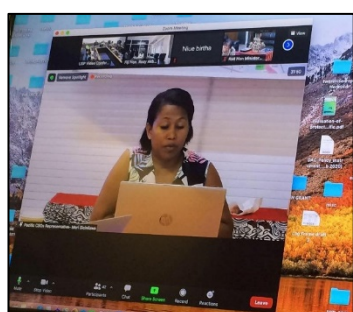


Building on milestones and shaping ASPBAE's Strategic Directions for 2021-2024

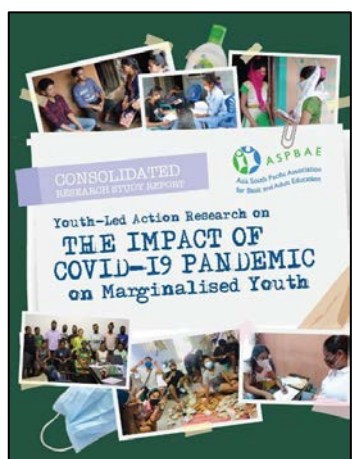
ASPBAE Executive Council Meeting

[Full article](#)



Pacific CSOs urge education ministers to protect national education budgets to recover from COVID-19

[Full article](#)



ASPBAE launches 'Youth-led Action Research on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Marginalised Youth'

[Full article](#)



KIX EAP Webinar: What has COVID-19 done to education and research?

[Full article](#)



ASPBAE expands Youth-led Action Research mentor training to Mongolia education coalition

[Full article](#)

ASPBAE Regional Dialogue on Education Financing Calls for Protection and Increase of Education Budgets

ASPBAE held an Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue on Education Financing to highlight the need for governments in the region to protect and progressively increase domestic financing for education especially in light of the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. - [Read more](#)

Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) 2021: A call for more and better education financing

The 2021 Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) took up the theme education financing with actions and activities focused on securing an increase in the public financing of education to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. - [Read more](#)

ASPBAE speaks at the 1st Plenary Session of SEAMEO Congress 2021

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Congress 2021 was held virtually with the theme 'Transforming Southeast Asian Education, Science, and Culture in the Digital Age'. ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, presented on 'Transformative Education Agenda: Policy, Financing, Technology and Governance'. - [Read more](#)

Parliamentarians in the Asia Pacific mark 100 days until Global Education Summit

To mark the 100-day countdown to GPE's Global Education Summit, parliamentarians convened a virtual roundtable on 21 April to discuss the critical role of development cooperation in supporting education in the world's poorest countries, including those in the Asia Pacific region. - [Read more](#)

Education News and Views

Education nearly missing from national stimulus packages

Despite the critical role of education in economic recovery and transformation and the importance of the school ecosystem—from students and teachers to parents and personnel—for communities and the society at large, the education and training sector has been given minor attention in governments' fiscal responses to the crisis. — [Read more](#)

Member of the Month

Asosiasi Pusat Pengembangan Sumberdaya Wanita (PPSW), Indonesia

The main objective of PPSW is the empowerment of women, especially of those in the lowest socio-economic strata of society in urban slums. PPSW works on issues related to the economic empowerment of women, reproductive health, political education and education as an entry point in organising the community, especially women's groups.

PPSW also works towards increasing women's access and control over resources to create a more egalitarian, democratic, and gender-just society.

Photo of the Month



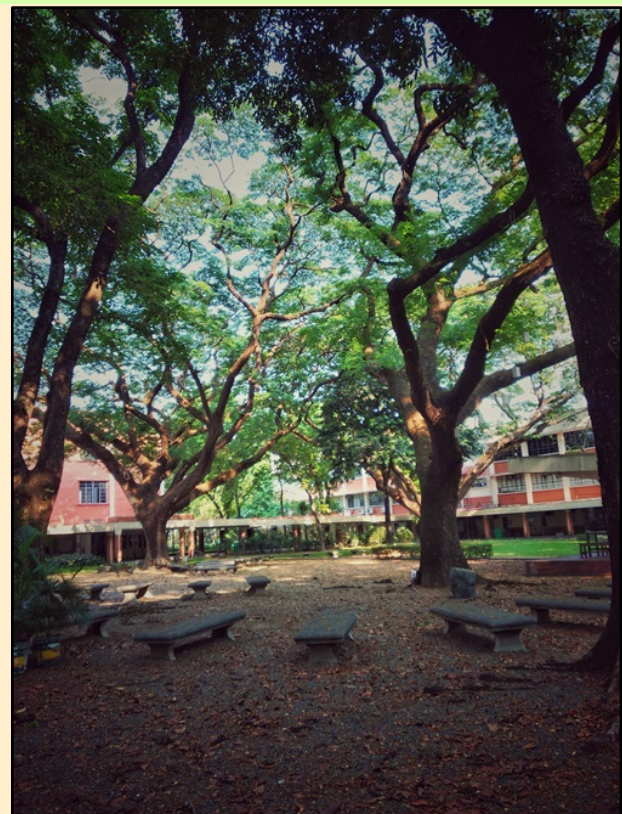
Earth Day is observed on April 22 to raise awareness about environment challenges. The theme of Earth Day this year was 'Restore Our Earth'.

ASPBAE Lens

ASPBAE dedicates this space in the Bulletin to showcase photos its staff have taken to feature their perception of life around them and the interesting and inspiring moments they observe. In this edition of the Bulletin, we feature a photo taken by Alena Mara Sipalay, Executive Assistant to the ASPBAE Secretary-General (SG).

Alena Mara Sipalay

Executive Assistant to the ASPBAE SG



Education News and Views

This section of the Bulletin is dedicated to highlighting news and events from the Asia Pacific and from around the world focusing on education and lifelong learning. For this edition, we highlight the minor attention given by governments to fiscal responses towards education during the COVID-19 crisis.

Education nearly missing from national stimulus packages



COVID-19 has taken a gruelling, global toll on education, disrupting learning from pre-schools to universities the world over. Despite both the role of education in economic recovery and transformation and the importance of the school ecosystem—from students and teachers to parents and personnel—for communities and the society at large, the education and training sector has been given minor attention in governments' fiscal responses to the crisis. Based on survey responses from governments (February and March 2021), UNESCO estimates that only 2% of COVID-19 stimulus package funding worldwide went to education. A substantial number of surveyed countries (41%) did not allocate any

funding to education in their fiscal responses. Of the countries that did, most were high-income economies. 93% of the total invested in education (or US\$ 264 of 280 billion) have occurred in these wealthy countries, which allocated much more per-pupil funding for education out of their packages.

Such disparities in financing threaten to further exacerbate existing educational inequalities across countries. Education systems in lower-income countries are therefore more likely to experience wider and deeper impact on their children's and youth's learning and participation in education, which will, in turn, affect the generation of a demographic dividend and eventually the human capital required to support the early recovery and sustainable transformation of the economy.

Some countries could leverage their spending of stimulus funds to innovate higher levels of education and diversify learning platforms and modalities, such as hybrid education. Other countries—faced with limited resources and competing priorities—could focus on basic coping measures such as school sanitation and primary education only. For example, the Republic of Korea deployed additional funds to further improve digital infrastructure, develop KMOOC or Korean open online curricula, and provide per-pupil distance learning subsidies. Côte d'Ivoire directed their spending to implement remote learning programmes through television and support the most vulnerable students with household packages such as electricity and water bills and hygiene kits for girls.

The post-COVID era will see significant social and economic transformations, and the education and training sector will once again be called upon to respond to these new realities. Education must be a critical component of pandemic recovery planning and financing, to meaningfully contribute to shaping resilient, responsive, inclusive societies and economies.

UNESCO will continue collecting data and advocating for the expansion of allocations to education and training in the fiscal responses to COVID-19, for investing in learning is investing in a strong, sustainable future.

This write-up appeared on the [UNESCO website](#). [BACK]



Organised as part of Global Action Week for Education (GAW), the Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue was guided by the theme, *'Protect Education Budgets: Reach the Most Marginalised'*.

In his overview, ASPBAE's Rene Raya warned that 6.7 million children are at risk of dropping out of school in the Asia Pacific and that recovery must focus on human capacities and well-being, with education as a priority in any stimulus package.



Global Action Week this year focused on education financing as part of GCE's One Billion Voices Campaign and in support of the Replenishment Campaign of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

ASPBAE Regional Dialogue on Education Financing Calls for Protection and Increase of Education Budgets

26 April 2021, Virtual

ASPBAE held an Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue on Education Financing to highlight the need for governments in the region to protect and progressively increase domestic financing for education especially in light of the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This event was attended by 100 online participants and generated a total of 1,400 views through ASPBAE's Facebook livestream which you can view [here](#).

Organised as part of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) Global Action Week for Education (GAW) held on 26-30 April 2021, the Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue was guided by the theme, *'Protect Education Budgets: Reach the Most Marginalised'*. The GAW this year focused on education financing as part of GCE's One Billion Voices Campaign and in support of the Replenishment Campaign of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Each day of GAW 2021 will see a different regional policy dialogue, focused on education financing but with a regional lens.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was already a huge gap between education spending and what was needed to achieve SDG4. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly exacerbated this gap, and has led to a curtailment of funding by governments for the education of its people. More than ever, it is important for governments to step up and protect national education budgets, and even better, to increase them. This is important to enable education access to those from poor and remote communities, people with disabilities, marginalised youth, women and girls and those who have no access to online learning opportunities owing to the great digital divide that persist in the region.

For this ASPBAE Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue, senior government officials from Timor-Leste and the Philippines participated and shared how their respective governments will mobilise domestic resources to support inclusive education systems and programmes that will prioritise the most marginalised.

The event was moderated by ASPBAE's Bernie Lovegrove and Thea Soriano. A welcome remark was provided by the ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, and was followed by an Asia Pacific overview on financing equity for education by ASPBAE's Rene Raya.

In his overview, Rene warned that 6.7 million children are at risk of dropping out of school in the Asia Pacific and that shrinking fiscal spaces are threatening education budgets. He underscored that education is a critical driver to better health and safety, to equitable and inclusive growth, to information access and critical thinking, and to long-term resilience. He stressed that recovery must focus on human capacities and well-being, with education a priority in any stimulus package.

Shradha Koirala of the National Campaign for Education in Nepal (NCE Nepal), provided the youth perspectives and recommendations for education financing



Dr. António Guterres, Vice Minister for Education, Youth and Sports of Timor-Leste, highlighted the challenges on resource allocations to education and said the country aims to increase the national education budget over the next 3 years.



Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, Chair of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture from the Philippines, spoke about continued efforts to increase education budgets, highlighting a 9.7% increase allocated to the resources of the Department of Education.



In a video presentation, Margarita Focas Licht, Chief for Effective Partnership, from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), stressed that domestic financing is the most significant and sustainable source of financing for education.

that can target marginalised youth. She called for combating COVID-19 with education, the prevention of corporate capture of online learning, the fast-tracking of gender-just skills for training for decent work, and the protection of teachers and educators at the frontline of education. Shradha also showed a brief 3-minute video of ASPBAE's Youth-led Action Research (YAR) work. Click [here](#) for the short video. You can also view the longer, full version of the video [here](#).

The first keynote speaker, Dr. António Guterres, Vice Minister for Education, Youth and Sports of Timor-Leste, highlighted the challenges on resource allocations to education in Timor-Leste, including the dependency of public financing on the petroleum sector, with non-petroleum GDP remaining low, and competing priorities, including basic infrastructure. Despite these challenges, he was pleased to announce that there is a trajectory in Timor-Leste to progressively increase the national education budget over the next three years.

The second keynote speaker, Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, Chair of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture from the Philippines, spoke about continued efforts to increase education budgets, highlighting a 9.7% increase allocated to the resources of the Department of Education, including for distance learning and self-learning modalities, computerisation, and child protection. He stressed four main points to move forward in prioritising education budgets: (1) Continued increased funding towards education and meeting UN spending targets; (2) Ensuring increased and efficient funding towards projects, with focus at the local level, that improves learner outcomes; (3) Ensuring vulnerable groups are included in government spending programmes, and; (4) Adjust the national education budget to adapt to the 'new normal'.

Senator Gatchalian also responded to questions from participants wherein, he highlighted his work in supporting the Alternative Learning System Act which was recently enacted into law in the Philippines and aimed at benefiting disadvantaged learners who cannot access the formal or mainstream school system. He also shared his work in supporting the bill on inclusive education for learners with disabilities.

The Regional Dialogue also included a video presentation from Margarita Focas Licht, Chief for Effective Partnership of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Margarita stressed that domestic financing is the most significant and sustainable source of financing for education. For this reason, domestic finance mobilisation is a top priority for GPE, foundational to its new strategy – GPE 2025. As an example, Margarita mentioned that in Nepal, GPE has helped develop an innovative Equity Index tool to ensure resources effectively target inclusion of the children who are furthest behind – including based on gender and disabilities.

Margarita also highlighted GPE's replenishment campaign goal to secure at least US\$ 5 billion in donor pledges to support the work of GPE in the next five years, and to call on governments to ensure domestic education expenditure is prioritized, protected, and increased. Margarita encouraged all partner countries to make commitments to protect domestic financing to pre-COVID levels, including asking countries to spend at least 20% of total public expenditure on education in order to build strong and resilient education systems.



Participants took part in a photo opportunity in support of GPE's 'RaiseYourHand' campaign to fund education.

In her synthesis, ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, emphasised the urgency as to why ASPBAE, GCE and GPE have strongly put into the spotlight the need to protect education budgets and call on governments to progressively increase the share and the size of budgets for education.



ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, taking part in the Regional Dialogue.

In support of GPE's education financing campaign, participants in the Regional Dialogue took part in a photo opportunity in support of GPE's 'RaiseYourHand' campaign action to fund education, emphasising the need to reach the most marginalised.

In her closing and synthesising remarks, ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, emphasised the urgency as to why ASPBAE, GCE and GPE have strongly put into the spotlight the need to protect education budgets and call on governments to progressively increase the share and the size of budgets for education. UNESCO has noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has dealt the most devastating impact to education in its history.

Helen expressed hope that the strong commitments in education financing made by the government representatives from the Philippines and Timor-Leste will inspire and encourage other governments to commit to the following:

- Protect and progressively increase the share of education budget towards at least 20% of the national budget that will support gender-transformative, pro-poor, pro-people, inclusive, sustainable and resilient education systems;
- Raise resources for education by improving and expanding domestic tax revenues thru tax justice mechanisms that will enable increased resources for social services such as education and health.
- Engage donor governments to improve and increase their aid to education. Linked to this, the GPE Global Education Summit in July 2021 is critical in replenishing aid commitments to education through the important work of GPE in supporting developing countries, including those in the Asia Pacific region, in financing the development and implementation of their education sector plans and in advancing the achievement of SDG4.
- Ensure that the education budget will reach the most marginalised students and learners – leaving no one behind in education.

The regional dialogue was an opportunity to engage directly with senior education officials in countries in the Asia Pacific, as part of civil society advocacy for better and increased funding for education that reaches those most left behind. [[BACK](#)]

Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) 2021: A call for more and better education financing

26-30 April 2021, Virtual



The Global Campaign for Education (GCE), which annually steers the GAWE campaign, led several activities globally in collaboration with its members, including those from the Asia Pacific.

The 2021 Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) took up the theme education financing with actions and activities focused on securing an increase in the public financing of education to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. GAWE 2021 featured a daily regional policy dialogue on education financing, including the ASPBAE Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue on Education Financing held on 26 April 2021. The Global Campaign for Education (GCE), which initiated and annually steers the GAWE campaign, led several activities globally in collaboration with its members, including those from the Asia Pacific region. Among these key activities were a photo competition, a social media campaign, a policy dialogue on mobilising education financing, and regional policy dialogues on education



A photo-story competition was launched by GCE to encourage people from around the world to document and speak up about the impacts of COVID-19 on education. This is the winning photo from Zimbabwe.

ANEC, the national coalition in Afghanistan, published a call to action focusing on education financing to ensure all girls have access to free, quality, and safe education. While the coalition in Pakistan, PCE, launched a targeted briefing on tax justice and called for an increase in domestic financing for education, the coalition in Nepal, NCE, held a discussion on the right to education and the role of political parties.



GCE and GPE convened the 'Raise Your Hand for More and Better Education Financing' global culminating event which made the case for the need to prioritise, protect and increase domestic finance for education.

financing. Highlighting the impact of school closures brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic that affected the education of over a billion people around the world, a photo-story competition was launched by GCE in March 2021 to encourage people from around the world to document and speak up about the impacts of COVID-19 on education. Entries from around the world were received by GCE and [winners](#) were announced during the first day of GAW 2021.

In support of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) replenishment campaign, GCE pursued GAW 2021 activities by encouraging its members and partners to join GPE's ["Raise your hand"](#) campaign where they can publish a customisable graphic hand with an advocacy message to drumbeat the upcoming GPE Global Education Summit in July. GCE and GPE also published a [joint statement](#) highlighting that the [GPE Case for Investment Raise your Hand](#) and the [GCE One Billion Voices Campaign](#) are bold and ambitious advocacy initiatives, focused on ensuring that education systems have the necessary resources for COVID-19 recovery such as the inclusion of education in fiscal stimulus packages.

GCE members initiated activities in support of the GCE and GPE campaign efforts. In the Asia Pacific region, in addition to the ASPBAE *Regional Dialogue on Education Financing*, national coalitions also organised their campaign actions. The Afghanistan National Education Coalition (ANEC) published a call to action focusing on education financing to ensure all girls have access to free, quality and safe education. The Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) launched a targeted briefing on tax justice and called for an increase in domestic financing for education. Further, the National Coalition for Education in Nepal (NCE Nepal) held a discussion programme on the right to education and the role of political parties organised in the presence of leaders of various political parties. Workshops and dialogues were also facilitated by NCE Nepal to discuss ways to direct financing towards girls' education. The coalition created a video to highlight inclusive voices of Dalits, people who are marginalised, youth, women, teachers, students, and parents. Lastly, animation and photos depicting the education system in Nepal and public education in the country were disseminated.

In the global culminating event of GAW 2021, GCE and GPE jointly convened the ["Raise Your Hand for More and Better Education Financing"](#) global dialogue with national, regional and international thought leaders. This included contributions from Nafisa Baboo (Board Member of GCE), Alice Albright (Chief Executive Officer of GPE), Haldis Holst (Deputy Secretary General of Education International), and key input from youth speakers. The event publicly made the case for the need to prioritise, protect and increase domestic finance for education and how a fully-funded GPE will help unlock system transformations in its partner countries. It also marked a week of action for civil societies to call on states and the international community to fulfil their obligations to secure and deliver sustainable transformative education financing in the lead up to the [Global Education Summit: Financing GPE 2021-2025](#) on 28-29 July. Click [here](#) for the event recording.

The write-up draws from the GAW 2021 report prepared by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). [\[BACK\]](#)



The SEAMEO Congress 2021 drew participants to engage in dialogues that will contribute in shaping a regional plan of action that identifies transformative education pillars.

SEAMEO Congress 2021 aims to be a platform for conversations regarding innovations, breakthroughs, and best practices in education, science, and culture; examine the sustainable development, networking, and strategic collaboration platforms for educational stakeholders in Southeast Asia; and reach a consensus to concretise transformative educational programmes and action plans.

ASPBAE speaks at the 1st Plenary Session of SEAMEO Congress 2021

28-29 April 2021, Virtual

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Congress 2021 was held virtually with the theme '*Transforming Southeast Asian Education, Science, and Culture in the Digital Age*'. This strategic event of SEAMEO drew thousands of participants within the sub-region and globally to engage in plenary and thematic dialogues that will contribute in shaping a regional plan of action that identifies transformative education pillars through extensive conversations and discussions among SEAMEO partners, co-organisers, resource persons, experts, and the broader participants.

SEAMEO Congress 2021 has three primary goals, namely:

- To serve as a platform for conversations regarding innovations, breakthroughs, and best practices in education, science, and culture to achieve SDG 4 by 2030
- To examine the sustainable development, networking, and strategic collaboration platforms for educational stakeholders in Southeast Asia and beyond to enhance the quality and relevance of learning and ensure wider access to education in the region
- To reach a consensus to concretise transformative educational programmes and action plans to develop a dynamic synergy of strengths, strategies, and standards so more inclusive and innovative learning paradigms and education policies can be implemented to meet global standards

ASPBAE offered four urgent calls for education transformation

ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, presented on '*Transformative Education Agenda: Policy, Financing, Technology and Governance*' in the first plenary session of the SEAMEO Congress 2021.

Given the threats and setbacks in education which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and other contextual challenges in Southeast Asia and in the Asia Pacific region, Helen emphasised civil society's **URGENT CALLS FOR TRANSFORMATION** to turn the situation around and advance a transformative education agenda covering the following -

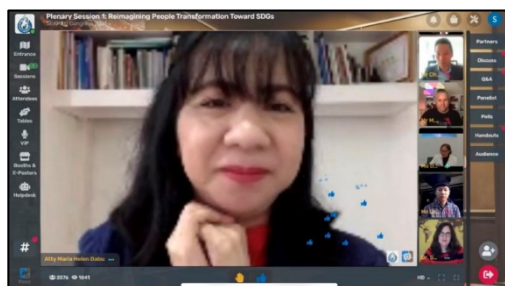
1. Transformation in education systems and policies

There is a need to push for gender-transformative, pro-poor, pro-people, inclusive, sustainable and resilient education systems. Linked to this is the need to challenge systems that exacerbate inequalities in education.

It is also important to put into the consciousness of policy-makers and education stakeholders that education is a basic human right for all and there is a need to cover the full spectrum of education and learning - basic, youth and adult education - to ensure sustainable development pathways for countries.



ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, presented on 'Transformative Education Agenda: Policy, Financing, Technology and Governance' in the first plenary session of the SEAMEO Congress 2021.



ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, emphasised civil society's urgent calls to advance a transformative education agenda through transformation in education systems and policies, education financing, education technology and delivery, and governance.

Helen Dabu, ASPBAE Secretary-General, highlighted the urgent need to address the digital divide in education and enable inclusive and equitable technology-supported learning, as well as the need for strong and institutionalised participation of civil society in education governance and in education sector planning processes



The SEAMEO Congress 2021 was held virtually with the theme, 'Transforming Southeast Asian Education, Science, and Culture in the Digital Age'.

2. *Transformation in education financing*

This calls for protection of public education budgets and ensure that it remains a priority in the allocations of governments. In particular, governments need to progressively increase the share of education budget towards at least 20% of national budget. Linked to this is the importance of raising domestic resources for education by improving and expanding domestic tax revenues thru tax justice mechanisms that will enable increased resources for social services such as education and health.

In addition to raising domestic resources for education, is the need to engage donor governments to improve and increase their aid to education. ASPBAE highlighted the importance of the Global Education Summit happening in July 2021 which aims to replenish aid commitments to education through the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

3. *Transformation in education technology and delivery*

There is an urgent need to address the great digital divide in education and enable inclusive and equitable technology-supported learning. And as more education systems rely on online learning modality, ASPBAE expressed caution on the corporate capture of digital learning space and technology which might further exacerbate inequalities and undermine the right to inclusive, free, and quality public education.

4. *Transformation in education governance*

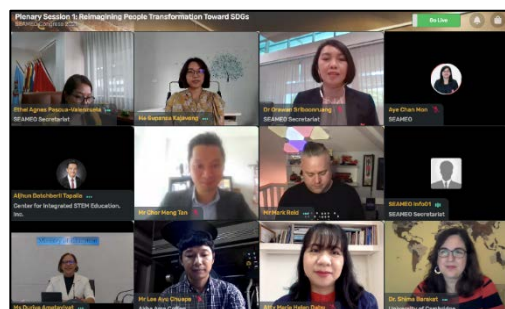
This calls for governments to commit to full transparency and accountability on budget execution and enable a participatory, inclusive and open budget monitoring process at the country level.

Further, there is a need for strong and institutionalised participation of civil society in education governance and in education sector planning processes. This also means ensuring democratic spaces remain vibrant and open for civil society engagements.

Helen was joined in the first plenary by the keynote speaker, Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General (ADG) for Education of UNESCO, and other panelists who shared their views and experiences on the role of education to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Through a video message, the ADG for Education of UNESCO, Stefania Giannini, opened the first plenary session with her keynote address reflecting on the global education situation. She challenged the delegates to think with visionary lenses about the course of human development and discussed the three levers for transformation: the digital transformation and the future of education; the orientation of education around the vision of more sustainable, inclusive and equitable societies; and, the strategic role of higher education in achieving the SDGs which were all relevant to UNESCO's mandate. In closing, she called on a

stronger connection between research, society and policy, and making sure that young people are well-equipped into shaping the future.



Speakers of Plenary Session 1 of the SEAMEO Congress 2021 on 'Reimagining People Transformation Towards SDGs.'

Lee Ayu Chuepa shared his experiences of being the founder of Akha Ama Coffee in Thailand. He shared the relevance of linking the gap between the elderly and younger generations through wisdom and roots; support through mutual respect; *Glocal* (Global and Local) innovations for sustainability; inclusive participation; and, being change agents for transformation towards designing the sustainable future people want to live in.

Mark Reid, a Global Teacher Prize Ambassador at the Vancouver School Board Career Programs, Canada, shared his experiences in teaching, his current work in trades, and thinking-around trajectory in combining policy and practices in reimagining people transformation towards SDGs and making the communities a livable place for all.

Shima Barakat, Director, Entrepreneurship for Sustainability at the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom shared her experiences both in research and institutional links, adult education, leadership development, and entrepreneurship support. Through education, she called on building a system of agents of change that will drive impact for a better world and ensure that all ventures create value beyond profit.

Duriya Amatavivat, Senior Expert on International Cooperation from the Ministry of Education, Thailand, served as the moderator for the session, co-moderated by Supansa Kajavong, a Programme Officer at SEAMEO Thailand.

It was envisaged that the regional plan of action that came out of the two-day Congress will contribute to achieving inclusive and equitable education for all. [\[BACK\]](#)

The regional plan of action emerging from the SEAMEO Congress 2021 will contribute to achieving inclusive and equitable education for all.

Parliamentarians in the Asia Pacific mark 100 days until Global Education Summit

21 April 2021, Virtual



Several parliamentarians from the Asia Pacific gathered for a virtual roundtable and discussed the critical role of development cooperation in supporting education in the world's poorest countries, including those in the region.

At a virtual roundtable, parliamentarians discussed the critical role of development cooperation in supporting education in the world's poorest countries, including those in the Asia Pacific region.

This event marked the 100-day countdown to the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) [Global Education Summit](#), co-hosted by Kenya and United Kingdom, which takes place on 28-29 July 2021. At this summit, GPE aims to raise at least US\$5 billion to transform education systems in up to 90 countries, where 80% of the world's out-of-school children live.

Reflecting on this milestone, Alice Albright, GPE's CEO, told members of parliament (MPs), "*100 days out, we're confronted with the largest education emergency in modern history. In lower-income countries, which were already facing a learning crisis before the pandemic, 126 million children are cut off from*



Parliamentarians heard about the impact of COVID-19 on education systems through GPE partner countries in the Indo-Pacific, many of which already had high numbers of children out of school.



The virtual roundtable marked the 100-day countdown to the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) Global Education Summit, co-hosted by Kenya and United Kingdom, to take place on 28-29 July 2021.



Alice Albright, GPE's CEO, highlighted that GPE's support is more important now than ever, especially in lower-income countries where 126 million children are cut off from schools and many are at risk of never returning, especially girls.

schools and many are at risk of never returning, especially girls. This is why GPE's support is more critical than ever".

Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education of Cambodia, shared how the support of a fully-funded GPE would enable Cambodia and other GPE partner countries to sustain their educational progress: *"Cambodia has received support from GPE since 2006 which has catalysed investment in our education system. GPE funding has helped increase access to education for children from disadvantaged backgrounds including through the provision of free schools and education in the language of ethnic minorities. At least \$5 billion from donors to GPE over the next five years will make a huge impact not only in Cambodia but also in other GPE countries".*

The parliamentarians also heard about the impact of COVID-19 on education systems through the GPE partner countries in the Indo-Pacific, many of which already had high numbers of children out of school.

"The pandemic has brought out all the inequalities in our education system in Pakistan. We already had 22 million children out-of-school. When schools reopened attendance was below what it was pre-COVID. We are seeing the children on the roads, begging or as laborers", said Mehnaz Akber Aziz, International Parliamentary Network for Education (IPNEd) Regional Representative for Asia and a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan.

Aya Yoshida, Director of Global Issues Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, joined the meeting and reiterated Japan's support to GPE: *"Japan and GPE have been collaborating for example on early education and distribution of textbooks to elementary schools in Papua New Guinea. And from the 2020 supplementary budget Japan decided to provide much more support to GPE than previous levels to address the dire situation in Ethiopia and Sudan".*

Responding to Ms. Yoshida's intervention, the Chairman of the International Cooperation Research Committee of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, MP Ashiako Mihara, echoed the support of MPs in Japan for GPE's replenishment.

In Japan, 10 MPs recently attended a seminar on GPE organised by Results Japan. MP Mihara explained that, *"based on our experiences and learnings, we need to support developing countries and that is the priority for our group in Japan".*

Following these remarks, the parliamentarians, representing current GPE donor partners as well as prospective donor partners such as Singapore and New Zealand, raised their hands in support of GPE's financing campaign. They then discussed the actions they are planning to take in the run-up to GPE's Global Education Summit.

Senator Deborah O'Neill, IPNEd's Regional Representative for Oceania, said she was working with colleagues on a letter calling for Australia to increase its funding for GPE: *"Australia has been an important supporter of GPE, but I am concerned that our contributions to GPE since 2011 have been falling. With a growing number of Indo-Pacific countries partnering with the GPE, Australia's leadership*



GPE CEO Alice Albright emphasised the importance of action by parliamentarians in building support for GPE and ensuring governments make ambitious pledges at the Global Education Summit in July.

is critical for the prosperity of the region". Echoing Senator O'Neill's support, Joanne Ryan MP shared that she was seeking to establish a network of schools in Australia to advocate for and raise awareness of global education and GPE.

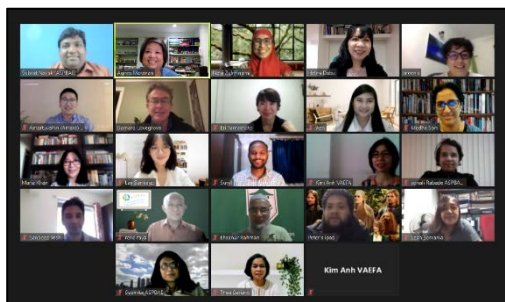
Jasmus Lim, MP from Singapore, said that in a recent speech he had delivered in parliament, he called for the country to be more ambitious in its allocation of overseas development assistance (ODA). Similar calls were made by MPs from Malaysia during the roundtable.

Alice Albright emphasised the importance of action by parliamentarians in building support for GPE and ensuring governments make ambitious pledges in July: "We often hear from our donor partners that parliamentary pressure plays a huge role in tipping the scales in support of GPE. Now is the time to ramp up the pressure and we are relying hugely on all of your support in your national parliaments". [\[BACK\]](#)

Building on milestones and shaping ASPBAE's Strategic Directions for 2021-2024

ASPBAE Executive Council Meeting

14-16 April 2021, Virtual



ASPBAE organised its first ever virtual meeting of its Executive Council and staff owing to the continuing mobility restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the continuing mobility restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic which, amongst others, massively impacted international travels, the ASPBAE Executive Council (EC) held its annual meeting in a virtual modality through the Zoom platform. Holding this meeting online is a first in the history of ASPBAE's annual EC meetings which, up until its last meeting in early March 2020 in Kathmandu, Nepal, had been organised in a face-to-face format.

This is also the first meeting of the ASPBAE EC under their new term for the period 2021-2024. And while most of the EC members are serving their second term, three new EC members, consisting of the new Secretary-General and EC Male Representatives from East Asia (from Mongolia) and Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan), are serving for the first time under this EC term.

With ASPBAE staff joining in the first two days, the EC meeting agenda covered strategic organisational discussions including reflections on ASPBAE's achievements, challenges, and learnings in 2020 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, synthesising the input and recommendations by ASPBAE members during its 8th General Assembly (GA) national consultations and Regional Strategic Planning Workshop and providing an EC steer in the shaping of ASPBAE's strategic plan in the next four years.

Main messages from the General Assembly and contextual considerations

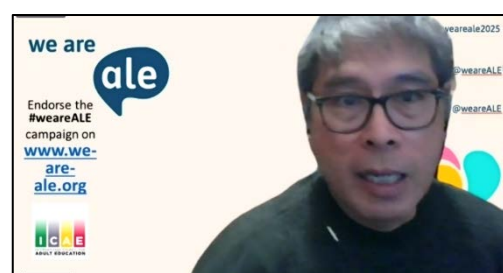
To help shape the development of ASPBAE's strategic plan, the EC members reflected on ASPBAE's milestones in the last four years, the considerations that were expressed by the members during the 8th GA consultations in 2020, and the contextual underpinnings of COVID-19 and other existing development issues in the region.

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The EC meeting was an opportunity to affirm ASPBAE's core strategies while embedding and amplifying key elements in the process of updating its specific objectives.

Deliberations during the meeting guided ASPBAE's overall direction in the coming period, ensuring sustained work with its members to protect education and lifelong learning as a human right; for CSOs and citizens to hold governments to account; protect and secure education budgets; and focus on the most marginalised and vulnerable.



The President of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), Asia Pacific civil society representative on the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) Board, and former ASPBAE President, Jose Roberto (Robbie) Guevara, gave an update on GCE and ICAE at the ASPBAE Executive Council meeting.

Some of the considerations to be reflected in ASPBAE's strategic plan included: threat to education financing; deepening inequalities, exclusions and divides (socio-cultural, economic, political, technological, urban-rural); navigating expanding, more complex and contested global education spaces, alongside shrinking democratic spaces in the region; aligning with other social movements to promote and protect the education agenda; responding to technological disruptions, threats and opportunities; and asserting a more sustainable and resilient education and development paradigm that will advance the right to education and SDG4 within a lifelong learning framework.

Deliberations during the meeting guided ASPBAE's overall direction in the coming period, ensuring sustained work with its members in the region to protect education and lifelong learning as a human right, defending basic, youth and adult education; for civil society organisations (CSOs) and citizens to hold governments to account; protect and secure education budgets; focus on the most marginalised and vulnerable; get back on track in response to the setback brought about by the pandemic; optimise ASPBAE's membership diversity and strength, and sustaining ASPBAE's ability to connect and integrate national, regional, and global networks.

The EC meeting was also an opportunity to affirm ASPBAE's core strategies while embedding and amplifying key elements in the process of updating its specific objectives which include the following –

- Assert gender-transformative, pro-poor, pro-people, inclusive, sustainable and resilient education systems;
- Assert a broader and holistic definition of education quality that supports diversity, critical thinking, freedom of thought, academic freedom, creativity, arts and humanities, indigenous knowledge and, skills for work and life;
- Sustain capacity support to scale up and advance the competencies of broad-based civil society organisations to advance the right to education and SDG4;
- Expand and strengthen thematic, sectoral, and sub-regional approaches by ensuring attention to disability-inclusive education, issues of racism and identity-based discrimination, indigenous education and right to self-determination, and defining customised strategy for Central Asia and South Pacific membership engagements;
- Consolidate current strategic linkages and at the same time expand partnerships in new or emerging formations that will support and advance the right to education and SDG4 within a lifelong learning framework;
- Build on the breadth and depth of ASPBAE's membership to mobilise an intergenerational voice able to shape and inform its strategic agenda;
- Engage further with other key actors in education (teachers, parents/families, students);
- Strengthen ASPBAE's digital footprint to sustain greater engagements with members and partners, support ASPBAE's advocacy and campaigns and promote members' practices and experiences.

EC deliberations and steer will help in the next stage of fully shaping and articulating the strategic plan of ASPBAE in the next four years.

The EC deliberations and steer, based on the recommendations of members during the GA processes in 2020, will help in the next stage of fully shaping and articulating the strategic plan of ASPBAE in the next four years.

Key activities for 2021 were also shared during the meeting which informed ASPBAE's 2021 calendar and can be found through this link [here](#). The calendar will be updated throughout the year as activities are rolled out and as ASPBAE continues to navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. [\[BACK\]](#)

Pacific CSOs urge education ministers to protect national education budgets to recover from COVID-19



Civil society organisations in the Pacific made a strong collective call to the Pacific education ministers at the 12th Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FE_{Ed}MM) to prioritise the funding of education as a key means of enabling recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the Pacific made a strong collective call to the Pacific education ministers to prioritise the funding of education as a key means of enabling recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The call was made during the 12th Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FE_{Ed}MM), held online during 13-14 April 2021. Education ministers were urged to ensure that national education budgets are protected and increased.

The CSOs were led by the Pacific Association of NGOs (PIANGO) and apart from ASPBAE, involved organisations such as the Pacific Disability Forum, COPE (Council of Pacific Education), which is the Pacific regional association of teachers' unions, the Pacific Council of Churches, four national education coalitions, namely PEAN, Papua New Guinea; COESI, Solomon Islands; KOBLE, Vanuatu; and SEN Samoa, as well as several Pacific academics based in Tonga, New Zealand and Australia.

ASPBAE's Bernie Lovegrove was asked to draft the CSO Statement, and other Pacific CSOs contributed comments and additions. The finalised CSO statement was presented by Meri Lewavudi of the Council of Pacific Education (COPE) at the FE_{Ed}MM.

The Statement emphasised that, *"education is a key vehicle for enabling countries to become resilient and to recover, and it needs to be prioritised for funding in COVID-19 recovery programmes. Without further funding, many of the PacREF and SDG4 targets will not be met."*

The Statement urged all stakeholders at the regional, national, and local levels to scale up efforts to implement Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF), its stated alignment with SDG4, which is to *'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'*.

CSOs highlighted the need to build resilience and capacity in national education systems and infrastructure, as well as to implement a range of national and local education programmes that are currently not sufficiently resourced.

There is an urgent need to address the gaps in achieving SDG4 and PacREF by increasing provision and access to early childhood care and education, improving literacy and numeracy in primary and secondary education, inclusive curriculum with a holistic approach that is grounded in culture, language, identity and

CSOs were led by the Pacific Association of NGOs (PIANGO) and involved four ASPBAE member national education coalitions - PEAN, Papua New Guinea; COESI, Solomon Islands; KOBLE, Vanuatu; and SEN Samoa - amongst other organisations and Pacific academics based in Tonga, New Zealand and Australia.



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The CSO statement underscored the need to overcome the barriers to education faced by women and girls in the Pacific. It also urged greater attention to inclusive education to ensure that priority is given to those who are missing out on, and are being excluded from, receiving good quality education.

safeguarding natural resources, improving national education data collection, and culturally and contextually relevant use of education technologies.

Community learning opportunities for youth, adults and the elderly were greatly needed, as well as further and special training and professional development for teachers, the teaching of Pacific literacies, environmental education, climate justice, critical thinking skills, and investing in capacity building for next generation leadership.

The Statement underscored the need to better understand and overcome the barriers to education faced by women and girls in the Pacific. It also urged greater attention to inclusive education to ensure that priority is given to those who are missing out on, and are being excluded from, receiving good quality education, adding the most vulnerable and marginalised groups have the least resources to survive and recover. These include rural and remote communities, people with disabilities, illiterate adults, out-of-school youth, and minorities such as LGBTQI groups, and children whose lives have been severely challenged by the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

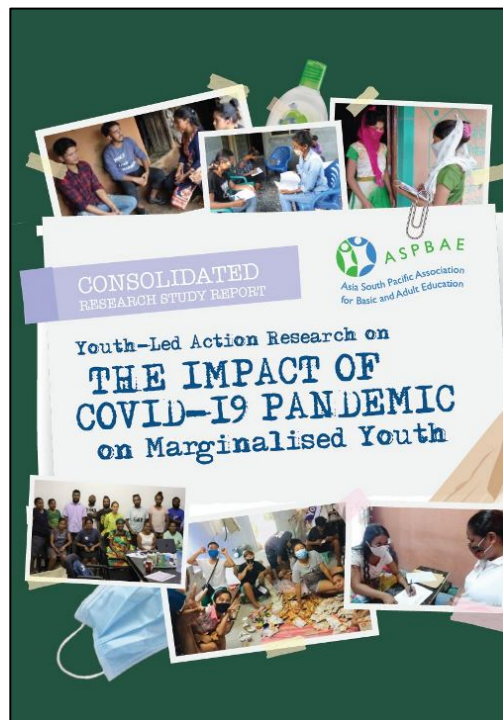
CSOs urged the ministers to approve the Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Framework (PRIEF) as a guiding document to Pacific Education when undertaking planning at national and regional levels, including through PacREF.

While this opportunity to engage with the Forum Education Ministers at their FEdMM meeting was welcomed by all CSOs, it was recognised that greater CSO participation and engagement in education policy and programmes should be considered.

ASPBAE worked with the four Pacific national education coalitions, PEAN, KOBLE, COESI, and SEN to participate in civil society consultation processes in the months leading up to the FEdMM. They contributed comments at the first forum meeting, and spoke in the second CSO forum meeting which was a parallel session of the first day of the FEdMM meeting.

The process was an encouraging collaboration of many Pacific regional CSOs, four national coalitions, and some Pacific academics.

It augurs well that the four national coalitions and ASPBAE's contribution to the process were welcomed and appreciated, and that there is an ongoing Pacific Regional CSO mechanism to ensure CSO voices are heard at the FEdMM meeting. [\[BACK\]](#)



ASPBAE's new publications documents finding from the Youth-led Action Research on the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Marginalised Youth' conducted by members of ASPBAE in nine countries consisting of India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Mongolia, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu between May and August 2020.

ASPBAE launches 'Youth-led Action Research on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Marginalised Youth'

27 April 2021, Virtual

ASPBAE launched its new publication which documents 'Youth-led Action Research on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Marginalised Youth'. Click [here](#) for the report.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented challenge globally, disrupting the lives of millions. The economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating: millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty, millions of students and learners are forced out of education, and millions further have lost work and livelihoods. Thus, COVID-19 is increasing inequalities and exposing existing vulnerabilities.

Against this background, this study reports the findings from the 'Youth-led Action Research on the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Marginalised Youth' conducted by members of ASPBAE in nine countries consisting of India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Mongolia, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu between May and August 2020.

While sharing the report, ASPBAE congratulated all the youth researchers and ASPBAE members involved in this study. Their persistence in meaningfully engaging with and mobilising young people from marginalised communities deepened the analysis on what the youth are experiencing, thinking, and doing to help communities through the COVID-19 crisis.

This regional report has been developed by ASPBAE with the support of DVV International, building on the broader ASPBAE Youth-led Action Research (YAR) initiative that has been supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). ASPBAE deeply appreciates their valuable assistance and partnership. [\[BACK\]](#)

KIX EAP Webinar: What has COVID-19 done to education and research?

21 April 2021, Virtual



Professor Elaine Unterhalter, one of the guest editors of NORRAG, discussed the emerging themes about education and research in the time of COVID-19, including repositioning of vulnerabilities, care and social protection, amongst others.

The Network for international policies and cooperation in education and training (NORRAG) hosted the 8th KIX EAP webinar on 'What has COVID-19 done to education and research?' in collaboration with Professor Elaine Unterhalter, one of the guest editors of NORRAG 'Special Issue 06: States of Emergency: Education in the time of Covid-19', and the following authors of the special issue: Pravintharan Balakrishnan, Marie Lall, and Kusha Anand.

Professor Elaine Unterhalter, discussed the emerging themes about education and research in the time of COVID-19: repositioning of vulnerabilities, care and social protection, disruptions and dislocated times and the revisioning and realignments on what inequality means in education.



Two papers were presented featuring the lived experiences of education during COVID-19 in Asia, which pointed to that fact that while there were many challenges with online teaching, the teacher digital agency has evolved as they adapt and develop local solutions.

Two papers were presented featuring the lived experiences of education during COVID 19 in Asia. Professor Marie Lall and Dr. Kusha Anand presented their study on “*Teachers’ digital agency and pedagogy during the Covid-19 crisis in India*”, which took an in-depth analysis of online classroom practices. Results indicate that while there were many challenges with online teaching, the teacher digital agency has evolved as they adapt and develop local solutions. Irrespective of these findings, the question remains: *What will happen with these new practices post-COVID-19?*

Lastly, Pravintharan Balakrishnan discussed the pandemic shock on the education system using an Actor-Network Theory perspective. As a public-school teacher in Malaysia, he shared his experiences in the field. Among other takeaways, COVID-19 has greatly reduced public trust in standardised assessments and has raised concerns about data-driven insights that are used to gauge students’ progress. It also brought about new forms of public-private partnerships (PPP) and the need to enhance the digital agency of teachers, students, and parents.

Throughout the webinar, diverse participants shared ongoing practices and raised concerns about COVID-19 and its impact on education in their respective countries and the region.

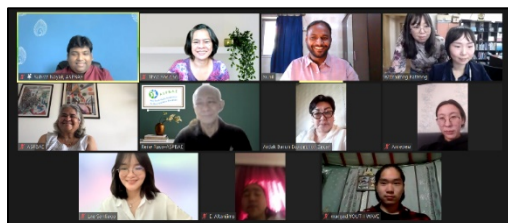
Pravintharan Balakrishnan, a public-school teacher in Malaysia, shared that COVID-19 has greatly reduced public trust in standardised assessments and has raised concerns about data-driven insights that are used to gauge students’ progress

The Global Partnership for Education’s Knowledge Innovation Exchange (KIX) Europe, Asia, and Pacific (EAP) hub functions as a regional forum within KIX and facilitates cross-country knowledge exchange and mobilisation, learning, synthesis, and collaboration among national education stakeholders in 21 Global Partnership for Education partner countries in EAP. The Network for international policies and cooperation in education and training (NORRAG), an associate programme of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, manages this hub.

This write-up is based on information in the [KIX EAP](#) website. [\[BACK\]](#)

ASPBAE expands Youth-led Action Research mentor training to Mongolia education coalition

7-9 April 2021, Virtual



This year, ASPBAE’s Youth-led Action Research (YAR) Initiative was expanded to Mongolia where the ‘All for Education!’ National Coalition (AFE Mongolia), anchored the research study.

As part of ASPBAE’s strong commitment to support youth communities to foster the potential of young people across the Asia Pacific region, it sustained its Youth-led Action Research (YAR) initiative to mobilise and train youth researchers from marginalised communities. For the past several years, youth researchers have been leading action research that builds knowledge on young people’s educational experiences and learning needs.

This year, the YAR initiative was expanded to Mongolia where the ‘All for Education!’ National Coalition (AFE Mongolia), anchored the research study. AFE has partnered with other national educational groups in the country to implement this in various communities with diverse youth.



Guest speakers Nitin Paranjape (Abhivyakti, India), Jose de Jesus (CSEP, Timor-Leste), and Kajal Boraste (Abhivyakti, India) facilitated the training along with ASPBAE staff. Translation support was provided by Bolorsaikhon Badamsambu (AFE Mongolia).

To kick-start this initiative, a virtual training aimed at sharpening the research and mentoring skills of participants was organised by ASPBAE. Sixteen youth mentors from 3 partner organisations (including Youth Wave NGO, Youth Policy Watch, and a representative from the district of Nalaikh where AFE works) and AFE staff participated in the three-day online training.

ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano, Sunil Gangavane, Anita Borkar, Lae Santiago, and Subrat Nayak facilitated the training along with guest speakers Nitin Paranjape (Abhivyakti Media for Development, AMD, India), Jose de Jesus (CSEP, Timor-Leste), and Kajal Boraste (Abhivyakti, India). Translation support was provided by Bolorsaikhon Badamsambu (AFE Mongolia).

The first day of the workshop was designed to highlight the significance of using research as a tool for youth and community development and the meaningful engagement of diverse youth groups. On the second and third day, participants were introduced to important concepts of youth-led participatory action research - research methods, such as surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, and ethical considerations for conducting research with the community.

Facilitators used participatory online tools and small group work methods to motivate participants to share and ask questions in the plenary.

ASPBAE's Anita Borkar provided an historical perspective on the YAR process. Sunil Gangavane moderated a panel discussion where several members shared learnings and experiences from the YAR process, and Thea Soriano facilitated a session where participants charted out project plans and identified where support and guidance is needed

ASPBAE's Anita Borkar provided an historical perspective on the YAR process and its growth. She highlighted the key milestones, challenges, and significant lessons learned. Sunil Gangavane moderated a panel discussion with Nitin Paranjape (AMD, India), Jose de Jesus (CSEP Timor-Leste), and Kajal Boraste (AMD, India) where they shared lessons, challenges, and ways to enhance skills of mentoring. Their contextual examples and practical tips not only helped participants to understand YAR but also helped them to reflect on their role as mentors in the programme.

Towards the end of the workshop, Thea facilitated a session where participants charted out project plans and identified where support and guidance is needed. To address this, a Google classroom support was provided to sustain the learnings from the workshop and to foster a peer learning process beyond the training. [\[BACK\]](#)

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