

## 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



**ASPBAE's Australia members – WAVE and 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).**

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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.

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



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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?

The presenters' panel, co-chaired by Jose Roberto (Robbie) Guevera (RMIT University and ASPBAE Immediate Past President) and Elaine Butler (WAVE) included Alice Albright, Chief Executive Officer, Global Partnership for Education; Sarah Goulding, Assistant Secretary Global Development Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra; Susan Hopgood, President of Education International (EI) and Federal Secretary of the Australian Education Union (AEU); and Professor Bruce Wilson, Director, EU Centre at RMIT University.

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.



**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.**

While the above events focussed 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

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**At the forum, Robbie Guevara of RMIT University and ASPBAE's Immediate Past President, explained the evolution and intent of the SDGs. ASPBAE's Bernie Lovegrove spoke of ASPBAE's regional civil society-SDG4 experiences, linking Australia and the Asia Pacific region in SDG4-related advocacy.**

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. At the forum, Robbie Guevara explained the evolution and intent of the SDGs and the *'Education 2030: The Incheon Declaration & Framework for Action'*.

Governments are expected to consult civil society and include this in their reviews (Voluntary National Reviews). While a number of countries have recently undergone their

VNRs, Australia's is yet to come and preparatory work is needed. Finally, at the time of the forum, the overarching SDG5 (gender) was under review at the UN, with WAVE participating through the Women's Major Group. Very little mention was made of SDG4 in that review. As SDG4 on education and SDG8 on decent work are due for review at a high level political forum (HLPF) in 2019, we 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.

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