Establishing community participation through action research
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Young people from Network for Education Watch (NEW) Indonesia enthusiastically participated in a research training using Participatory Action Research (PAR). The aim of the training was to enhance the capacity of NEW Indonesia members to overcome challenges related to education faced by communities.

Unlike conventional research methods, PAR is a study that involves all relevant parties in active research and enhances their skills. It is a research by, with, and for the community, rather than a research on the community.

The training was facilitated by ASPBAE’s Cecilia (Thea) Soriano and Anita Borkar. At the opening ceremony, National Coordinator of NEW Indonesia, Abdullah Ubaid, stressed that, “This training will give birth to a resilient researcher based on the needs of the community. This not only goes beyond data collection, but it must have an impact on changing social conditions that prevent communities from living their lives to their fullest potential”.

Thea highlighted that participatory action research is beneficial to addressing and finding solutions to the various challenges that people, especially young people, face in accessing education, amongst other issues that arise in the social fabric of communities, “PAR is a tool ‘from’ and ‘to’ the community in overcoming the various social inequalities they experience.” Thea reiterated.

Anita spoke of PAR activities being implemented in India. "Low-income communities, including girls and their families, are directly involved in using PAR methods to address issues of education, health, early marriage, and economic disparities," she said.

Participants learnt about the concept of PAR, research topics and targets, research stages, data mining techniques, and the making of PAR instruments. "This training is very useful for me, especially in providing alternative methods of raising awareness and public participation on educational issues. I will also use this method in implementing projects in my institution," said Udin, a participant from the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information Jakarta (LP3ES).
Participants of the training were committed to implementing PAR methods in the communities they work in. They also saw the initiative as an important tool to increase awareness and create a movement among young people to learn not only about their right to education, but also their rights as citizens.