysing country-specific gaps between pledges and actual expenditures; engaging with Developing Country Partner focal points, parliamentary committees on education, GPE CSO2 (developing country) representatives, and local education groups (LEGs); showcasing success stories of GPE fund implementation and influencing donors through the success stories; having meetings with representatives of Ministries of Education; organising education consultations/forums for donors and partners; building capacities on education financing; engaging with sub-regional platforms such as ASEAN; carrying out social



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Strengthening capacities of Asia Pacific coalitions in advocacy for SDG4/Education 2030

Asia Pacific Education Coalitions' Consultation Meeting
9-11 October 2017, Hanoi, Vietnam



GCE urged coalitions to share their best practices and success stories with Ministries of Education and link those experiences and best practices to regional and global platforms.

media advocacy campaigns; and working with the print and broadcast media. While it emerged during the discussions that some countries have already committed 20% of the national budget to education, participants recognised the need for monitoring systems to track how the resources are being disbursed and spent and whether they are actually going towards educational opportunities for communities and marginalised sectors.

ASPBAE's Rene Raya, in a session on, *Platforms and opportunities to advocate for SDG4/Education 2030 implementation and monitoring*, updated on development related to the SDG and SDG4 follow-up mechanisms at global and regional levels. He highlighted the need for CSO education advocates to strengthen their presence in the SDG follow up processes such as the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) especially in the 2019 HLPF which

will focus its review on (among others,) SDG4. He highlighted the need to also engage the Voluntary National Reports processes and informed the participants that the 48 countries volunteered to report for 2018, including Australia, Bhutan, Lao PDR, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam from the Asia Pacific. He underscored the need to continue to monitor discussions within the UN Financing for Development (FFD) processes and identified key lobbying opportunities to make a case for increased public investments in public education and increased ODA. Rene advised that CSOs should prepare for the review process of the SDG Indicator Framework with the UN Statistical Commission agreeing to review the SDG Indicators in 2020: the review process and consultations in this regard are likely to be set in place in 2018-2020. Rene also reminded on the need for national education coalitions to plan engagements in the annual Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED) and to join the Asia Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism (APRCM) to have a deeper involvement with the SDG follow up processes at the regional and global levels.

While sharing GCE's overall advocacy plans for 2018-2019, GCE's Henry Malumo stressed the importance of making education financing, more specifically, domestic financing, a priority advocacy issue with the UN and World Bank. He urged that coalitions share their best practices and success stories with Ministries of Education and link those experiences and best practices to regional and global platforms.

Thea Soriano of ASPBAE, Laura Giannecchini of CLADE (Latin America), and Refaat Sabah of ACEA (Arab region) shared regional advocacy plans and platforms to engage in 2018-2019. Some of ASPBAE's plans included coordinating advocacy efforts to roll out Education 2030/SDG4, especially on financing, equity, quality, youth and adult education and lifelong learning systems; securing increased financing for the new education agenda, ensuring stronger public education and lifelong learning systems; addressing



Nguyen Thi Kim Anh, ASPBAE Executive Council Member representing Southeast Asia, addressing the Asia Pacific education consultation in Hanoi.

Strengthening capacities of Asia Pacific coalitions in advocacy for SDG4/Education 2030

Asia Pacific Education Coalitions' Consultation Meeting
9-11 October 2017, Hanoi, Vietnam



Vice President of the Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA), Nguyen Xuan Phuong, presenting a gift to ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, at the conclusion of the consultation.

commercialisation and unregulated education privatisation; securing civil society policy spaces in regional and international SDG4 platforms; and forging links with the other SDGs.

Participants from NCE Nepal (Shradha Koirala), NNER Myanmar (Hawng Tsai), Foro Dakar Honduras (Jose Javier Acebedo), and the Sudanese Education Coalition (Ensaf Abdallah Ebrahim Ahmed) shared successes and challenges on coalition engagements in education sector planning, implementation, and monitoring, and participation in local education groups (LEG), or its equivalent, mechanisms. Some of the recommendations emerging from the presentations included capacity building of civil society organisations in the LEG engagement processes, raising awareness amongst governments on the importance of civil society participation in the LEG processes, and GPE advocacy to governments to effectively engage local civil society organisations in the LEGs.

GPE's Muntasim Tanvir provided updates on ongoing consultations on funding mechanisms being developed under GPE's Financing and Funding Framework (FFF).

Laura Giannecchini (CLADE, Latin America) and Zehra Arshad (PCE Pakistan), both CSO2 Representatives to the GPE Board, provided a summary of CSO2 mechanisms and opportunities for coalitions to engage, and CSO feedback and consultation processes on GPE's Advocacy and Social Accountability (ASA) and Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) funding mechanisms.

Wolfgang Leumer Global Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) Manager, and ASPBAE's Bernie Lovegrove provided updates on CSEF reporting processes and deliverables by end-2018. Grant Kasowanjete of GCE gave updates and a refresher session on the CSEF on-line financial reporting tool.

Close to 80 participants from 27 countries participated in the regional meeting.

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