Learning from the Thai experience in non-formal and informal education

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ASPBAE, with support from DVV International, organised a study exchange for members from 14 countries in Bangkok. The aim of the study exchange was for participants to learn from the Thai experience in the operation of Community Learning Centre’s (CLC) as well as from the Thai non-formal and informal education system.

Participants represented civil society organisations (CSOs) from India, the Philippines, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, Samoa, Nepal, Tajikistan, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. They were inspired to draw lessons from the Thai experience to work on reforming the education systems in their own countries, drive forward lifelong learning with a special focus on youth and adult needs in non-formal and informal education. The study exchange was also a good way of forming and building transnational partnerships and developing regional advocacy for lifelong learning.

During the study exchange, an exhibition on youth and adult learning and education was organised by Thailand’s Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), Ministry of Education, represented by its Secretary General, Kritchai Aroonrat, and Cecilia (Thea) Soriano and Anita Borkar of ASPBAE. Parichart Yenjai, Expert on Science Education Promotion, ONIE, presented on ‘Thailand’s Education System, Policy on Lifelong Learning and the Role of CLCs’. She informed that there are 1340 CLCs located in almost every village in Thailand. The CLCs are built and managed by the communities. The Thai government provides teachers, pays their salaries, and provides learning equipment. Khua Huu Phuoc, Manager of Training and Research at the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning (SEAMEOCELLL), presented on ‘Lifelong Learning Policies and Promising Practices in 11 Southeast Asia Countries’.
Participants visited 3 CLCs focusing on digital marketing technologies, new farming theories, and vocational training skills. The Thai government plays a large role in supporting and sustaining the CLCs. Participants observed that the CLCs were well-organised with smoothly functioning management structures. They also learnt of the challenges such as the need for more transparent and accountable financial management, and for more community involvement in supporting the CLCs.

Kenika Sigvasophon, Director of Test System Development, ONIE, and Rungaroon Saiyasophon, Director of Non-Formal and Informal Education Development Division, shared insights into the different components that make up the non-formal and informal education system in Thailand. Ichiro Miyazawa, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Bangkok, presented on ‘Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), Quality Education, and Trends in Education – Working towards Lifelong Learning’.

At the conclusion of the study exchange, participants developed country plans for 2018. ASPBAE will continue to coordinate activities and follow up with members of the study exchange.