Accountability towards advocating for adult education to wider networks

Training of Master Trainers (ToMT) follow-up workshop

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To make an education development programme sustainable, or any development programme sustainable, there should never really be an ‘end date’. Rather, it should be acknowledged and supported that development is ongoing and takes place over many years. This has been the approach of the Training of Master Trainers (ToMT), an education programme spanning almost three years, eight 4-5-day training workshops, and multiple follow-up activities where 40 trainers from the non-formal education sector in Lao PDR have increased their adult education and facilitation skills.

Recently, a follow-up workshop was held in Vientiane to provide an opportunity for graduate Master Trainers to come back together to share their experiences and to gain additional skills and techniques. The ToMT, a joint initiative between DVV International and the Non-formal Educational Development Centre (NFEDC) of the Department of Non-formal Education, has been developed and implemented by a range of local, regional, and international partner organisations, including ASPBAE, RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia), UNESCO Bangkok, and the Australian Volunteer Programme. Robbie Guevara (RMIT) and Anita Borkar (ASPBAE) anchored the preparatory work towards the planning and facilitation of this workshop. Along with resource persons from NFEDC and DVV, they also provided the mentoring support to the local trainers. Some of the sessions, such as Context Setting and Building a Community of Practice, were led by Robbie and Anita, respectively.

Over the course of the follow-up workshop, Master Trainers shared their stories of most significant change from the ToMT, participated in sessions on method selection technique, note-taking as a facilitator, and how to explain lifelong learning to different target groups. Stories the trainers shared spoke of how their approach towards educating others had shifted and the opportunities that had been opened up to them through the programme. One story was that of Northern Master Trainers, Khongmany and Sor, of running an adult education training for health trainers for the Swiss Red Cross. At first, they had been concerned that, given they have no expertise in health, they would have little to offer. However, after running the training, they soon realised the importance having strong trainers who understood the principles of adult education working in every sector.
This growing understanding towards the role that adult and non-formal education plays in multiple sectors in Laos is not only reflected in the incoming project requests, but also in the overall attitude of the Master Trainers themselves. An accountability has developed that surpasses that of simply being a good trainer to advocating for adult education to wider national network. Indeed, the concept of accountability was a central theme of the workshop with many people reflecting on it on the final day. The discussions and stories shared throughout the training showed a remarkable shift in the way the Master Trainers see themselves and their place in the wider community.

With larger projects now coming in, such as a major training collaboration with the Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos (BEQUAL), this accountability and expertise will only continue to grow. Through committing to annual follow-up activities, partner organisations and key trainers who have nurtured the ToMT over the years can continue to provide support to the group, ensuring a sustainable and lasting impact.