

## Building leadership capacities of marginalised youth in Timor

Youth-led Action Research training

6-11 May 2019, Dili, Timor Leste

By Jose de Jesus, National Coordinator, Civil Society Education Partnership (CSEP)



**Timor Leste is among the 4 countries where YAR will be implemented after ASPBAE piloted it in Indonesia, India, and the Philippines (2017-2018).**

Civil Society Education Partnership (CSEP) Timor Leste, in partnership with ASPBAE, will be implementing the Youth-led Action Research (YAR) project in Timor-Leste in 2019 and 2020. Timor Leste is among the four expansion countries where the YAR initiative will be implemented after ASPBAE piloted YAR in Indonesia, India, and the Philippines in 2017-2018.

ASPBAE and CSEP began the YAR initiative with a five day in-country training in Dili. Eighteen youth leaders from five municipalities - Ainaro, Aileu, Ermera, Liquiça, and Bobonaro - participated in the training.

The youth leaders were selected by non-government organisations (NGOs), all members of CSEP, located in the municipalities from where the youth leaders belong to. During the training, the youth participants expressed that the villages where they come from have several opportunities for them to develop through local resources, such as cultural and religious tourism, as their municipalities are endowed with high mountain views, beaches, lakes, and waterfalls. However, there are also several factors that prove challenging for their education and development.

Participants were inspired by the training that was facilitated by ASPBAE's Anita Borkar and Helen Dabu, and Jose de Jesus, National Coordinator, CSEP. For many of them, this was the first time they had participated in a training of any kind. All participants travelled from their villages, which were far and remotely located from Dili. A few of them, who had limited reading and writing skills, participated enthusiastically. They were encouraged and excited to start collecting data from their respective villages, followed by analysis and a written community report. This work will be conducted from June-December 2019. Participants will then strategise the dissemination of the findings of their research and plan for advocacy initiatives for their recommendations in 2020.

At the opening of the YAR training, Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion (Timor Leste), Maria Jose da Fonseca Monteiro de Jesus, emphasized the importance of the training for marginalised youth as it would be beneficial for the government to have proper data on their situation related to education, gender, health, and other issues. The Secretary also stated that the government would be able to formulate appropriate policies, undertake adequate planning, and initiate and implement relevant programmes to respond to the issues and findings raised by the YAR report. She further committed her willingness to share the findings and recommendations of the study to other line



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ministries. She congratulated and appreciated the partnership between CSEP and ASPBAE in building leadership capacities of marginalised youth in Timor Leste.

Mentors from the five partner NGOs and President of CSEP, Veronica de Souza, also participated in the training.



Participants of the first YAR training in Timor Leste.

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## Enabling marginalised youth define community actions in Vanuatu

Youth-Action Research workshop  
20-25 May 2019, Port Vila, Vanuatu

By Shirley Abraham, National Coordinator, Kolisen Blong Leftemap Edukesen (KOBLE)



25 young people participated in the YAR training in Port Vila.

A 5-day Youth-led Action Research (YAR) workshop was held in Port Vila which saw the participation of 25 young people. The youth were from the three communities of Etas, Eratap, and Club Hippique. Some are members of three local civil society organisations - Youth Challenge Vanuatu, Vanuatu PRIDE, and Vanuatu Civil Society Disability Influencing Network (VCSDIN). They represent the disadvantaged and marginalised groups of out-of-school youth, those living with disabilities, and some are members of the LGBTQI community.

The YAR is an initiative from ASPBAE in partnership with the Kolisen Blong Leftemap Edukesen in Vanuatu, (KOBLE). The training was facilitated by ASPBAEs Anita Borkar and Cecilia (Thea) Soriano. ASPBAE's Peter King also participated in the training.

The aim of the YAR in Vanuatu is to enable community youth to analyse the factors preventing their greater access to and participation in basic and higher education, basic skills programmes, and other services in their communities. By researching themselves, they more fully understand their situation and therefore are better able to define community actions that can help them.

The workshop was a great success with many of the participants enjoying the opportunity to think about their communities and their places in the communities in a different way. The workshop also provided an opportunity for the youth to conduct mapping and village profiling exercises.

Martino Sam, a young man from the Etas Community, relished the opportunity, *"I have never done a community mapping before and this simple exercise has really expanded my understanding on how our local resources can nurture us, and what things can make life difficult or get in our way. It's important to understand the main actors in community life and how influential they are"*.

The youth participants also commented how they had formerly believed that research was done by experts or consultants, and how that meant that only certain views were heard. During the workshop, they came to realise how important it is that young people do research in their own communities.



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the background to the research, also allowing the participants to better understand the education context in their communities and organisations.

Some of the participants had previous experience in conducting surveys and focus groups, but none had been a part of any design phase or in analysing their own data and producing their own reports. They found the prospect exciting, and they finished the workshop full of expectations and energy.

The Vanuatu education sector gets the largest allocation in the government budget, yet some important sectors are under-resourced. A recent review conducted by KOBLE identified five issues in particular that needed to be addressed – (1) access to post-school education (2) drop-outs from the system (3) skills mismatch (4) youth literacy, and (5) education for youth living with a disability. These are some of the important issues that form

Shirley Abraham, National coalition Coordinator of KOBLE, was encouraged by the performance of the participants - *“There is so much energy coming out from these young people. They seem really motivated, and it’s great to see all the youth, especially youth with disabilities, fully involved in the activities. I know it’s obvious anyway, but seeing the youth with disabilities’ efforts and their ability, despite their physical impairment, proved yet again that they are not limited and can be good researchers. Who better to research and understand the barriers to mainstreaming inclusive education?”*

The workshop ended well with a plan of action and way forward facilitated by Shirley Abraham. The YAR participants decided to organise the first design workshop by the end of June 2019 and research will be conducted in July this year.

Finally, the participants farewelled the three ASPBAE staff with feathers, symbolizing the wings of a bird. As Meriam Sam said, *“This training has given the participants extra wings. This workshop has enabled them to fly to the new heights that were talked about on day”*.



**Participants of the YAR training in Vanuatu.**



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KOBLE would like to acknowledge ASPBAE for the partnership. It can already see the positive impact on the youth that participated in the YAR workshop and believe they will be able to influence other marginalised groups in their communities to advocate for change in the development of the country.

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