

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



## SDG 4 National Coordinators discuss progress of SDG 4 localisation

SDG 4 National Coordinators Meeting, Bangkok

[Full article](#)



## Sharing knowledge and analysing Pacific regional education architecture

South Pacific Sub-Regional Advocacy Workshop and Vaka Pasifiki Conference

[Full article](#)



## Study visit of Tajikistan alliance to Mongolia focuses on inter-linkages between coalition strengthening, capacity building, and policy advocacy

[Full article](#)



## Government should not fail children to cover up education system's failure

[Full article](#)



## Treat skills, skills education and skilled youth with the dignity they deserve

World Youth Skills Day

By Snehal V. Soneji, Chief Technical Advisor, ILO, Bangladesh

[Full article](#)

## High-level Political Forum (HLPF) 2018 adopts Ministerial Declaration amidst calls for reforms by civil society

The theme of the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2018 (HLPF 2018) was, 'Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies'.

[Read more](#)

## ASPBAE HLPF 2018 side event highlights transformation towards resilient societies through education

ASPBAE co-organised a side event – 'Learning Cities: Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies through Education', for the High-level Political Forum (HLPF 2018).

[Read more](#)

## Meeting the skills demand to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia Pacific

4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 4)

The theme of this year's APMED was, 'Transforming Learning – Meeting the skills demand to achieve SDGs in the Asia Pacific'. It explored progress and challenges towards implementing and monitoring skills development and outcomes through formal, non-formal, and informal education.

[Read more](#)

## ASPBAE brings Asia Pacific civil society together for effective lobbying at APMED 4

ASPBAE organised a civil society meeting prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 4) to prepare its member and partner civil society organisations (CSOs) for effective and well-coordinated CSO participation in APMED 4.

[Read more](#)

## EDUCATION NEWS & VIEWS

Digital skills for tomorrow

[Read more](#)

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)

## Member of the Month

### **Action for Change Foundation (ACF), Timor Leste**

Action for Change Foundation (ACF) is a local non-profit organisation based in Dili, created by Timorese youth from different backgrounds who help each other through constructive activities.

ACF engages vulnerable young people, teaches them new skills, and helps them find employment. It promotes peace and non-violence through sports, and provides job skills training to help transform lives.

Click [here](#) to know more about ACF.

## Photo of the Month



World Youth Skills Day is celebrated every year on 15 July 2018. The theme this year was 'Youth Skills for Sustainability and Innovation'.

## ASPBAE Lens

ASPBAE would like to dedicate a space in the Bulletin to showcase photos its staff have taken. We want to feature their perception of life around them, the interesting things they see, inspiring moments they observe, and beautiful imagery they capture that reflect education and lifelong learning in a myriad different ways and forms, all left to be interpreted in our own unique ways. In this edition of the Bulletin, we feature a photo taken by Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan, ASPBAE Secretary-General.

### **Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan**

ASPBAE Secretary-General





## 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 recently launched collaboration between the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to support countries to improve administrative data on disabled populations and the extent to which they are excluded from education.

### Digital skills for tomorrow



What has enabled Hong Kong (SAR of China), the Republic of Korea, and Singapore to rise to the top of the rankings in digital skills? How can other countries catch up?

The UNESCO report - [\*Managing tomorrow's digital skills\*](#) - seeks to answer these questions by looking at populations in countries that have particularly high-level digital skills.

The results of five international comparative surveys show that factors involved in acquiring digital skills vary by generation. Across the board, however, ICT equipment, such as computers and Internet access, are a precondition to provide the necessary

digital infrastructure. But this should not lead to a false conclusion. Access to devices is not the decisive factor determining whether a population acquires digital skills.

The ePIRLS study, which ranks Singapore highest in terms of digital skills, showed that students using a computer every day at school to prepare papers had higher levels of digital skills than their peers; students just accessing online information during the same period showed slightly lower scores. The conclusion is that the purpose for which digital skills are practised matters most in the development of such skills from an early age.

For adults, education levels are a factor. Among adults with higher-education qualifications, 15% did not have computer experience, while 80% of adults with less than upper-secondary school qualifications did not have relevant experience, as seen in the example of the Republic of Korea.

Along with factors such as ICT school curricula, ICT training of adults at the work place, and essential ICT infrastructure, functional literacy, and numeracy skills are also at the foundation of acquiring digital skills. Student populations in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) who scored highest in online reading skills also showed good results in hard-copy reading. Adult populations in the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) showed a strong correlation between literacy and numeracy competency and problem-solving skills in technology-intensive environments.

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



PISA and PIAAC both assess populations in terms of literacy and numeracy levels. [PIAAC offers a good starting point](#), covering a range of factors that influence the development and maintenance of skills, such as education, social background, engagement with literacy and numeracy, as well as information and communication technologies. The effort to monitor young people and adults' skills development under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 specifically intends to measure the functional ability to use information to communicate and express oneself.

SDG target 4.4 aims to increase the proportion of young people and adults who have ICT and digital literacy skills; SDG target 4.6 seeks to ensure literacy and numeracy skills among all young people and a significant proportion of adults.

To support efforts in monitoring and achieving SDG 4, during the [Fourth Meeting of the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning](#) in November 2017, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics explored creating target-specific frameworks measuring a continuum of literacy and numeracy skills, as well as ICT and digital literacy. Those frameworks are meant to provide guidance for governments and non-governmental organisations to address developing functional skills that are needed to succeed in an increasingly digital world.

Specifically for SDG target 4.4 on the percentage of youth and adults with a minimum level of proficiency in digital literacy, the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) has proposed [A Global Framework to Measure Digital Literacy](#) and narrowed its definition by reviewing more than 40 digital literacy frameworks.

Digital literacy is the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital devices and networked technologies for participation in economic and social life. It includes competences that are variously referred to as computer literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy and media literacy.

For other countries to catch up with Hong Kong (SAR of China), Republic of Korea, and Singapore, the proposed global framework on digital literacy can serve as a guide, considering very different contexts and needs to formulate policies, interventions, and assessments of digital skills.

To achieve the best conditions for developing digital skills, UNESCO's publication suggests that two types of public policies must be considered: policies that create a supportive framework; and sectoral policies for basic and further training.



The full analysis and list of recommendations can be found in [Managing tomorrow's digital skills - what conclusions can we draw from international comparative indicators?](#)

*This write-up is available on the [UNESCO website](#). [\[BACK\]](#)*

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



The theme of this year's High-level Political Forum (HLPF 2018) was '*Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*'.

## High-level Political Forum (HLPF) 2018 adopts Ministerial Declaration amidst calls for reforms by civil society

High-level Political Forum (HLPF) 2018

9-18 July 2018, New York, U.S.A

The sixth session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2018 ([HLPF 2018](#)), convened under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), took place in New York. The high-level segment of the Forum was held from 16-18 July where Member States presented their respective Voluntary National Reviews of the SDG implementation.

ASPBAE participated in this year's HLPF, along with the [Global Campaign for Education](#) (GCE), the [International Council for Adult Education](#) (ICAE) and other education-focused networks cooperating under the umbrella of the [Education and Academia Stakeholder Group](#) (EASG).

The theme of HLPF 2018 was, '*Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*'. The sub-set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reviewed in depth by HLPF 2018 were - [SDG 6](#) (clean water and sanitation), [SDG 7](#) (affordable and clean energy), [SDG 11](#) (sustainable cities and communities), [SDG 12](#) (responsible consumption and production), and [SDG 15](#) (life on land). [Goal 17](#) (strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development) is also considered each year. The eight-day session heard Voluntary National Reviews ([VNRs](#)) of [46 countries](#) highlighting plans and efforts to implement the SDGs; reviewed six of the 17 SDGs; conducted thematic reviews; held a discussion on progress in "leaving no one behind;" and convened a High-Level General Debate.

CSOs working under the Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) which includes ASPBAE and the EASG, however, expressed disappointment on the VNR process and reporting during the HLPF. CSOs assert the need for meaningful inclusion and participation of stakeholders in the implementation, monitoring, and review of the 2030 Agenda, including in the elaboration of the Voluntary National Reviews. They noted that the HLPF provides no mandate for parallel or 'shadow' reports on country-level implementation, and that there is no meaningful follow-up of issues raised during the interactive dialogue were done by the reporting Member States.

Adopting its [Ministerial Declaration](#), Ministers and high representatives reaffirmed their commitment to eradicating poverty, expressing concern that poverty remains a principle cause of hunger, and stressed the importance of taking collective measures to make an impact, among other goals. They further reaffirmed their commitment to the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) of the [Third International Conference on Financing for Development](#), stressing that much work remains to achieve the ambitious 2030 Agenda three years into its implementation.

Representatives of Member States noted with concern that 844 million people lack basic water services, 2.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water, 4.5 billion people have no access to safely-managed sanitation, and 892 million



ASPBAE's Rene Raya (above) and Cecilia Soriano (not in picture) were at the HLPF 2018. CSOs asserted the need for meaningful inclusion and participation of stakeholders in the implementation, monitoring, and review of the 2030 Agenda, including in the elaboration of the Voluntary National Reviews.



# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



**The Ministerial Declaration reaffirmed commitment to gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls, and full realisation of the human rights of all women and girls.**

**Representatives of Member States stressed the critical role of science, technology, and innovation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and endeavoured to take immediate steps to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships.**



**To move forward in the shared pledge to 'leave no one behind', UN Secretary-General, António Guterres mentioned the importance of mobilising the transformative power of the world's youth, and stressing education as a critical tool for empowerment, for addressing gender inequality, and for changing unsustainable lifestyle and consumption patterns.**

still practise open defecation. They also acknowledged that owing to rapid urbanisation, many cities and local authorities face challenges in providing access to adequate housing and that migration and forced displacement further exacerbates these challenges. They called on all stakeholders to adopt a sustainable-food-systems approach and develop effective strategies to reduce food waste. They underlined the challenges related to plastic waste, especially in the oceans, stressed the critical role of science, technology, and innovation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and endeavoured to take immediate steps to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The Forum recognised that sustainable development cannot be realised without peace and security and that peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. *"We call for further effective measures and actions to be taken, in conformity with international law, to remove the obstacles to the full realisation of the right to self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation,"* the Declaration reads.

It also reaffirms the Forum's commitment to gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls, and full realisation of the human rights of all women and girls. *"To achieve inclusive, sustainable, and resilient societies, we call for the leadership and full, effective, and equal participation of women in decision-making in the design, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programmes that affect their livelihoods, well-being, and resilience,"* the document reads. *"We reiterate the urgency to ensure women's equal access to, and control over, land and nature resources",* it adds.

Taking up the issue of 'leaving no one behind' during the HLPF, a discussion on 13 July featured keynote speaker, Andrew Gilmour, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Mr. Gilmour said the world is not on track with the 2030 Agenda as many people are pushed further behind by the forces of globalisation, with risks and burdens borne by the poorest and marginalised. Lead discussant, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Committee on Development Policy (CDP), said only 14 VNRs presented detailed action plans to leave no one behind. Participants called for - understanding who is being left behind; ensuring inclusion of disabled, marginalised, and vulnerable persons in data collection and disaggregation; and increasing attention to critical linkages across the SDGs, among other areas. Several noted the relationship between access to land, water and energy, and poverty and inequality.

Addressing the Forum, UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, said that while much progress has been made, the world has also backtracked in areas that are fundamental to the shared pledge to leave no one behind. For the first time in a decade, the number of people who are undernourished has increased, gender inequality continues to deprive women of basic rights, and investment in sustainable infrastructure remains "entirely inadequate" — all amid runaway climate change, eroding human rights, and persistent pockets of poverty. He recommended several pathways to move forward, mentioning firstly the importance of mobilising the transformative power of the world's youth, and stressing education as a critical tool for empowerment, for addressing gender inequality, and for changing unsustainable lifestyle and consumption patterns.

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



The role played by civil society and other key stakeholders in the HLPF has been limited despite the clear commitment of the Agenda 2030 to a multi-stakeholder approach to monitoring and implementation.

Greenhouse gas emissions must be brought under control, countries must do everything to mobilise internal resources, and drivers of conflict must be addressed. *“Let us leave this Forum with a fresh commitment to work together, to share innovative solutions, and live up to the Agenda we set for ourselves.”*

The HLPF 2018 formally closed with the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration. It is unfortunate that civil society stakeholders were not given enough time, space, and opportunities to comment and introduce revisions in the draft declaration that was circulated close to the opening of the Forum.

The High-level Political Forum has been the central United Nations platform for the follow-up and review progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Member States’ Sustainable Development Goals commitment since June 2013, as part of an outcome document of the [Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development](#) to replace the [Commission on Sustainable Development](#). It promotes an integrated approach of a wide range of stakeholders that provides political leadership, guidance, and recommendations to track the implementation progress and encourage coherent policies among States.

The HLPF meets every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the General Assembly; and every year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. A series of preparatory sessions takes place, especially at the regional level, and other special events are conducted for dynamic dialogues. The HLPF adopts a Ministerial Declaration and provides a Chair’s summary of the discussions.

ASPBAE, along with its members and partners, have participated actively in the HLPF and related SDG processes at national, regional, and global levels. But the process and outcomes so far is proving that the HLPF is an insufficient platform to meet the expectations of its role in implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the 2030 Agenda and other sustainable development commitments.

The role played by civil society and other key stakeholders in the HLPF has been very limited despite the clear commitment of the Agenda 2030 to a multi-stakeholder approach to monitoring and implementation. High-quality spotlight (alternative) reports produced by CSOs in parallel to the VNRs are given no official status of any kind as part of the HLPF resources.

ASPBAE therefore sees the importance of instituting meaningful reforms as we look toward the 2019 HLPF when education and other empowerment-related goals will be reviewed. To this end, ASPBAE will work with other civil society networks to ensure greater and more meaningful spaces for participation of and contribution from all stakeholders in SDG-related processes in the lead to HLPF 2019 and through 2030.

*Continued on next page...*



The High-level Political Forum has been the central United Nations platform for the follow-up and review progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Member States’ Sustainable Development Goals commitment since June 2013

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



Katarina Popovic (L), Secretary General of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), and Vernor Munoz (centre), Head of Policy, Global Campaign for Education (GCE), addressing a side-event of the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group.

## Education and Academia Stakeholder Group (EASG) holds side event on 'Education for Social, Economic and Sustainability'

9 July 2018, New York, USA

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) organised a side-event in the framework of the [Education and Academia Stakeholder Group \(EASG\)](#) on the topic, 'Education for Social, Economic and Sustainability'. More than 75 civil society activists, teachers, academics, and government authorities and officials gathered to discuss the trends, gaps, and main features of education in the context of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

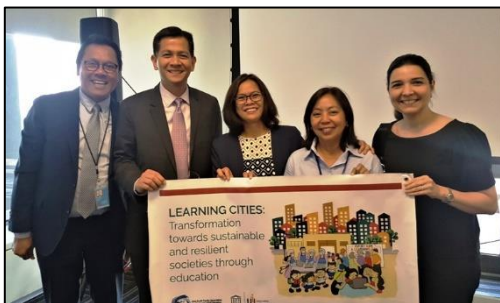
The speakers, Vernor Muñoz (Global Campaign for Education, GCE), Katarina Popovic (International Council for Adult Education, (ICAE) and Megan McHaney (Bridge 4.7 – Building Global Citizenship project) discussed challenges, practices, and discourses that threaten the realisation of SDG 4, with the aim of developing inter-sectoral strategies and coordination among different actors in defence of education.

Discussion focused on the inter-sectoral approaches needed to promote dialogue and coordination in the education sector, in tune with the recognition of the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights that are reflected across the 17 SDGs. It was agreed with Vernor Muñoz (GCE) that, *"We all have the right to a good quality education, which means that the content should reach the aims of education as stated in the international human rights framework."*

This write-up draws from an article appearing on the [SDG Knowledge Hub website](#) and by information provided by Ricarda Motschilnig, Policy and Advocacy Officer, International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). [\[BACK\]](#)

## ASPBAE HLPF 2018 side event highlights transformation towards resilient societies through education

10 July 2018, New York, U.S.A



ASPBAE, UIL, CoNGO, and the United Methodist Church, co-organised a side event at the HLPF 2018 on 'Learning Cities: Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies through Education'.

ASPBAE, along with the [UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning](#) (UIL), the [Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN](#) (CoNGO) and [The United Methodist Church](#) organised a side event – 'Learning Cities: Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies through Education' – for the High-level Political Forum ([HLPF 2018](#)) at the Church Centre for the United Nations.

The objectives of the side event were to -

1. Facilitate the discussions on the role of learning cities in achieving the right to education of children, youth and adults and in the realisation of SDG 11, SDG 12, and all the other SDGs.
2. Draw lessons on the challenges, key policies, and actions done to sustain learning cities and the role they played in providing equal access to education and other social services and in promoting social dialogue and cohesion.



# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



ASPBAE's Rene Raya (L) and Cecilia 'Thea' Soriano (R) speaking during the side event co-organised by ASPBAE in New York.

3. Catalyse inter-sectoral collaboration amongst development and education advocates and partners on possible research, advocacy, and actions on the continuing work on SDG 4 and the wider SDGs.
4. Draw up recommendations to inform discussions during the HLPF 2018.

The session started with setting the agenda in line with this year's theme of the HLPF 2018, '*Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*'. It mentioned the intersection of Sustainable Development Goal 4 ([SDG 4](#) - ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) with [SDG 11](#) (make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), and [SDG 12](#) (ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns).

Although the primary responsibility for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lies at the country level, local governments, being the closest level of government to people, are critically placed to make cities sustainable. This session explored the pivotal role of local governments, education, and learning cities in ensuring the achievement of SDG 11 and SDG 12. Importantly, it proposed the creation of learning cities as key to social inclusion and building sustainable and resilient societies.

## The role of cities

The World Cities in 2016 (booklet by the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2016) said that "*more than 50% of the world's population will be dwelling in cities and almost all the growth of the world's population between 2000 and 2030 is expected to be absorbed by the urban areas of less developed regions.*" This means the number of city dwellers around the world has been growing more rapidly than ever in recent years: more than half of the world's population lives in cities today, and this is expected to rise to 60% by 2030. Cities have played an increasingly influential role in national and world affairs as they have expanded. However, this expansion is also presenting municipal governments with multiple challenges relating to social cohesion, economic development, and sustainability. A growing number of municipalities see the implementation of a lifelong learning strategy for inclusive, sustainable, and resilient urban development as key to tackling these challenges.

Ensuring social inclusion is a key challenge in the cities. Poor families from rural areas who flock to the cities to look for a better life oftentimes become vulnerable and marginalised. Many families do not have access to information and connections to enable them to access social services. Most of them engage in informal economy; without continuing learning opportunities they are not able to get decent work and living wages in the cities. Without decent job and living wages, the sustainability of cities and the resilience of families are challenged through generations. Children and youth of migrant families are not able to complete their education because of high costs, discrimination in school, and need to help their family earn a living.

*Continued on next page...*

The side-event aimed to, amongst other things, facilitate a dialogue on the role of learning cities in achieving the right to education of children, youth, and adults, and in the realisation of the other SDGs.



Jose Enrique Garcia III, Congressman of the 2<sup>nd</sup> District of Bataan and former Mayor of the City of Balanga, Bataan, Philippines (R), speaking at the side event that saw the participation of civil society organisations, academics, environmental groups, and faith-based organisations, among others.

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



**Song, Young-Wan, Director General of Culture, Sports and Education at Suwon City, Korea, addressing the side event.**

The increasing demand for jobs, education, health, water, sanitation, recreation, as well as peace and order, put to test the abilities of the local government to respond strategically and in an integrated approach. The top-down approach of development, where local government on its own defines policies and programmes, delays development responses and exacerbates inequality amidst the economic growth in the cities.

Education and learning are at the core of the process of sustainable development and social inclusion. Many local governments have transformed their cities into learning cities to provide quality education in schools, community learning centres, and informal settings such as libraries or cafes. Education and learning are grounded on the development plan of the city to promote people's economic, social, and cultural well-being and encourage participation of citizens in development.

## What is a learning city?

The Guiding Documents of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) define a 'learning city' as a city which effectively mobilises its resources in every sector to - promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education, revitalise learning in families and communities, facilitate learning for and in the workplace, extend the use of modern learning technologies, enhance quality and excellence in learning, and foster a culture of learning throughout life.

Learning cities guarantee the right to education of all children, youth and adults regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, geography, and socio-economic status.

The understanding is that learning cities build on three fundamental conditions: (1) strong political will and commitment, (2) governance and participation of all stakeholders, and (3) mobilisation and utilisation of resources that ultimately can result in wider benefits to the city such as individual empowerment and social cohesion, economic development and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development.

An increasing number of UNESCO Member States have expressed interest in the learning city concept, calling for the promotion and establishment of lifelong learning as the guiding principle for building more sustainable cities

While the role of learning cities for sustainable development in communities is a step forward in the implementation of the global goals, there are challenges on issues related to the youth, skills and employment, financing and privatisation, migration, and inclusion. Speakers at the side event shared their experiences of transforming their cities with green and healthy learning environments, providing equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for all – youth, children and adults, supporting individual empowerment, intercultural dialogues and activities for social cohesion, and facilitating decent employment and entrepreneurship that spur local economic development.

The main panel of the side event was made up of several prominent personalities – Jose Enrique Garcia III, incumbent Congressman of the 2<sup>nd</sup> district of the

Education and learning are at the core of the process of sustainable development and social inclusion.

Many local governments have transformed their cities into learning cities to provide quality education in schools and community learning centres.



**Panelists at the side event – L-R: Liberato Bautista, President of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO); Luis Gonzalez Arenal, President of the School of Architects, Mexico; Jose Enrique Garcia III, Congressman of the 2<sup>nd</sup> District of, Bataan, Philippines; Song, Young-Wan, Director General of Culture, Sports and Education at Suwon City, Korea; and Raúl Valdés-Cotera, Senior Programme Specialist at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and Programme Manager of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities.**



# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



**Representing the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group, Secretary General of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), Katarina Popovic, stressed that learning cities integrate the whole scale of lifelong learning: children, youth, adult, elderly, formal and non-formal education, and various other sectors.**

Speakers at the side event shared their experiences of transforming their cities with green and healthy learning environments, providing equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for all.

historical Province of Bataan, Philippines; Song, Young-Wan, Director General of Culture, Sports and Education at Suwon City, Korea; Liberato Bautista, President of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO); Luis Gonzalez Arenal, President of the School of Architects, Mexico; and Raúl Valdés-Cotera, Senior Programme Specialist at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and Programme Manager of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. The side event was well attended by approximately 75 participants from different sectors – civil society, academics, environmental groups, faith-based organisations, and others.

In her presentation, representative of the [Education and Academia Stakeholder Group](#) (EASG) and Secretary General of the [International Council for Adult Education](#) (ICAE), Katarina Popovic, highlighted that, “*Learning cities is the practice that successfully integrates the whole scale of lifelong learning: children, youth, adult, elderly; formal and non-formal education; different levels of education; and various sectors and areas.*” Katarina also pointed out that learning cities showcase how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can work at the local level and the functioning and resilience of cities through transformative learning. Discussions further highlighted how cities can successfully integrate the whole scale of lifelong learning in and outside the formal school system.

Click to read the reflections on the side event by ASPBAE’s Rene Raya, entitled, ‘[Challenges in education financing and migration in cities](#)’; and a blog by ASPBAE’s Cecilia (Thea) Soriano entitled ‘[Scaling down education advocacy](#)’. [\[BACK\]](#)

## Meeting the skills demand to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia Pacific

4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 4)

12-13 July 2018, Bangkok, Thailand



**The 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 4) was themed on ‘Transforming Learning – Meeting the skills demand to achieve SDGs in the Asia Pacific’.**

APMED 4 focussed on SDG Target 4.3 (TVET and tertiary education) and Target 4.4 (relevant skills for work).

There was a flurry of events around the 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 4). There was a pre-APMED 4 meeting for Asia Pacific civil society organisations (CSOs) who met to brainstorm on the issues to be debated at APMED 4 and to strategise and agree on common advocacies from the Asia Pacific. Then there was a National Coordinator’s meeting that was held after APMED 4.

The CSO pre-APMED meeting (see next article for write-up) saw the active participation of over 25 representatives from national civil society education coalitions from the region, many of them ASPBAE members. The participants agreed a [core set of recommendations](#) to APMED 4 which guided their lobbying and advocacy efforts within this important policy space.

The theme of this year’s APMED was, ‘*Transforming Learning – Meeting the skills demand to achieve SDGs in the Asia Pacific*’. It specifically focused on [SDG Target 4.3](#) (equitable access to technical vocational training and education, TVET, and tertiary education) and [Target 4.4](#) (relevant skills for work), and

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni (2<sup>nd</sup> from left), was a speaker at APMED 4 and was part of a panel discussion on 'Building new learning pathways in the Asia Pacific'.

explored progress and challenges towards implementing and monitoring skills development and outcomes through formal, non-formal, and informal education.

ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, ASPBAE Executive Council (EC) Members, Meenu Vadera, representing South and Central Asia, Thein Lwin, representing Southeast Asia, and Nasiba Mirpochoeva, Co-opted Executive Council member representing Central Asia, actively participated in APMED 4, as did several of ASPBAE's national education coalitions from the region. Youth representatives who were ASPBAE partners in the Youth-led Action Research – Norfriza Yesmita (Mita) from ASPPUK, Indonesia, and Manisha Gangode from Abhivyakti, India – also participated as resource persons, sharing the outcomes of the research and advocacy efforts.

Elaine Butler of Adult Learning Australia (ALA), an ASPBAE member, and ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano were members of the Drafting Committee of the [Regional Recommendations for Action on SDG targets 4.3 and 4.4](#). ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, was a speaker at the event and was part of a panel discussion on 'Building new learning pathways in the Asia Pacific,' which aimed to clarify and create a shared understanding of holistic approaches to developing learning pathways in Asia and the Pacific and raise awareness about potential barriers and challenges to link TVET and tertiary education, including university. Meenu Vadera, ASPBAE EC member, was a panellist in a session entitled, 'A Skilled Workforce for the Future: School-to-work transition'. The session aimed to identify - specific examples of policies or programmes that have provided better education and job opportunities; best governance practices to guarantee a smooth transition from school to work; and best practices related to workplace learning. Youth representatives who were ASPBAE partners in the youth-led action research - Norfriza Yesmita (Mita) from ASPPUK, Indonesia, and Manisha Gangode from Abhivyakti, India - also participated as resource persons in a session entitled, 'Learning in the Second Decade: Ensuring Inclusion & Equity', where they presented the main outcomes of their action research and recommendations for policy advocacy.

Several of the CSO advocacies found resonance in the final agreements of the meeting.

There was strong consensus on the need for attention to considerations of inclusion, equity, and gender equality. There were explicit commitments to being attentive to the conditions of marginalised groups and communities in designing policies for secondary education, TVET, and higher education. The final outcomes document referred to, "Targeted financial support should be made available with special attention given to the most marginalised groups and communities, to access accredited skills development programmes, including through secondary education options and TVET courses." Ministries of education financing to schools should include a strong equity-based formula and even public-private partnerships should support those education programmes to serve the adolescents and youth most at risk of exclusion. CSOs sensitised the debates to gender concerns with several civil society recommendations on gender inclusion finding support. The final Meeting document spoke, for example, on the need to, "Establish and implement realistic quotas and targets to increase and



Ram Gaire (R) of NCE Nepal, an ASPBAE member, participating in APMED 4 in Bangkok.



# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



**Experts and officials discuss latest developments on SDG 4 at the APMED 4.**

*maintain enrolments for job-related training for women and girls, especially in emergent and non-traditional jobs, occupations and industries".*

A major assertion of CSOs that gained acceptance was the need to reform national policies and programmes to ensure a holistic education environment that encompasses Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), primary and secondary education, TVET, tertiary, and adult education within a lifelong learning context and to ensure no one is left behind from availing diverse learning opportunities and pathways. Following this understanding, it was agreed that policies related to 4.3 and 4.4 cannot be developed without the interconnectedness of the other targets, especially 4.1 (primary and secondary education), 4.5 (gender equality and inclusion), 4.6 (youth and adult literacy) and 4.7 (ESD and Global Citizenship Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth); and that "foundation and transferable, transversal, soft skills" essential for work and life starts with achieving SDG 4.2 (Early Childhood Development).

At the conclusion of APMED 4, civil society participants reflected on the lessons they learned from participation:

- The pre-APMED meeting was useful for identifying issues beforehand to be well-equipped during the formal sessions;
- The recommendations paper that was agreed upon during the pre-APMED civil society meeting provided coalitions talking points and boosted confidence in intervening in discussions and influencing others;
- Civil society presence set a high standard among participants from sub-regional groups and parallel workshops;
- Follow-through will help in assuring proper coordination institutionalising recommendations.

The meeting documents are available [here](#).

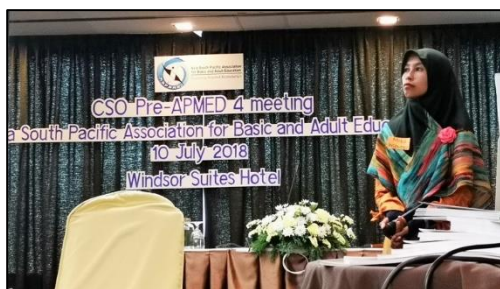
Some ASPBAE's members blogged during the event. Click to read a blog by John Ryan, of the Samoa Education Network (SEN), entitled, '[Providing education opportunities for all](#)'; and a blog entitled '[Deconstructing digital skills](#)' by Nasiba Mirpochoeva, Adult Education Association of Tajikistan (AEAT) and co-opted ASPBAE Executive Council Member representing Central Asia. [\[BACK\]](#)



**ASPBAE and other civil society representatives at APMED 4.**

## ASPBAE brings Asia Pacific civil society together for effective lobbying at APMED 4

10-11 July 2018, Bangkok, Thailand



**ASPBAE organised a CSO pre-APMED 4 meeting to prepare for lobbying and advocacy at the event.**

ASPBAE organised a civil society meeting prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 4) to prepare its member and partner civil society organisations (CSOs) for effective and well-coordinated CSO participation in APMED 4. The theme of the meeting was - '*From reality to policy: recommendations from civil society on SDG 4.3 and SDG 4.4*' - and it specifically aimed to:

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



One of the aims of the CSO pre-meeting was to draw up recommendations to advocate during APMED 4 and guide follow-up efforts at the country level.

1. Deepen understanding of the targets SDG 4.3 and 4.4, appreciate the requirements for monitoring their progress and advocating for their implementation in ways that benefit marginalised, excluded groups and sectors.
2. Highlight policy issues on higher education, technical vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development based on researches and experiences from the field, sensitised to the varied contexts of the different sub-regions in the Asia Pacific.
3. Draw up recommendations to advocate during APMED 4 and to guide follow-up efforts at the country level.
4. Agree strategies and working modalities for CSO advocacy and lobbying within APMED 4.

The meeting was divided into 2 parts – the first involved primarily ASPBAE members and partners, and the second which focussed on agreeing the core advocacies of civil society in the meeting expanded participation to include other CSO invitees to APMED 4.

In preparing for CSO analysis and recommendations on SDG 4.3 and 4.4, discussions at the CSO meeting began with a joint appraisal of SDG 4 implementation in countries and what CSOs have been doing in this respect. The discussions on the theme of APMED 4 drew on the outcomes of ASPBAE-led researches such as the youth-led action research on the learning needs of youth from marginalised communities (including TVET and non-formal education, skills development and literacy) and on policy and financing options on skills for decent work for marginalised women in India. The work of WAVE, Australia on TVET and CAMPE's (Bangladesh) analysis on data and indicators for SDG 4.3 and 4.4 also richly informed the deliberations.

The discussions culminated in agreement on a set of [CSO Recommendations to APMED 4](#).



Discussions on the theme of APMED 4 drew on the outcomes of ASPBAE-led researches such as the youth-led action research on the learning needs of youth from marginalised communities, and on policy and financing options on skills for decent work for marginalised women in India.

Participants also spent time organising themselves for coordinated lobbying actions in APMED 4 to have greater impact and effectiveness. They appreciated the positive features of CSO participation in this year's APMED. As Asia Pacific focal point for the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030, ASPBAE worked closely with UNESCO and UNICEF - the convenors of APMED - to agree a protocol for CSO participation. The protocol enables dedicated slots for national-level CSOs to participate in APMED, alongside encouragement to governments by the organisers, to include CSOs as part of their official delegations. This made for wider and more diverse CSO participation in APMED 4. Youth representatives were also visible in different plenary and workshop spaces in APMED, along with other CSOs and representatives of teachers' organisations. [\[BACK\]](#)

*Bulletin continued on next page...*



# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the SDG 4 National Coordinators Network reported on the progress of implementation of SDG 4 in the Asia Pacific.

---

The APMED 2018 survey, that gathered the perceptions of 30 Member States on the progress of the localisation of SDG 4, recommended strategies to strengthen the monitoring of SDG 4, build capacities of implementers, and effectively coordinate partnerships and governance.

---

## SDG 4 National Coordinators discuss progress of SDG 4 localisation

14 July 2018, Bangkok, Thailand

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the SDG 4 National Coordinators Network took place after the 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 4). Thirty-four Member States participated, represented by the SDG 4 National Coordinators and officials from the Ministry of Education. Civil society organisations, mostly regional organisations, were present, as well as UN agencies.

The meeting reported on the progress of implementation of SDG 4 in the Asia Pacific. Nyi Nyi Thaung of UNESCO Bangkok presented the key findings of the APMED 2018 survey that gathered the perceptions of 30 Member States on the progress of the localisation of SDG 4. The survey showed that most countries have appointed an SDG 4 Coordinator while only about half (approximately 55%) have established the national SDG 4 coordination mechanism. It also reported "most countries perceive that the Education 2030 targets are feasible." However, many expressed that Targets 4.4 (job skills), 4.6 (literacy and numeracy), 4.7 (education for sustainable development and global citizenship education) and 4.b (scholarship) as challenging to meet. The survey also recommended strategies to strengthen the monitoring of SDG 4, build capacities of implementers, and effectively coordinate partnerships and governance. The sub-regions also shared updates on their experiences and efforts on SDG 4 coordination.

Maki Hayashikawa of UNESCO Bangkok presented the outline of the [Regional Recommendations for Actions on SDG Targets 4.3 and SDG 4.4](#), the outcomes document from APMED 4. This document has been finalised and disseminated to Member States for their attention.

Moving forward, Maki also discussed the Regional Roadmap for the SDG 4-Education 2030 Agenda in the Asia Pacific. The document detailed out the SDG 4 implementation phases, regional areas of cooperation, and expected regional milestones and outcomes.

Moving from regional to global, the session on global updates on Education 2030 presented the highlights of the work of the Global Steering Committee, monitoring SDG 4 through the Global Education Monitoring Report, and preparations for the global review of SDG 4 at the High-level Political Forum 2019. There is a plan to produce a special publication for HLPF 2019 to look at how countries re-orient their policies in light of SDG 4.

ASPBAE, together with E-Net Philippines and Education International, attended the SDG 4 National Coordinators meeting. Please contact ASPBAE for the presentation slides and documents from the meeting. [\[BACK\]](#)



ASPBAE, together with E-Net Philippines and Education International, attended the SDG 4 National Coordinators meeting.

*Bulletin continued on next page...*

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



ASPBAE's Peter King (L) with David Kumie, Coordinator of the Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network (PEAN), in Suva, Fiji.

Peter Clinton-Foaese and Kilala Devette Chee, South Pacific representatives on ASPBAE's Executive Council, made presentations at the sub-regional advocacy workshop for South Pacific national civil society education coalitions. ASPBAE's Bernie Lovegrove, Peter King, and Sonali Rabadi also participated.

## Sharing knowledge and analysing Pacific regional education architecture

South Pacific Sub-Regional Advocacy Workshop and Vaka Pasifiki Conference

2-4 July 2018; 5-6 July, Suva, Fiji

ASPBAE organised a sub-regional advocacy workshop for South Pacific national civil society education coalitions in Suva. The workshop enabled participants to - share knowledge and experiences in education advocacy; share experiences in analytical skills regarding national education policy alignment with SDG 4, education policy in relation to inclusion, and national education budgets; analyse the Pacific regional education architecture; and hear from key players from Fiji and the sub-region. To add value, participants then joined in the Vaka Pasifiki Education Conference held at the University of the South Pacific, also in Suva, from 5-6 July.

The three national coalitions - Kolisen Blong Edukesen Vanuatu (KoBLE), Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network (PEAN), and the Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI) - participated in the workshop. Peter Clinton-Foaese and Kilala Devette Chee, South Pacific representatives on ASPBAE's Executive Council, both participated and made presentations. ASPBAE's Bernie Lovegrove, Peter King, and Sonali Rabadi also participated in both events.

Multiple shared issues came up - dealing with the surge in student numbers due to the introduction of fee free education; the push to fully include those with disabilities as well in under-resourced schools and straining education budgets; the difficulties of finding reliable data; government reluctance to make available information on education budgets and program details; the failure of governments in the region to tackle adult literacy or education in any meaningful way; the lack of transparency in educational grants; and the politicisation of school grants and scholarships.

The workshop received a presentation by a Fiji civil society representative on the current state of play in SDG 4 implementation, and government approaches to civil society in Fiji. Civil society organisations (CSOs) in Fiji face onerous controls and regulations placed on them by the Government, restricting freedom of speech and assembly, including on education issues. In order to hold an event, CSOs need to provide explanations to the government which in turn leads to reframing to fit the government's agenda. Civil society needs to be wary of dropping into self-censorship mode, just to be allowed to operate.

There were presentations from Peter Clinton-Foaese and Analiese Robertson from ACE Aotearoa, giving a New Zealand perspective on youth exclusion and education pathways. Felipe Jitoko, Social Policy Adviser from the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS), gave up-to-date information and background on policy processes in the South Pacific and PacREF, the Pacific Regional Education Framework. Kilala Devette Chee presented on her current work at the National Research Institute in Papua New Guinea (PNG) on the implementation of Universal Basic Education in PNG.



Participants of the advocacy workshop visiting a primary school in Suva.



# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



**The Sub-Regional Advocacy Workshop in the Pacific was an arena to voice ideas, share perspectives, and learn from challenges in the South Pacific.**

Litea Naliva, from the Ministry of Education's Special and Inclusive Education, spoke passionately about her work, leaving participants energised. Shortly after, participants visited a local Suva primary school trialling inclusion with government grants of just US\$235 per year per student with disabilities, and two special education assistants.

## Vaka Pasifiki Education Conference

Following the sub-regional workshop, participants joined the annual Vaka Pasifiki Conference, a significant and valuable coming together of 300 educators from across the Pacific. The conference included a large array of speakers and sessions from many Pacific countries, and a strong presence and linkages between other Pacific island peoples and Maori, New Zealand.

There was a strong focus on deconstructing colonisation, a dominant Pacific theme and reality. It formed a frame and powerful image of the collective Pacific island countries being 'the small fish' threatened by the 'big fish' – which would variously include Australia, New Zealand, US, EU, or all colonisers together, and occasionally Fiji.

The issue of Pacific identities, and therefore appropriate education systems, was a strong theme throughout. The New Zealand contingent gave passionate presentations on the identity crisis of Maori and Pacific Island youth in New Zealand, and how the formal education system has tried to mould them into the same education box, but failed.

The South Pacific coalition representatives enjoyed picking from the many presentations available, from the Tongan Yam Garden in the frontline against Global Change, to using mobile phones to support teachers in Papua New Guinea, or the use of appreciate enquiry to support head teachers in the Pacific.

While there were many sessions promoting certain technological innovations - for example, to make reading and electronic books more accessible for more Pacific people, especially children - there was little analysis of the impact of technology for the Pacific, especially in relation to education, and how this sits within a frame of protecting cultures and traditions, and rejecting colonial influences.

Similarly, more attention could have been given to the importance of mother-tongue as the language of instruction in children's early learning years or the place of the respective pidgins in Pacific countries vis-à-vis mother tongue usage and vis-à-vis English, complex though these issues are.

Among the many sessions was positive discussion of a project aimed at improving early grade literacy in schools in the Cook Islands, Tonga, and Solomon Islands, led by a team at the University of Auckland. The project adopted a design-based research approach which focused on engaging with the local teachers, and adapted to the varying and complex contexts of what was happening on the ground.



**Vaka Pasifiki Conference, a significant and valuable coming together of 300 educators from across the Pacific. The conference included a large array of speakers and sessions from many Pacific countries, and a strong presence and linkages between other Pacific island peoples and Maori, New Zealand.**

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



**Pacific CSO education coalition representatives hope to be able to present their own work and key advocacy issues at future Vaka Pasifiki conferences.**

The project had a built-in sustainability dimension so that the teachers were trained to continue their own data collection, analysis and literacy teaching, and it has yielded noticeable literacy improvements as a result.

Another promising project discussed in a session was a Tongan case study on vocational training and skills development, called 'Tonga Skills'. While funded by Australia's DFAT, this was described as a locally-owned and driven project which worked with local leadership and within existing local systems, recognising prior social relationships. Both training, employment, and income returns to date are providing encouraging results.

All of the Pacific CSO education coalition representatives commented that they found the experience very worthwhile and relevant to their work. In future years, the hope is that coalition representatives can themselves be presenters of sessions highlighting their work and key issues for advocacy. [\[BACK\]](#)



**Members of the Tajikistan Alliance undertook a study exchange visit to Mongolia to understand and learn the coalition building process, advocacy strategies to advance education issues, and ways to engage in national education policy processes.**

## Study visit of Tajikistan alliance to Mongolia focuses on inter-linkages between coalition strengthening, capacity building, and policy advocacy

26-30 July 2018, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

The severe turbulence finally ended with a safe landing at Ulaanbaatar in the midst of strong winds and rain. As part of an exposure visit, members of the Alliance of CSOs in Tajikistan for Education arrived in Mongolia with the objective to understand and learn the coalition building process, advocacy strategies to advance education issues, and ways to engage in national education policy processes.

At the new cozy office of the Mongolian coalition, the first day started with general introductions and sharing about the work of the members of the Alliance of CSOs in Tajikistan for Education. The discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), different advocacy strategies to engage with the SDG 4 processes at the national level, and examples of using various platforms to advance education issues were informative and enlightening for the Tajikistan alliance members. Bolorsaikhan, Vice Coordinator of 'All for Education' (AFE) Mongolia, highlighted the importance of engaging non-coalition members and international organisations in advocacy efforts. Members of the Tajikistan alliance highlighted shrinking civil society spaces at the national level and the challenges in raising critical voices on various issues.

The second day was dedicated to coalition building processes where AFE staff and board members discussed membership policies, coalition laws and regulations, roles and responsibilities of board members, and strategic plan development. Tungalag Dondog, Coordinator, AFE Mogolia, emphasised 6 aspects of strengthening a coalition – (1) development of coalition documents, including by-laws, and policies; (2) capacity building of members; (3) regular communication among members; (4) membership expansion in provinces; (5) learning by doing; and (6) insourcing or using own available resources.

---

ASPBAE Executive Council member representing East Asia, Batjargal Batkhuyag, presented on membership issues in a coalition. Tungalag Dondog, Coordinator, AFE Mogolia, an ASPBAE member, spoke about ways to strengthen a coalition. Bolorsaikhan, Vice Coordinator of AFE Mongolia, highlighted the importance of engaging non-coalition members and international organisations in advocacy efforts.

---



# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



The exposure visit helped members of the Tajikistan Alliance understand about the coalition building process, advocacy strategies to advance education issues, and ways to engage in national education policy processes.

While explaining governance issues, Batjargal Batkhuyag, Board Member, AFE Mongolia, and ASPBAE Executive Council Member representing East Asia, reiterated the significance of Patience, Process, Involvement, and Respect among members. The membership committee and the functions of a governing board were explained by Selenge, Chairperson, AFE Governing Board.

Members of the Tajikistan alliance asked several questions regarding varying aspects of the coalition building process. They also shared their experiences of a strategic planning workshop where they discussed the goals and objectives of an alliance. Overall, discussions on the strategic plan helped the Tajikistan alliance members understand the inter-linkages of coalition strengthening, capacity building of members, developing coalition positions on education issues to help build awareness among people, and conducting policy advocacy at the national level.

ASPBAE's Susmita Choudhury facilitated the session on sharing of learnings from the visit, followed by revisiting the planning for the rest of the year. Participants pledged to build the alliance as one of the prominent coalitions for education advocacy in the country. [\[BACK\]](#)

## Government should not fail children to cover up education system's failure

24 July 2018, New Delhi, India



The lower house of the Parliament of India, (Loksabha), has passed a bill to remove the 'No detention' provision from the Right to Education Act 2009.

The lower house of the Parliament of India, known as the *Loksabha*, has passed a bill to remove the 'No detention' provision from the Right to Education Act 2009. As a constitutional guarantee of eight years of education to each and every child, the RTE Act had made a provision that no child should be made to fail or be detained in class to ensure completion of elementary education without compromising on the quality of education. Thus, in place of annual exams, the RTE Act had included Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). Even after 8 years of implementation of the RTE Act, only 8% of schools across India are RTE-compliant, while enrolment in schools has increased many folds.

Altogether, there is a shortage of approximately 600,000 teachers in India and approximately 10% of all elementary schools are still operating with only one teacher. However, instead of investing in the implementation of the Right to Education and ensuring a minimum quality of education, the government has decided to bring in an amendment that will allow schools to fail children and detain them in 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This move will impact millions of children, especially those from marginalised communities, and girls.

A group of organisations working on education and RTE put together a press release to protest and reach out to the wider community to explain why this amendment is not in favour of children, especially marginalised children. Click [here](#) to read the press release.

This write-up draws from information provided by [Nirantar](#), an ASPBAE member in India. [\[BACK\]](#)



A group of organisations working on education produced a press release to protest and to explain why the amendment is not in favour of children

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



**Snehal V. Soneji, Chief Technical Advisor,  
International Labour Organisation (ILO),  
Bangladesh.**

## Treat skills, skills education, and skilled youth with the dignity they deserve

**World Youth Skills Day 2018**

15 July 2018

*By Snehal V. Soneji, Chief Technical Advisor, Skills 21 Project, International Labour Organisation (ILO), Bangladesh*

Everyone around the world let out a collective sigh of relief last week when news broke that the 12 children and their football coach stuck in a cave for two weeks in Thailand were successfully brought out alive. This was a feat requiring great skill on part of many which included the divers, medical staff, the people involved in setting up the rigging inside the cave, those who set up pumps to take out water and even the cooks who kept the rescue team well fed with nutritious food. Members of each of these groups that formed the rescue team had two things in common - that they were each highly skilled in their own areas of expertise and that they had the soft skills, the ability to work as a team, complementing each other while being persistent and innovative. Skills that they were otherwise using for earning a living was on this occasion used to save precious young lives!

Skills and skilled people have been greatly valued throughout history. The great Mughal king Akbar was known to have the *nava-ratnas* (nine geniuses). The most famous of them is of course Tansen who was a highly skilled singer and myth has it that his songs could even make it rain!

Here I want to share my thoughts on the perception that skills education has in the minds of common people and why I think it has come about to be so.

The advent of modernisation along with industrialisation across the world has seen the gradual erosion of the value attached to traditional skills. Mechanisation of production and the introduction of production lines ushered in the concept of workers needing to ceaselessly focus on one repetitive job. No longer was it necessary for anyone to master all skills relating to a particular occupation. A young apprentice at a blacksmith learnt everything from the technique to manage the temperature of the fire to different types of hammers to be used to shape the metal from the master craftsman (*ustaad*). People could just buy vessels in all shapes and sizes which were mass produced.

Traditional skills no longer were sufficient to earn a living. In their place new skills had to be mastered. The methodology used to pass on skills too underwent a massive change. Teaching of skills was formalised and started taking place in schools and colleges set up for this purpose. The respect and pride that once was associated to being a master craftsman (and regretfully it was almost always a man, rarely a woman) also diminished. In the minds of people, the emphasis shifted from what job you could perform with great skill to what academic degree you possess. Criteria for selection to jobs too started to be specified in terms of degrees acquired. Technical and vocational education that focussed on providing skills to students started to be perceived as being secondary to Bachelors and Masters degrees where the emphasis was on learning and understanding theory.

The advent of modernisation along with industrialisation across the world has seen the gradual erosion of the value attached to traditional skills.



As science progressed further and more and more mechanisation started taking place, the technical and vocational education system imparting skills was slow to respond and did not keep pace by adapting the curriculum to stay relevant.



# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)



Teaching of skills has been formalised and now takes place in schools and colleges set up for this purpose.

The link between applying what you learnt in the day to day practical life became rather tenuous.

As science progressed further and more and more mechanisation started taking place, the technical and vocational education system imparting skills was slow to respond and did not keep pace by adapting the curriculum to stay relevant. The courses that were taught in the technical schools and the resulting skills that were developed were not in sync with the job market of the day. This mismatch between skills that were taught and the skills that were needed by the industry increasingly led to a situation where these graduates had to be retrained by the industry that recruited them. The trainees therefore started considering the time spent in technical and vocations schools acquiring skills that they were not going to use as an opportunity cost. They were better off to directly get jobs which were essentially low skilled ones but enabled them to start earning right away. The industries found it more cost effective to recruit youth and impart skills that they needed to do a particular job through focussed training provided to them on the job site immediately on recruitment.

Women, who have historically been barred from learning and practicing a skill (not a single *navaratna* in Akbar's court was a woman), faced barriers that were rooted in patriarchal mores that were prevalent and continue to be so, in the society. Over the years, skills have been stereotyped and occupations using them have been "assigned" to males and females - particularly in South Asia. A perfect example is professional driving which is usually considered to be an occupation for men while not considered suitable for women even though the underlying skill of driving can be as easily acquired and practiced by women. In contradiction, the occupation of a medical nurse is considered suitable for women more than men! The impact of this stereotyping has been that women are massively underrepresented in the technical and vocational education sector and therefore also in employment.

It is time that initiatives are taken which focus on changing the low value attached to skills education. As technology changes rapidly, it is the practical knowledge and skills that people possess that is likely to be in demand rather than theoretical and bookish knowledge. Soft skills like persistence, taking initiative and working in teams will also continue to play a key role in determining future employability of the youth. As Bangladesh rises towards becoming a developed country by 2040, it will be the skilled women and men who will act as the fuel. It may not be an exaggeration to state that it is the skills of these women and men that will make them the *ratna* (jewel) of the country and not their academic degrees. This world youth skills day let us all pledge to treat skills, skills education, and skilled youth with the dignity that they rightfully deserve.



This world youth skills day let us all pledge to treat skills, skills education, and skilled youth with the dignity that they rightfully deserve.

This article appeared in [The Daily Star](#), Bangladesh, on 15 July 2018, on the occasion of World Youth Skills Day. [\[BACK\]](#)



Asia South Pacific Association  
for Basic and Adult Education  
Learning Beyond Boundaries

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2018

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)

---

**Publishing ASPBAE's write-ups:** Please contact ASPBAE's Information and Communications Coordinator, Medha Soni, at [medha.aspbae@gmail.com](mailto: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.