



ASPBAE welcomes new Secretary-General, Helen Dabu

Helen comes with a solid track record in advocacy, capacity building, institutional building and networking in the region

[Full article](#)



ASPBAE launches new logo!

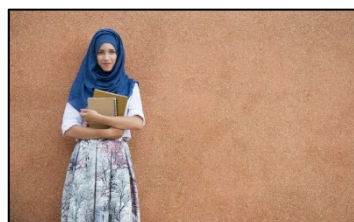
ASPBAE's new logo is part of its initiative to sustain its robust institutional and communication profile

[Full article](#)



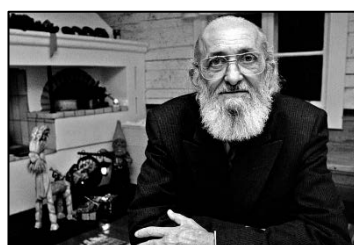
CoNGO president, three other NGO leaders, including ASPBAE, join in a statement on the International Day of Education 2021

[Full article](#)



ASPBAE speaks at Arab education network campaign launch on 'Debts Cancellation for Future of Education' in the Arab Region

[Full article](#)



International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) celebrates 100th birthday of Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire

[Full article](#)

Education of more than a billion affected by COVID-19

Global Campaign for Education (GCE) launches **One Billion Voices Campaign**

The One Billion Voices campaign, which will run throughout 2021, aims to secure an increase in public financing for education to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by elevating the voices of the billion learners who have been affected by the COVID pandemic and sharing their experiences and call for urgent action.

[Read more](#)

Momentum builds for Replenishment Campaign of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

With the rallying call of 'Raise Your Hand, Fund Education', the 4th Replenishment Campaign of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) aims to raise at least US\$5 billion to finance the new strategy of GPE for the period 2021-2025.

[Read more](#)

ASPBAE engages in the Civil 20 (C20) as Co-Lead of the Working Group on Global Citizenship Education

More than 200 participants all over the world, including ASPBAE, participated in the Civil 20 (C20), the Engagement Group that brings together the global civil society, kick-off Meeting organised by the Italian Civil 20 Organising Committee.

[Read more](#)

Education News and Views

Learning heroes, innovations, and financing at the forefront of International Day of Education 2021

[Read more](#)

Member of the Month

Indigenous Maori & Pacific Adult Education Charitable Trust (IMPAECT)

IMPAECT is a Charitable Trust based in New Zealand and Tonga and has working relationships throughout the Pacific, Asia and Europe.

It has contributed to the efforts of UNESCO and other NGOs towards the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

IMPAECT's objectives include advancing culturally appropriate development for both Māori and Pacific communities to achieve outcomes that are authentic to them.

Photo of the Month



International Day of Education - 24 January

#EducationDay

The third International Day of Education (January 24) was marked on 25 January 2021 under the theme, 'Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation'.

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 Sonali Rabade, Finance Officer, ASPBAE Australia.

Sonali Rabade

Finance Officer, ASPBAE Australia



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 a global event held to commemorate the International Day of Education 2021.

Learning heroes, innovations, & financing at forefront of International Day of Education 2021



"We must make education a priority in recovery plans," said UNESCO Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, in a [video message](#) as she opened and set the tone of the virtual conference organized for the third [International Day of Education](#) on 25 January, under the theme 'Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation'. *"We are celebrating this International Day of Education in an exceptional situation: the greatest disruption in history to the lives of students, teachers, and the entire educational community,"* she said.

The [global event](#) was organised in partnership with the UNESCO New York Office, UNHQ, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (CRI), as well as partners from the Global Education Coalition.

One year into the COVID-19 pandemic, over 800 million students, more than half the world's student population, still face significant disruptions to their education, ranging from full school closures in 31 countries to reduced or part-time academic schedules in another 48 countries, according to [new UNESCO data](#)



The crisis was highlighted by the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, *“The pandemic has dashed hopes of a brighter future among vulnerable populations. Education is the foundation for expanding opportunities, transforming economies, fighting intolerance, protecting the planet, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.”*

Meet the 'learning heroes'

'Learning heroes' from around the world shared their experiences on how they've been able to ensure the continuity of education under difficult circumstances during COVID-19 school closures. Christopher Oule, a blind activist from Burkina Faso, talked about his efforts in making education available for visually impaired

learners by scanning textbooks and making them accessible to students in his country. Marla Yolibet Vasquez, a teacher from Honduras, explained how she was determined to make sure that children received adequate meals at home during school closures, with support from the World Food Programme, together with learning resources. *“For some children, their only meals were the ones provided by their schools,”* she said.

More financing needed now more than ever

The need for adequately financed recovery packages for education was underlined by many participants. *“Governments must commit to making significant investment in education,”* said Alice Albright, CEO of the Global Partnership for Education. *“GPE has put itself in a position to help countries respond to what is perhaps the worst crisis that the education sector has faced.”*

Manos Antoninis, Director of the Global Education Monitoring Report, underlined the findings of a new policy paper showing that, even before the COVID-19 crisis, only 1 in 5 countries demonstrated a strong commitment to equity in education through their financing mechanisms. Over 80 country profiles were compiled detailing countries' financing policies and programmes to inform the [new GEM Report policy paper](#).

Refaat Sabbah, President of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), talked about the role that organisations and individuals can play to protect the right to education. *“We must not only prevent rollbacks of education financing, but we must be pushing for more and better financing for education to make sure that progress towards achieving SDG4 is back on track. The One Billion Voices campaign is a chance for everyone to stand together and call for urgent action for education.”*



Yasmine Sherif, Director of Education Cannot Wait, explained the need to go into the education crisis and the countries affected by it to fully understand what the situation is like on the ground. She mentioned the profit generated by the world's wealthiest individuals during the pandemic and affirmed that *“we need to look at new donors”* and *“make sure that the children left behind can get benefit from quality education.”*

Click [here](#) to watch the recording of the event and [here](#) for more on the International Day of Education.

This write-up draws from an article appearing on the [UNESCO website](#). [\[BACK\]](#)



Education of more than a billion affected by COVID-19

Global Campaign for Education (GCE) launches One Billion Voices Campaign

25 January 2021, Virtual

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) launched a new campaign called [One Billion Voices](#) on the occasion of the [International Day of Education](#), as the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the education of more than one billion people.

The pandemic is also significantly impacting education financing, thereby threatening the progress of the entire [Sustainable Development Agenda](#), and, specifically, Sustainable Development Goal 4 for Education ([SDG 4](#)).

The One Billion Voices campaign, which will run throughout 2021, aims to secure an increase in public financing for education to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by elevating the voices of the billion learners who have been affected by the COVID pandemic and sharing their experiences and call for urgent action.

One Billion Voices' call to action

The campaign's call to action sets out how governments can act to finance quality education and includes eight policy recommendations:

1. Increase state funding for education to 20% of public expenditure.
2. Increase their tax base to increase resources, working towards a minimum tax-to-GDP ratio of 20%.
3. Enable urgent debt cancellation for the least developed countries; and debt alleviation for middle and upper-middle income countries.
4. Ensure inclusive educational systems and institutions.
5. Provide free quality education for all and end the trend towards the privatisation and commercialisation of education.
6. Improve the quality of teaching through adequate recruitment, remuneration, and continued teacher training.
7. Listen and respond to the voices of those affected. Space must be allowed for individuals and civil society to speak up.
8. Developed countries must continue to work towards the goal of 0.7% aid, with 20% of this spent on education, and step up their financial contributions to the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait.



The One Billion Voices campaign aims to secure an increase in public financing for education to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by elevating the voices of the billion learners who have been affected by the COVID pandemic.



The campaign's call to action sets out how governments can act to finance quality education and includes several policy recommendations, including increasing state funding for education to 20% of public expenditure and ensuring inclusive educational systems and institutions.



The launch event, held virtually, featured a keynote address by GCE President, Refat Sabbah; screening of the One Billion Voices Campaign film; regional panel discussions on the impact of COVID-19 on education; and regional plans to finance education.

ASPBAE's Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, who also spoke at the event, stressed that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and education financing, in the Asia Pacific region and the world, has been sweeping, deep, and ultimately, long-lasting. Tremendous pressure is exerted on education budgets in most countries as the sector competes for dwindling resources given the projected contraction of the economy, the reduction of government revenues, the huge spending to combat COVID-19, and the expected decrease in external aid. She further highlighted the multiple challenges for education in the Asia Pacific which were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which include digital divide and inequalities in education especially since almost half of the population of the region lacks access to the internet. Added to this situation is the push towards further commercialisation of education given the rush among the private ICT firms to aggressively promote and market their digital learning technologies.

Grant Kasowanjete, GCE Global Coordinator, explained, *"At a time like this, it has become increasingly urgent and important for governments to involve civil society organisations in the drawing up of education budgets for them to provide inputs and comments. The overall strategic intent is for governments to live up to the commitment they have made to their citizens on domestic financing within the 2030 Framework to Action by allocating at least 4%-6% of gross domestic product (GDP) to education and/or at least 15%-20% of public expenditure to education"*.

Refat Sabbah, GCE President, added, *"All GCE members around the world, INGOs, regional networks and national education coalitions, parents, guardians, teachers, and learners should rally behind the One Billion Voices Campaign. GCE reaffirms its commitment to continue campaigning for publicly-funded, equitable, and inclusive free quality education for all, including the need to improve and closely monitor domestic and international education financing mechanisms. This includes calling for strong publicly funded education systems that meet the internationally agreed education financing benchmarks, championing tax justice as a critical instrument to financing public education and effective response to the increased commercialisation of education and the development of so-called innovative financing mechanisms"*.



Refat Sabbah, GCE President, reaffirmed GCE's commitment to strong publicly-funded education systems that meet the internationally agreed education financing benchmarks, championing tax justice as a critical instrument to financing public education.

Education systems are faced with a huge threat and setbacks. The challenges around public financing and ever-increasing pressure on resources for public services have resulted in a lower prioritisation of education. Public education systems have to be protected to cope with and recover from the shocks of the pandemic. There is also a need to lay the foundations for a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable education systems. The One Billion Voices campaign is a chance to stand together to call for urgent action for education. The voices of the billion people whose education is affected by the pandemic need to be elevated and heard - ONE BILLION VOICES FOR EDUCATION!". [\[BACK\]](#)



The 4th Replenishment Campaign of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) aims to raise at least US\$5 billion to finance the new strategy of GPE for the period 2021-2025.

Momentum builds for Replenishment Campaign of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

With the rallying call of 'Raise Your Hand, Fund Education', the 4th Replenishment Campaign of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) aims to raise at least US\$5 billion to finance the new strategy of GPE for the period 2021-2025. The Campaign involves ensuring that donors make strong pledges to fund GPE, and that developing country governments pledge to protect and progressively increase the size and share of education funding in their national budgets.

To support this Campaign, ASPBAE participated in a global partners online call with CSOs and other stakeholders organised by GPE on 19 January 2021 to update on replenishment plans and events.

GPE staff described how the new year started positively due to outreach efforts to the major donors by GPE and its partners, including CSOs. The Campaign was buoyed by the news that when the United States approved its budget for 2021, it included \$125 million allocated for GPE.

The online call also discussed the CSO recommendation to donors to set greater ambitions and pledges compared to the previous replenishment given the urgent need for additional resources for education brought about by COVID-19.

GPE promoted the International Day of Education (IDE) on 25 January, organised by UNESCO, with the theme, '*Recover and revitalize education for the COVID-19 generation*'. IDE highlighted the urgency to mobilise funding for education and give voice to 'community heroes' who acted to provide education to learners during school closures. It was an opportunity to present innovations that pave the way towards more resilient and inclusive education systems. An #EducationDay social media pack with messages and visuals was prepared by GPE.

On 25 January, GPE launched the [GPE Raise Your Hand Live Talk show](#), which featured Dag Inge Ulstein, the Minister for International Development from Norway, and Aya Chebbi, the African Union Youth Envoy during its pilot episode.

GPE, through its [blog](#), released the first of a series of interviews entitled '*In focus: 5 reasons for \$5 billion*'. This series, which can be accessed on the GPE website, showcases GPE partners and education supporters who discuss their reasons for supporting increased financing for education, and through GPE in particular.

The first interview featured Aksel Jakobsen, Norway's State Secretary for International Development, who shared that '*GPE provides a truly critical support to countries and we must not forget that education is essential to any resilient society*'. GPE also promoted the One Billion Voices Campaign of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) launched on 25 January 2021.



Aksel Jakobsen, Norway's State Secretary for International Development, was the first to be interviewed in a GPE series of interviews entitled 'In focus: 5 reasons for \$5 billion'.



ASPBAE liaised with GPE staff and supported GPE's inclusion in the agenda of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO).

Further, GPE assembled a Youth Leaders Group composed of 15 young education advocates based in GPE developing country partners, to promote the Campaign, along with identifying youth ambassadors in some donor countries. In the Asia Pacific region, ASPBAE liaised with GPE's Regional Partnerships Lead (Africa and the Asia Pacific), Victoria Egbetayo, and Deepali Gupta to promote the Replenishment Campaign. ASPBAE supported GPE's inclusion in the agenda of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) whose Congress will be held on 28-29 April 2021.

ASPBAE also supported a GPE presentation to the Pacific Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEdMM) to be held on 13-14 April. GPE is also collaborating with the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and ASPBAE in optimising the 2021 Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) to support the GPE Replenishment Campaign, including the GAWE Asia Pacific launch event on Education Financing on 26 April organised by ASPBAE.

Further updates on ASPBAE's support to the GPE Replenishment will be shared in the coming months culminating in the Global Education Summit to be held in London on 28-29 July 2021. [\[BACK\]](#)

ASPBAE engages in the Civil 20 (C20) as Co-Lead of the Working Group on Global Citizenship Education

25-27 January 2021, Virtual



More than 200 participants all over the world, including ASPBAE, participated in the kick-off meeting of the Civil 20 (C20), the Engagement Group that brings together global civil society, organised by the Italian Civil 20 Organising Committee. The group discussed the political priorities to be submitted to the G20, an international forum of 19 countries and the European Union, and started the discussions with the institutions.

As the first official event of the C20 process, the three-day virtual meeting had a mix of plenary and thematic sessions on selected workstreams to collectively define the objectives of the C20 agenda for this year, identify specific advocacy strategies, tactics, and coordination mechanisms, and provide a platform to initiate institutional dialogue with the Group of Twenty (G20). ASPBAE was represented in this event by Cecilia (Thea) Soriano, Rene Raya, and Lae Santiago.

This year, the C20 process is managed by a broad coalition of Italian civil society organisations under the coordination of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP). Under the Italian Presidency of the G20, the C20 will focus on three broad interconnected pillars of action, namely: People, Planet, and Prosperity. The [C20's 2021 Proposed Priorities](#) include strengthening the G20 support for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, and all related UN systems and processes and strengthening the G20 Accountability Framework and democratic participation in the G20 process.

The C20 will focus on three broad interconnected pillars of action, namely: People, Planet, and Prosperity.



The C20 is a platform for CSOs to dialogue with political leaders of G20 countries and the EU and put forward civil society proposals and demands on important issues such as sustainable development, gender equality, human rights, and social, economic, and climate justice.

As part of its continuing engagement in SDG 4 advocacy, ASPBAE, as the focal point, will co-lead the Working Group on Global Citizenship Education (GCED), which is linked with the SDG 4.7 target on Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship.

ASPBAE participated in virtual consultations held fortnightly with C20 Asian CSOs, where participants exchanged country updates on and new developments in G20 processes, reviewed the formation of the C20 Asia Working Groups, and discussed updates on the Global C20 Working Groups.

In April 2019, ASPBAE also engaged in the C20 processes through Rene Raya who represented ASPBAE and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) in the Civil Society Summit hosted by the Government of Japan in Tokyo, Japan. The focus of its interventions and advocacies during its participation in the C20 processes included education financing and challenging the commercialisation and privatisation of education that undermines the right to education of children, youth, and adults and furthering discrimination and inequity in education. ASPBAE also participated in the processes of developing the Policy Paper on Education to inform CSO advocacies in the G20 Summit.

This year, as part of its continuing engagement in SDG 4 advocacy, ASPBAE, as the focal point, will co-lead the Working Group on Global Citizenship Education (GCED), which is linked with the SDG 4.7 target on Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship. ASPBAE also expressed its interest in the Finance Working Group. The 2021 C20 has other Working Groups on Agenda 2030/Sustainable Development, Global Health, Climate, Biodiversity and Ecological Transition, Anti-Corruption, Digitalisation, and Gender.

The C20 Global Citizenship Education Working Group's overarching goal is "investing in education as the main lever to affect inequalities and restore equality of opportunity." Its macro-objectives include -

- Debt cancellation and use of "freed" resources to invest in children's education
- Lifelong learning to build a democratic culture: protection of common goods and human rights
- Education 4.0: Global citizenship as the main transversal competence to be citizens of the future
- Transformative learning at the service of sustainable development: care of the planet and the earth's inhabitants in the pandemic era



The C20 Global Citizenship Education Working Group's overarching goal is "investing in education as the main lever to affect inequalities and restore equality of opportunity."

The C20 Education Working Group shall "examine the factors involved in facilitating or hindering the right to education and the achievement of higher education, also in the context of the pandemic." Overcoming the digital divide and exploring the tools available through digitalisation to improve interconnections between education and the job market are among its priorities this year.

The C20 became one of seven official Engagement Groups of the G20 in 2013. It provides a platform for CSOs to engage in dialogue with political leaders of the G20 countries and the European Union and put forward civil society proposals and demands on important areas, such as sustainable development, gender equality, human rights, and social, economic, and climate justice. Countries in the Asia-Pacific included in the G20 are Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan and South Korea. [\[BACK\]](#)



Helen Dabu, ASPBAE's new Secretary-General.

ASPBAE welcomes new Secretary-General, Helen Dabu

1 January 2021

As officially announced by the ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, to ASPBAE members and partners in November 2020, the organisation underwent a significant change in its leadership in 2021.

Former ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, by her express choice, stepped down from her role after 25 years of dedicated, exemplary service. As ASPBAE's Secretary-General, Maria competently and capably steered ASPBAE from a relatively small regional education NGO to becoming one of the most respected, credible regional civil society organisations for education in the global arena: an exceptional achievement by any measure.

ASPBAE, under Maria's leadership, grew to be truly representative of the rich and deep tradition of civil society in the Asia Pacific, advancing the right to education and lifelong learning through advocacy and practice, at the grassroots, national and international levels.

As part of her legacy, ASPBAE has honed a deep bench of highly capable leaders, more than able to build on the strong organisational foundations established during Maria's term as ASPBAE's Secretary-General. Anticipating the significant changes that leadership shifts of this kind can unleash, the ASPBAE Executive Council (EC) worked with Maria to set in place the processes needed to ensure a meaningful and smooth turn-over of leadership.

At the end of a comprehensive executive search and selection process, the Executive Council, in July 2020, appointed Helen Dabu as ASPBAE's Secretary-General, effective 1 January 2021.

Helen comes with a solid track record in advocacy, capacity-building, institutional building and networking in the region. She has dedicated her professional life to championing human rights: as a practicing lawyer, defending migrant workers' rights through strategic litigation and parliamentary engagements, and in her work with ASPBAE, staunchly advocating for education as basic human right.

She trail-blazed ASPBAE's efforts to facilitate the formation of national education coalitions in countries where they didn't as yet exist and where ASPBAE membership and linkages were then thin: East Timor, Vietnam, Myanmar, Mongolia; and co-managed ASPBAE's extensive capacity-building for advocacy programme. One of the emerging global CSO leaders, Helen Dabu currently represents civil society in the Board of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

As ASPBAE transitions into a new highly capable stewardship, it fully recognises the profound impact this leadership shift will bring. However, the organisation is confident in the choices it has made, and stand assured together with the new Secretary-General, the newly elected Executive Council, and the abundantly able, professional, and dedicated ASPBAE staff complement. [\[BACK\]](#)



Helen Dabu takes over from Maria Khan, who stepped down as ASPBAE Secretary-General after 25 years at the helm.

ASPBAE launches new logo!

ASPBAE is proud to announce the launch of its new logo as part of its initiative to sustain its robust institutional and communication profile. After careful consideration and design process, it has chosen a new logo that reflects a forward-looking and dynamic identity that captures ASPBAE's aim of continuing to set the bar high in its work towards the right education and lifelong learning.

Although the logo has evolved, ASPBAE stayed true to its roots at the same time hence, the design swaps the previous logo with more vibrant green-blue colours and retains a part of the older version, represented by the two figures. Taking this approach, ASPBAE brought a design which is more in line with ASPBAE's commitment to sustain its ability to being responsive in a fast-changing world and in diverse development and education contexts regionally and globally, working closely with its members and partners.

Sincere appreciation is extended to ASPBAE Secretariat staff and members of ASPBAE's Executive Council for their creative and inspiring inputs towards the conceptualisation and design of the new logo. Click [here](#) to watch a brief animated video on the logo. [\[BACK\]](#)

CoNGO president, three other NGO leaders, including ASPBAE, join in a statement on the International Day of Education 2021

24 January 2021

A 26-point Statement was jointly issued on the occasion of the International Day of Education 2021 by Liberato C. Bautista, President of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations ([CoNGO](#)), joined by Helen Dabu, [ASPBAE](#) Secretary-General, Franklin Shaffer, President and Chief Executive Officer of [CGFNS International](#), and Montse Rafel, Director General of [Dianova International](#).

The statement reaffirmed education as a human right, a public good and state responsibility, and must be publicly-funded. It further emphasised that inclusion and equity are crucial for transformative education from basic to adult learning and education.

The civil society leaders called attention to the blessings and perils of online education, emphasising that the digital divide was exacerbated by the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the same vein, they recognized the importance of education, especially for health and allied professions, and their portability across borders, given the high demand but shortage of health workers at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Education must foster [civic engagement, democratic participation and social innovation](#)," the statement said. "Now is the time to develop global civic consciousness and innovate on a global civics education that fosters global citizenship and multilateral collaboration. Our countries, our people, and the planet will be better for it."



A joint statement by CoNGO, ASPBAE, CGFNS International and Dianova International on International day of Education reaffirmed education as a human right, a state responsibility, and must be publicly-funded.

Civil society leaders called for "education to increase hope and decrease fear", especially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and called for advocacy and partnerships for education.



While emphasising that inclusion and equity are crucial for transformative education from basic to adult learning and education, civil society leaders also called attention to the digital divide exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The leaders spoke of basic and adult education in a time of intersecting pandemics. They called for “education to increase hope and decrease fear.”

“Education must expose fear brought about by threats to and violations against the dignity and human rights of persons, such as those generated by increasing racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that alienate and divide people and communities from one another. These, on top of fears and anxieties resulting from intersecting crises of pandemic proportions—health crisis, racial crisis, climate crisis, migration crisis, economic crisis, and violence.”

The statement closed with an urgent call for “advocacy and partnerships for education among civil society organisations, NGOs, the UN System, and States.”

Click [here](#) to read the full statement. [\[BACK\]](#)

ASPBAE speaks at Arab education network campaign launch on “Debts Cancellation for Future of Education” in the Arab region

30 January 2021, Virtual

ASPBAE participated during the Arab Campaign for Education for All's (ACEA) launch of its regional advocacy campaign on ‘Debts Cancellation for Future of Education in the Arab Region’. The event brought together civil society, representatives of international organisations, human rights activists, decision-makers and government representatives, academics, educators, and the media, as well as the ACEA Board of Directors and Arab education coalitions to put forward the urgent demand for debt cancellation in Arab countries and countries that are most affected by wars and conflicts.

As part of the One Billion Voices Campaign led by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), ACEA's campaign will span several events and activities, within short- and medium-term interventions, to ensure debt cancellation for education and secure an increase in public financing for education.

ASPBAE's Rene Raya provided an Asia Pacific context at the ACEA event by summarising the impact of COVID-19 pandemic to education and development in the region which include the economic contraction in most countries, the sharp fall in revenues, loss of jobs and livelihood, rising poverty, and the massive learning losses which affected at least 800 million learners across the region due to extended school closures.

ASPBAE's Rene Raya participated as a panellist in the Forum to provide the Asia Pacific context. He summarised the impact of COVID-19 pandemic to education and development in the region which include the economic contraction in most countries, the sharp fall in revenues, loss of jobs and livelihood, rising poverty, and the massive learning losses which affected at least 800 million learners across the region due to extended school closures. The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities in education as a result of income losses, challenges in accessibility, the digital divide, and the lack of support for home learning. A significant number of learners are at risk of dropping out. ASPBAE and its members noted the increasing cases of child labour, violence against women and children, early marriage and teenage pregnancy, and online sexual assault.

Rene further pointed out that with falling revenues and shrinking fiscal spaces, education budgets in most countries in the region are threatened with significant cutbacks. International financial institutions are in a frenzy, offering loan packages to countries that face serious fiscal constraints, thus, deepening



Camilla Croso, Director of the Education Programme at Open Society Foundations (OSF), underlined the importance of strengthening social services, specifically public health, public education, and social protection, in the frame of calling for debt cancellation.



David Archer, of ActionAid, underscored the need for coordinated voices across countries calling for debt cancellation. He added there should be new policies for debt cancellation as well as a collectively agreed global process for resolving debt that is comprehensive, impartial, and fully independent.



Grant Kasowanjete, Global Coordinator of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), stressed the need to place human rights at the centre of discussions and consider debt cancellation as a global justice issue.

indebtedness, especially in low-income countries. This will have a serious impact on debt servicing which can further reduce the budgets for education and other public services. He pointed out that the loans were concluded with no consultations with the target beneficiaries and affected sectors, and with conditionalities on spending caps and other austerity measures. Most of the packages focused on emergency response – relief, immediate health services, short-term livelihood support, and support to businesses, and less on building resiliency and human capacities. There is little or practically nothing on education.

Also speaking at the event was Camilla Croso, Director of the Education Programme at Open Society Foundations (OSF), who raised the issue of the mounting debt crisis and the foreseeable slowdown in public education spending due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. She underlined the importance of strengthening social services, specifically public health, public education, and social protection, in the frame of calling for debt cancellation. Debt cancellation and respect for human rights and development priorities need to go hand in hand. Other recommendations include guaranteeing democratic oversight over debt decisions, increasing the scrutinizing role of the parliament and civil society on government decisions on debt, and using additional fiscal space gained through debt cancellation.

David Archer, Head of Participation and Public Services at Action Aid, also raised concerns on the devastating effects of the pandemic on education budgets, which will suffer enormously due to declining Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) and tax revenues. He mentioned that there are clear guidelines under international law indicating that the pandemic has had an exogenous impact on the economy, thereby offering reasonable grounds for debt cancellation. He also underscored the need for coordinated voices across countries calling for debt cancellation and added that there should be new policies for debt cancellation as well as a collectively agreed global process for resolving debt that is comprehensive, impartial, and fully independent.

Grant Kasowanjete, Global Coordinator of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), was also one of several speakers who stressed the need to place human rights at the centre of these discussions and consider debt cancellation as a global justice issue. He also recommended bringing all movements and sectors together and identifying existing international structures and instruments that can be used to push for debt cancellation.

During the session, Dalila EL Barhmi, the Regional Coordinator for Arab Countries at Education International, and Dr. Zahi Azar, Secretary-General of the Arab Network for Popular Education, spoke on the teachers' association's role and contribution in debts cancellation campaign and strategies for debts cancellation of poor Arab countries. Urgent actions must be taken to ensure debt cancellation, especially for the least developed and low-income countries, and realign these to strengthen public services such as education, which is a critical strategy for sustainable recovery and overall development. [[BACK](#)]



ICAE celebrated the start of a year-long planned celebration of the 100th birthday of Paulo Freire through a workshop as part of the Virtual World Social Forum 2021.



Speakers emphasised Freire's contribution to the development of popular literacy and the pedagogy of conscientization, and how these educational approaches continue to be relevant to current adult learning and education.

International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) celebrates 100th birthday of iconic Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire

26 January 2021, Virtual

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) celebrated the start of a year-long planned celebration of the 100th birthday of Paulo Freire through a workshop as part of the Virtual World Social Forum 2021. The online workshop, which was attended by more than 200 participants from 15 countries and moderated by ICAE Secretary-General, Katarina Popovic, featured speakers from different countries who were invited to reflect on why Paulo Freire is still relevant today

The panellists included Jose Roberto (Robbie) Guevara, President of ICAE, former President of ASPBAE, university lecturer in Melbourne, activist, and dedicated adult educator; Timothy Ireland, a member of the ICAE Executive Committee and ICAE Vice President for Latin America; Carole Avande Houndjo, a member of the ICAE Executive Committee and Vice President for Africa; and Nelida Cespedes Rosel, former General-Secretary of the Council of Popular Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL)

Speakers emphasised Freire's contribution to the development of popular literacy and the pedagogy of conscientisation, and how these educational approaches continue to be relevant to current adult learning and education. They all argued that while Freire applied his approach in the Brazilian school system when he was the Secretary of Education in Sao Paulo in 1980s, his thinking and education practice continue to influence many countries today.

Freire's pedagogy is ever relevant in the multiple crises facing the people of the planet particularly in the areas of health, economy and ecology. More broadly, it supports all challenges to relations of domination and oppression, as do feminist, anti-racist, and decolonial pedagogies. Freire's approach, based on dialogue and respect, is one oriented towards engaging learners in political action for social transformation. As one participant suggested, the pedagogy of conscientisation will always be relevant as long as there are inequalities.

One hundred years after his birth, Paulo Freire continues to not just inspire us, but to challenge us as educators that the practice of popular education is more necessary than ever.

You can watch the recording of the workshop on ICAE's YouTube channel [here](#).

This write-up is the contribution of Jose Roberto Guevara (ICAE President and former President of ASPBAE) and adapted from the ICAE Membership Update of February 2021. [\[BACK\]](#)

Freire's approach, based on dialogue and respect, is one oriented towards engaging learners in political action for social transformation. As one participant suggested, the pedagogy of conscientization will always be relevant as long as there are inequalities.

Publishing ASPBAE's write-ups: Please contact ASPBAE's Information and Communications Coordinator, Medha Soni, at medha.aspbae@gmail.com if you wish you re-produce any material published in this Bulletin.

Photo credits: Some photos used in this Bulletin have been sourced from the internet and belong to international NGOs, networks, and individual photographers.