

# ASPBAE THIS MONTH

July 2020

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## Skills for a resilient youth in the era of COVID-19 and beyond

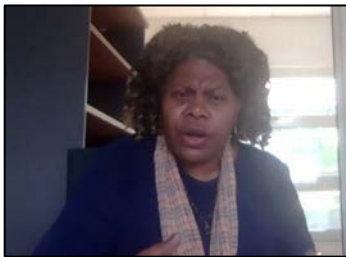
World Youth Skills Day

[Full article](#)



## ASPBAE holds cluster meetings of members on its strategic review, planning, and other governance processes related to its 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (GA)

[Full article](#)



## Strengthening education for learning, and learning for resilience

Cluster meeting of ASPBAE's members in the South Pacific

[Full article](#)



## Creating opportunities for learning and exchange

Cambodia National Consultation for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

[Full article](#)



## Engaging with members in Central Asia for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly processes

Central Asia cluster meeting and National Consultations

[Full article](#)

## ASPBAE and national education coalitions continue active engagement in HLPF and VNRs despite COVID-19

The 2020 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development took place virtually for the first time ever as the world grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse impacts. It was also the first time all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were reviewed. - [Read more](#)

## Education Post-COVID-19 2020: High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) Side Event

Responding to negative impact of COVID-19, UN Member States, UN agencies, and key actors in the field of education reaffirmed their commitment to transform education in an egalitarian, resilient, and inclusive way at 'Education post-COVID 19', a United Nations High-Level Political Forum side event. - [Read more](#)

## Enhancing national capacities for monitoring adult learning and education

GRALE 5 webinar

UIL, in cooperation with DVV International, ICAE, and ASPBAE organised a webinar on 'Enhancing national capacities for monitoring adult learning and education' for the Asia Pacific region.

[Read more](#)

## Civil society actions to protect the right to education during and post-COVID

Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 meeting (CCNGO ED) meeting

The Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 met in an online forum, bringing together some 100 NGOs to share information and analyse how members are responding to the COVID-19 crisis and strategies for the way forward. - [Read more](#)

## Call to Action on domestic financing for post-COVID Education

190 organisations have signed up to a bold Call to Action on domestic financing of education post-COVID. Faced with the threat of major cuts to education spending in developing countries, this call to action offers an alternative path. - [Read more](#)

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## Rethinking and redefining education with a lifelong learning perspective

Samoa National Consultation for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

[Full article](#)



## National Consultation in Timor-Leste sees members commit to continuing advocacy and capacity building work amidst COVID pandemic

[Full article](#)



## ASPBAE members in Vietnam look to push ahead with focus on youth and adult learning and education, lifelong learning, and knowledge sharing

Vietnam National Consultation for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

[Full article](#)



## Education News and Views

Coordinated action needed for migrant students amid pandemic

[Full article](#)

## ASPBAE members in India prepare for 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

ASPBAE's members in India held a national consultation where 16 out of 20 members came together virtually. One of the aims of the consultation was to identify and acknowledge the development and education challenges and opportunities in India. - [Read more](#)

## Equitable access to quality education, non-discrimination, non-formal education, and education budgets highlighted by Myanmar members as advocacy priorities

Myanmar National Consultation for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

Representatives from Thinking Classroom Foundation and Equality Myanmar shared analysis on their country's education and development context, and how ground realities should inform ASPBAE's work as a regional civil society movement. - [Read more](#)

## Quality education and lifelong learning opportunities central to ensuring a full and productive life to all

Pakistan National Consultation for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

Some of the challenges identified by ASPBAE's members in Pakistan included illiteracy, especially among women, poverty, political instability, sexual violence on women, gender disparities in opportunities for education and work. members stated that education plays a significant role in addressing and alleviating these issues. - [Read more](#)

## Goodbye ASPBAE office in Mumbai. Thank you for the memories.

Sadly, ASPBAE closed down its office in Mumbai. Secretary-General, Maria Khan, pays tribute to a space that was home for ASPBAE for many years, and to those without whom it would not have been the much-loved sanctuary that it was. - [Read more](#)





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### Member of the Month

#### **Vikas Sahyog Pratishthan (VSP), India**

Vikas Sahyog Pratishthan (VSP) is a voluntary organization that works with deprived communities in rural Maharashtra, India.

It enables communities to improve sustainability of livelihoods and benefit from a quality education. Some of its projects include water and soil conservation and sanitation and hygiene.

VSP engages in information dissemination, training, lobbying, and policy advocacy, amongst other initiatives.

Visit the [VSP website](#) to know more.

### Photo of the Month



World Youth Skills Day is observed on 15 July. This year, it recognised the importance of equipping young people with skills for employment, decent work, and entrepreneurship.

### 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 Helen Dabu, Deputy Regional Coordinator, Education Out Loud (EOL) Programme.

#### **Helen Dabu**

Deputy Regional Coordinator, EOL Programme



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## 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 UNESCO's take on action needed for migrant students amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand.

### **Coordinated action needed for migrant students amidst pandemic**

*By Peerapas Ratanapaskorn, a recent graduate from Chulalongkorn University (Thailand) and intern for Educational Innovation and Skills Development Section at UNESCO Bangkok*



The COVID-19 outbreak has deprived students of brick-and-mortar schools, including about 500,000 migrant children in Thailand who are among the most vulnerable. The increasing financial burden, emotional distress linked to families losing jobs, and school and migrant-learning centre closures have put children at risk of losing opportunities or even dropping out of school.

For many migrants, the accompanying economic crisis means that even more children have to contribute to earning incomes to help their families survive day to day. Child labour further adversely affects learning loss and makes students fall further behind. Lifelong learning prospects are at stake, but so are healthy and inclusive societies that are in the interest of everyone.



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The digital divide, language barriers, and limited personalized learning support raise further barriers to migrant students' participation in online lessons and distance learning. At the same time, migrants are receiving inadequate psychological and emotional support during a very difficult time.

*"According to our survey, migrant students do not have their own mobile phones to watch online lessons via DLTV and the incurring debt forces students to leave school to help their families earn money, and they are at risk of being victims of domestic violence," said Tanaporn Ormtavesub, of the Baan Dek Foundation.*

Building on pre-pandemic initiatives, UN agencies, the private sector, and NGOs are working to meet these challenges and re-establish education opportunities for the most vulnerable. UNESCO Bangkok, in collaboration with IOM Thailand, UNICEF Thailand, Save the Children, and other NGOs, recently organized an online meeting focusing on migrant children and education in Thailand under COVID-19 conditions to build collaboration to transform education, calling for concrete and immediate action.

Participants raised issues such as the lack of teaching and learning materials, budgets to provide education at all levels including nursery school, and financial support to ensure migrant students and families' basic needs were being met. UNESCO Bangkok and partners are also continuing to support the LearnBig initiative, an open digital library platform for underprivileged students offering more than 1,000 educational resources both in Thai and Myanmar languages.

As school and migrant learning centres are able to partially reopen, the online and ICT-related strategies will complement other distance learning methods as well as physical distancing measures. Similarly, the migrant learning centres and multilingual teaching materials supplement state schools to strengthen the nationwide education system.

*"According to our experiment, a four-metre by four-metre space can accommodate up to nine students in the case of the implementation of half model of returning to school guidelines," said Pongsakorn Thongkom, Director of Migrant Education Coordination Center, Tak Primary Educational Service Area Office 2. "The students who can study online would use the LearnBig application and website developed by UNESCO for their studies."*

However, tablets and other ICT devices are still needed for teachers and students to access the platform. *"Those who cannot access the internet will be provided with learning kits such as printed materials and textbooks," he added.*

From the private sector, True Corporation focuses on the digital divide, maintaining migrant workers' contracts, and providing scholarships and funds for rural schools and learning centres. Organizations such as the Migrant Education Coordination Center is seeking help to secure tablets for teachers in Mae Sot and Tak provinces; Help without Frontiers Foundation needs assistance to feed 2,164 migrant families in Mae Sot; and Baan Dek Foundation requires backing for non-formal education and programmes catering for the emotional health of children and their families.

Distance learning, and particularly online learning, are transforming the learning landscape, but disproportionately for higher-income or urban families. As schooling shifts to distance learning as part of blended education options, migrant students cannot be excluded at risk of creating even more inequalities in society.

This work depends on extensive partnerships and policy integration between Government, UN agencies, NGOs and the private sector. The welfare of migrant workers and education of migrant learners are fundamental human rights, and critical to the social and economic welfare of communities and the country. [\[BACK\]](#)

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The theme of the HLPF 2020, '*Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.*'

## ASPBAE and national education coalitions continue active engagement in HLPF and VNRs despite COVID-19

7-16 July 2020

The 2020 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development was held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Forum took place virtually for the first time ever as the world grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse impacts. This year marks the fifth year of the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and ushers in the final decade of action and delivery. It was also the first time all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were reviewed.

Informed by the findings of the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), the HLPF took up the theme, '*Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.*' It included thematic sessions on the six transformative entry points identified in the 2019 GSDR, the first of which is on 'Human wellbeing and capabilities', which will be addressed in the thematic review on advancing human well-being. The first entry point collectively looks at key SDG well-being and capabilities goals, one of them being Goal 4 on quality education, alongside Goals 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (health and well-being), 5 (gender equality), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 15 (life on land), and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

ASPBAE continued its active engagement in this year's HLPF and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes. In preparation for its engagement, ASPBAE organised several virtual meetings with national education coalitions from countries doing the VNR this year, specifically the Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI), Samoa Education Network (SEN), PNG Education Advocacy Network (PEAN), National Coalition for Education-India (NCE-India), Campaign for Popular Education-Bangladesh (CAMPE), National Campaign for Education- Nepal (NCE Nepal), and Association for Education Development-Kyrgyzstan (AED).

ASPBAE launched its [Key Messages for HLPF 2020: Protect Education Budgets for Resilient Public Education Systems Advancing SDG 4](#) along with the seven national education coalitions' [Civil Society Key Messages on SDG 4](#) in the lead-up to the presentations of the VNRs. These Key Messages include important observations on the SDG 4 implementation from the perspectives of civil society organisations (CSOs), focusing on the progress and challenges in the achievement of SDG 4. These were the result of consultations among coalition members and their constituencies done virtually in most of these countries.



ASPBAE launched its '*Key Messages for HLPF 2020: Protect Education Budgets for Resilient Public Education Systems Advancing SDG 4*', along with the 7 national education coalitions' *Civil Society Key Messages on SDG 4* in the lead-up to the presentations of the VNRs.

ASPBAE, its members, and affiliated national education coalitions were particularly active in drafting CSO positions that will be delivered after the presentations of the VNRs. Representatives of these coalitions were part of the Drafting Committee, tasked to finalised the CSO positions. Planning and strategy sessions were likewise organised at the regional level to facilitate the meaningful contribution of CSOs in the HLPF and VNR presentations. While the official

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David Kumie, Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network's (PEAN) National Coordinator, also spoke on behalf of the APRCEM to deliver the Collective CSO Statement for Papua New Guinea's VNR in the HLPF.

On behalf of the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM), ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano spoke in Session 6 of the HLPF on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). She highlighted the need for significant investments in education, health, and social services sectors in SIDS.

meetings and side-events were held virtually with limited time, ASPBAE maximized the available spaces for CSO engagement.

On behalf of the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM), ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano spoke in Session 6 of the HLPF on, '*Mobilizing international solidarity, accelerating action and embarking on new pathways to realize the 2030 Agenda and the Samoa Pathway: Small Island Developing States*' on 8 July 2020. It was reported that alongside continuing challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) also face several formidable challenges - from poverty and climate change to violence against women and severe inequalities, particularly in education. Thea, therefore, highlighted the need for significant investments in education, health, and social services sectors in SIDS. She also raised the issue of inequity and the lack of access to education, especially for the marginalised groups.

David Kumie, Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network's (PEAN) National Coordinator, also spoke on behalf of the APRCEM to deliver the Collective [CSO Statement for Papua New Guinea's VNR in the HLPF](#) on 15 July 2020. In the intervention, David raised the need to ensure access to quality and inclusive education, early childhood care, adult literacy, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for marginalised groups, such as girls and children with disabilities. Women's contribution to the care economy and to the socio-economic and well-being of the country should be acknowledged. There should be increased actions to end violence against women and human right defenders must be protected.

The 2020 HLPF ended without adopting the expected Ministerial Declaration. ASPBAE shares the concern of civil society about the lack of a consensus outcome following the closing of the HLPF and echoes the call of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) upon Member States to "agree on a strong Ministerial Declaration that focuses on systemic barriers and commits to dismantling injustice in all its forms" in order to effectively recover from the multiple and intersecting crises of today's times.



ASPBAE, along with its member coalitions, remains optimistic about the SDGs, largely because of the vibrant civil society movement in education and in other sectors, and the urgent and collective actions taken by UN agencies.

ASPBAE joined the MGoS, civil society organisations, and NGOs in calling for strengthening the HLPF follow-up and review with accountability measures and human rights monitoring and a clear recognition of the significant contributions of civil society in facilitating spaces and amplifying the voices of marginalised and vulnerable communities and advancing the SDGs.

As mentioned in its Statement to the 2020 HLPF, ASPBAE, along with its member coalitions, remains optimistic about the SDGs, largely because of the vibrant civil society movement in education and in other sectors, and the urgent and collective actions taken by UN agencies, such as UNESCO and UNICEF. This optimism, however, will be coupled with a stronger commitment to continue its engagement in SDG 4 and the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. [\[BACK\]](#)



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## Education Post-COVID-19 2020: High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) Side Event

9 July 2020, Virtual



**Key actors in the field of education reaffirmed their commitment to transform education in an egalitarian, resilient, and inclusive way at 'Education post-COVID 19', a United Nations High-Level Political Forum side event.**

Responding to negative impact of COVID-19, the UN Member States, UN agencies, and key actors in the field of education reaffirmed their commitment to transform education in an egalitarian, resilient, and inclusive way at '[Education post-COVID 19](#)', a United Nations High-Level Political Forum side event.

Organized by UNESCO and the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, with support from the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning, this virtual event brought together high-level personalities from the World Bank, UNICEF, OECD, Global Partnership for Education, Education International, and youth representatives to assess the pandemic's impact on learning. The discussions focused on the new realities for schools and the need to tackle amplified inequalities, as well as clear call for partnerships and innovation and redoubling renewed support for education financing which is deemed essential for driving forward SDG 4.

Discussions at the virtual HLPF side event focused on new realities for schools and the need to tackle amplified inequalities, as well as clear call for partnerships and innovation and redoubling renewed support for education financing which is essential for driving forward SDG 4.

*"Our first estimates find that 20 million students are at risk of not returning to school. Without the right policy choices backed up by resources, the learning crisis will deepen with cascading repercussions across all the development goals,"* said Stefania Giannini, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Education. *"No society can afford this. This is a time to recommit to education, better and differently, reaching beyond our circles."*

From the outset of the event, Jaime Saavedra, the [World Bank's](#) Global Director for Education, announced a joint multi-partner global campaign [#SaveOurFuture](#) which aims to reimagine our education system following a deepening learning crisis and to engage people in dialogues around education across the globe.

Mona Juul, Ambassador and [Permanent Representative of Norway](#) to the United Nations, [delivered a statement](#) on behalf of [the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning](#), co-chaired by the Permanent Missions of Argentina, Czech Republic, Japan, Kenya and Norway. Ambassador Juul reaffirmed the Group's commitment to education as an enabler for peace, human rights, equality, human well-being as well as green growth, and called on all parties to seize this momentum to scale up international and domestic investment in education as a prerequisite for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. *"This crisis presents an opportunity for all stakeholders to come together and improve coordination within the global education architecture. This begins with the SDG Education Steering Committee, our main multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism for the implementation of SDG 4 on education. Through engaged leadership, genuine commitments, and coordinated actions during and after the COVID 19 response, the education community can leverage the comparative advantages of all actors to truly deliver for the children and youth of the world."* – Ambassador Juul reiterated the dedicated engagement of the Group of Friends and urged all stakeholders to work collectively to build synergies between the global architecture and the UN forums, including the HLPF.



**Stefania Giannini, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Education, stated that 20 million students are at risk of not returning to school. She reiterated this was the time to recommit to education, better, and differently.**



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**Tijjani Mohammad-Bande, President of the UN GA, stressed that we must mainstream education in response to mitigate conflict, hunger, poverty, and instability which weaken a child's ability to learn.**

In his video message, Tijjani Mohammad-Bande, [President of the General Assembly](#), called on all governments to accord education high priority and to ensure that funding is focused, coordinated, and supports national education systems. He underlined that, as we re-build and recover from COVID-19, we must mainstream education in our response to mitigate conflict, hunger, poverty, and instability which weaken a child's ability to learn. As we begin the Decade of Action and Delivery to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, Mr. Bande called for a mechanism to analyze the quality and access to education for those furthest behind. To this end, he encouraged the Association for the Development of Education in Africa to collaborate with [the Global Education Monitoring Report](#), the international tool for monitoring global progress on SDG 4, to advance our progress. *"This partnership should work towards producing comparative evidence which will equip national policymakers to take action towards our 2030 commitments,"* said Mr. Bande.

Speaking as a representative of her country, Maria Victoria Angulo Gonzalez, Minister of National Education of Colombia and representative of Colombia on the Steering Committee, introduced her government's efforts in mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as improving digital platforms to facilitate students' e-learning, providing financing support to needy students, developing roadmaps and strategies for delivering digital transformation, as well as promoting emotional and mental health of students and teachers. The importance of financing education was further stressed by Manos Antoninis, Director of [UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring \(GEM\) Report](#). He warned that COVID-19 may *"increase the SDG4 financing gap by up to one-third but investments now could save up to two-thirds of these costs by 2030."*

Robert Jenkins, UNICEF Global Chief of Education, highlighted the ['Framework for Reopening Schools'](#) which was proposed jointly by the UNESCO, UNICEF, World Food Programme, and the World Bank as a guiding document to help national and local authorities reopen schools. He stressed the importance of adhering to key principles of education equity and inclusiveness as we strive to realize this once-in-a-generation opportunity for all students. This was reinforced by Haldis Holst, [Education International's](#) Deputy General Secretary, who called on governments to *"trust the professionalism of educators and prioritize social dialogue with teachers and unions while ensuring equity as top priority."*

Rasheda K. Choudhury, Executive Director of [Campaign for Popular Education \(CAMPE\)](#) and Representative for the Collective Consultation of NGOs to the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, added her voice to the call for stronger government-civil society cooperation in realizing the right to education for all.

At the conclusion of the event, Alice Albright, CEO of [the Global Partnership for Education](#), emphasized that we prioritize debt restructuring and ensure money is spent in the most efficient way in order to bring resources to the front line. She emphasized how imperative it is for us to invest in the resilience of education. *"An educated citizen is the best investment you can have to deal with an uncertain future,"* Ms. Albright firmly stated.

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

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The UIL webinar, organised in collaboration with DVV, ICAE, and ASPBAE, was held to support the efforts from the Asia Pacific to develop country-level reports for the 5<sup>th</sup> Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 5).

## Enhancing national capacities for monitoring adult learning and education

GRALE 5 webinar

23 July 2020, Virtual

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), in cooperation with DVV International, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), and ASPBAE organised a webinar on ‘*Enhancing national capacities for monitoring adult learning and education*’ for the Asia Pacific region. This is envisaged to support the efforts to develop the country-level reports for the 5<sup>th</sup> [Global Report on Adult Learning and Education \(GRALE 5\)](#).

GRALE 5 will be especially important as this will be the report that will be considered as one of the main documents for deliberation during the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA 7), to be organised in June 2022 in Morocco. While themed on citizenship education, it will offer a progress report in relation to the overall Belem Framework for Action (BFA) commitments and the UNESCO Recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (RALE), the main UNESCO normative instrument on ALE policy.

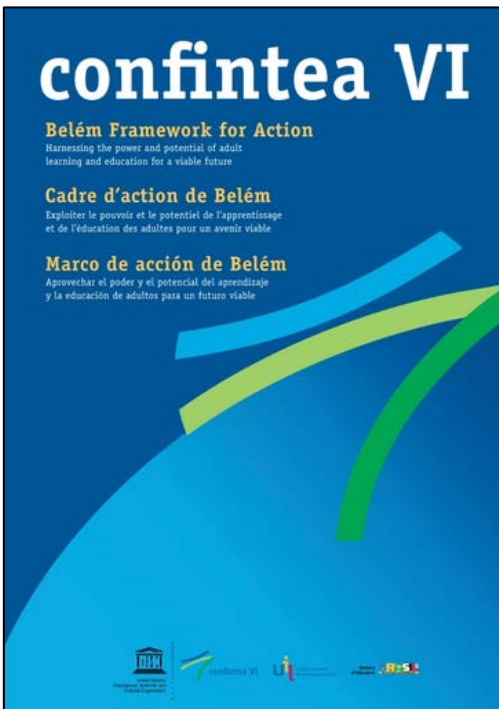
UNESCO has supported global dialogue and action in the field of adult learning and education (ALE) since its foundation in 1945. To that end, it organizes the CONFINTEA every 12 years, enabling Member States to consider, share, compare, and develop further their approaches to ALE.

[CONFINTEA VI](#), the most recent conference, took place in Brazil in 2009. It adopted the [Belém Framework for Action \(BFA\)](#), which sets out the commitments of Member States and presents a strategic guide for the global development of ALE. The BFA also requires the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) to publish a GRALE at regular intervals.

GRALE monitors the progress of Member States against the BFA on the basis of the GRALE survey, and provides an overview of emerging trends and challenges in the field of ALE. Since its fourth edition, the GRALE survey has also been used to monitor implementation of the [Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education \(RALE\)](#), adopted by Member States in 2015.

The fifth edition of GRALE, with a thematic focus on citizenship education, will be launched at CONFINTEA VII in Morocco.

Obtaining reliable national data and information for GRALE 5 is a prerequisite for an accurate assessment of global, regional, and national ALE development. Accurate data and sound analysis support policy-makers, researchers, and practitioners in realizing the potential benefits of ALE, and thereby promote relevant policies and provide adequate financing, as well as enabling the creation of monitoring mechanisms to assess the quality of learning and oversee progress in ALE policy and practice.



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The aim of the regional workshops was to enhance capacities in Member States to monitor and assess ALE development in light of the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE).

The GRALE 5 country reports are to be submitted by UNESCO member states, hence by governments. However, to facilitate wider stakeholder participation in the development of these reports, the webinar involved both the government focal points for GRALE 5 and other ALE stakeholders, notably civil society. To follow up on this, another webinar focused on the GRALE 5 questionnaire will be launched for civil society representatives at a later date.

The overall aim of the regional workshops was to enhance capacities in Member States to monitor and assess ALE development in light of the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE). More specifically, key objectives of the workshop were to:

- Strengthen understanding of the importance and the process of GRALE as a global monitoring tool that tracks ALE development within the framework of CONFINTEA;
- Apply and promote BFA and RALE as a conceptual framework for global and national ALE monitoring;
- Introduce the GRALE 5 monitoring survey and provide technical knowledge on filling out the GRALE 5 survey;
- Provide a platform to engage key national ALE stakeholders across the region in data collection for ALE by means of using the GRALE 5 reporting template.

The fifth edition of GRALE, with a thematic focus on citizenship education, will be launched at CONFINTEA VII in Morocco.

The workshop was well-attended by ASPBAE members, keen to meaningfully engage in the GRALE 5 processes in their countries and in the over-all preparatory work for CONFINTEA 7.

*This write-up draws from a concept note prepared by UIL, DVV International, and ICAE. [\[BACK\]](#)*

## Civil society actions to protect the right to education during and post-COVID

Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 meeting (CCNGO ED) meeting

29 July 2020, virtual



Civil society organisations working in education have continued to advocate and monitor the right to education as the pandemic has exposed systemic flaws and severe inequalities.

Noting that the pandemic is not just a health crisis but also an educational one, the July 2020 Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 met in an online forum, bringing together some 100 NGOs to share information and analyse how members are responding to the COVID-19 crisis and strategies for the way forward.

During this pandemic, civil society organisations (CSOs) working in education have continued to advocate and monitor the right to education as the pandemic has exposed systemic flaws and severe inequalities.

*“The ability to mitigate the impact of this pandemic relies heavily on the ability of civil society to maintain its role and give voice to communities most likely to be left behind in the public emergency response. Yet, the crisis will also hamper civil society’s ability to respond. Closing civic space, constraints on movement, and*

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**Refat Sabbah, GCE President, highlighted that closing civic spaces, constraints on movement, and increasingly authoritarian policies in many countries make the environment for advocacy and accountability a difficult one to work in. Civil society will have to adopt new mechanisms to protect funding for social sectors.**

*increasingly authoritarian policies in many countries make the environment for advocacy and accountability an extremely difficult one to work in. Civil society will also face diminishing resources, as the contributions that allow them to work on behalf of the public interest dry up as a consequence of the widespread economic crisis. The pandemic may result in a civil society collapse in many countries. As CSOs we, therefore, have to adopt new mechanisms and approaches of work and join forces with other sectors (tax, health, etc) to protect funding for social sectors,” said Refat Sabbah, President of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).*

Participants explained how civil society has responded to this crisis. CSOs have shown their capacity to learn and support their commitment to the Education 2030 agenda through enhancing civil society participation in influencing government decision-making in the education sector; enhancing democracy and citizen participation in governance and public policies development; ensuring the continuity of education, tackling student drop-outs, maintaining bonds with families and communities and supporting teachers and school directors; advocating for the protection of educational funding; strengthening the voice and bonds of CSOs, including inside the United Nations system.

Civil society monitored government responses to mitigate learning losses and to build inclusive responses. Civil society also highlighted the deep inequalities related to accessing the right to education, especially for the poorest, people living in rural areas, indigenous communities, girls and women, children in early childhood education and care, migrants and refugees, as well as children with disabilities.

*“The impact of the divide and widening gap between learners who have good opportunities and the substantial group of people that are not able to satisfy their need for education, especially children from poorer families, disabled people and refugees was startling in Europe. On the one hand there is a huge gap between countries but also even within countries,” said Uwe Gartenschlaeger, President of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) and Deputy Director of DVV International. “Overall, the education sector and especially the non-formal education was unprepared due to lack of adequate investments.”*

In most countries, the decisions of school closures were taken without the participation of teachers, families, and students. Civil society worked to involve forgotten or silenced voices stressing the need for democracy. CSOs are fighting against the rise of authoritarianism and social control. CSOs spoke out against human rights violations under the facade of national protection.

The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing problems: the right to education was not guaranteed, and today it is worse. Civil society organisations developed multiple resources to support the efforts of teachers and families, including projects for online teaching, psychosocial support, bridging connections through digital boost, local networks, libraries, varied ICT tools, and blended approaches. The two fundamental roles of civil society have continued throughout the pandemic from aid in the process of monitoring and accountability to being the voice of those that are at serious risk of being left behind in public policy



**Civil society organisations developed multiple resources to support the efforts of teachers and families, including projects for online teaching, psychosocial support, and ICT tools, amongst others.**



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**To fully recover from this crisis and to survive potential future crises, governments must invest in education as a critical strategy for economic recovery, both for resilience and overall development - emphasized ASPBAE's Thea Soriano.**

responses. Over the last few months more than ever, CCNGO members have employed impactful means for education such as in information gathering and sharing, capacity building, and building networks.

Organizations, educators, and institutions face great challenges when it comes to funding. Formal and non-formal education are in danger of losing funding diverted to other priorities. Members emphasized the importance of being vigilant in the distribution and priorities of stimulus packages.

NGOs have been advocating for education to be included in the COVID-19 stimulus packages. *"There are several challenges that governments face in response to COVID-19. Governments have been realigning national budgets to address health emergency and social protection. The budget realignments have an impact on public finance, especially on allocation to education. We have been calling on governments to strengthen their resolve in shoring up and safeguarding the budget for social protection, such as education and health. To fully recover from this crisis and to survive potential future crises, governments must invest in education as a critical strategy for economic recovery, both for resilience and overall development,"* emphasized ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano.

**Formal and non-formal education are in danger of losing funding diverted to other priorities. Members emphasized the importance of being vigilant in the distribution and priorities of stimulus packages.**

Studies into stimulus packages in different countries are showing that corporate incentives, interest-free business loans focusing on big business, and big infrastructure to recover from loss are higher priorities than education and support for marginalized groups, which are in fact very limited. Yet, when schools fully reopen, there will be a need for increased funding if the safety and security protocols are to be maintained. This means immediate and long terms investments to make school classes less crowded.

ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, recalled three means of mitigating disastrous effects on education budgets. Firstly, action on debt and debt servicing because when debt servicing rises, countries decrease funding on public services. Secondly, action on tax, the size of the tax base is a critical determinant, countries must expand their tax to GDP ratio with better enforcement of fair tax. And thirdly, argue against the International Monetary Fund's sector wage bill policies to freeze funding to public services. Instead, countries need to invest more in public services.

Participants in the forum agreed on the importance of working connections with UNESCO offices, National Commissions and of engaging in the Voluntary National Reviews and the High-level Political Forum and other mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of SDG4.

Thea expressed the importance of engaging in UN led country Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) and the High-level Political Forum's (HLPF) monitoring of the SDGs and showcased that despite the lockdown, national education coalitions engaged with VNR processes in seven countries in the Asia Pacific region.

In the Asia Pacific, members are engaged in VNR processes particularly in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Papua New Guinea (PNG), and the Solomon Islands. *"It was very challenging. Face-to-face meetings were not possible and*



**ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, recalled three means of mitigating disastrous effects on education budgets - action on debt and debt servicing, action on tax, and investing more in public services.**

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*“New responsibilities are falling on the shoulders of civil society and we need to show our ability to remain agile and adaptive, and to pioneer new approaches and solutions to social development through responsible innovation and inclusive technology.” – Refat Sabbah, GCE President.*

*governments were saying we could not have consultations because of the lockdown, but in the end, we were able to engage governments and we needed to learn how to engage virtually on the different platforms. We needed persistence in this process,” stressed Thea. “With persistence, for example, David Kumi from PNG was able to deliver the civil society message on the PNG VNR on behalf of civil society at the HLPF.”*

The inescapable new reality of COVID-19 has already prompted many NGOs to refocus their mission and objectives. Noting that some traditional approaches will no longer work, it is now time to take stock and rethink strategies. *“Decision making processes within governments have changed dramatically and have been reduced to a few individuals, not necessarily limited to public officials or other recognizable figures. In other words, decision-making is no longer pre-established, even moderately transparent, and respective of different normative levels and procedures. As CSOs we have to find ways of working with this new reality,”* said Refat Sabbah of the GCE. *“New responsibilities are falling on the shoulders of civil society and we need to show our ability to remain agile and adaptive, and to pioneer new approaches and solutions to social development through responsible innovation and inclusive technology. We need to do this the civil society way.”*

*This write-up draws from a report of the meeting compiled by the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030. [\[BACK\]](#)*

## Call to Action on domestic financing for post-COVID Education



**COVID-19 has thrown 1.5 billion children out of school and with education systems facing a devastating crisis in public financing, it's unclear how many of them will be able to safely return, or what quality of learning schools will be able to provide to them if they do.**

190 organisations have signed up to a bold Call to Action on domestic financing of education post-COVID. Faced with the threat of major cuts to education spending in developing countries, this call to action offers an alternative path.

This call to action emerges from a webinar on 28 July 2020 convened by ActionAid with key speakers from UNESCO, Education International, the Global Partnership for Education, the Global Alliance for Tax Justice, the UN Girls' Education Initiative, Open Society Foundation, Wellspring Philanthropy, The Peter Cundill Foundation – with opening remarks by the Minister of Education from Sierra Leone. Hundreds of participants from developing country governments, civil society organisations, philanthropic foundations, unions and movements, UN agencies and multi-stakeholder partnerships came together to identify solutions to the coming crisis in domestic financing of public education. This ten-point call for action is based on the critical issues and insights that were shared.

Already COVID-19 has thrown 1.5 billion children out of school and with education systems facing a devastating crisis in public financing, it's unclear how many of them will be able to safely return, or what quality of learning schools will be able to provide to them if they do. UNESCO estimates at least \$210 billion will be cut from education budgets next year simply owing to declines in GDP. Pressure to reallocate scarce resources to health and social safety nets might cut



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**UNESCO estimates at least \$210 billion will be cut from education budgets next year simply owing to declines in GDP. Pressure to reallocate scarce resources to health and social safety nets might cut 5% from education budgets, amounting to a total loss of \$337 billion in education spending.**

5% from education budgets, amounting to a total loss of \$337 billion in education spending – and the World Bank projects that even deeper cuts of 10% could be on the horizon. This is probable but not inevitable. We need political will, bold solutions, and urgent action to prevent this health crisis triggering an education calamity that could affect the life prospects of a whole generation of children.

## THE CALL –

### 1. Defend the share of the budget spent on education

Developing countries should spend at least 20% of their national budgets on education. COVID-19 must not be an excuse for retrogression, reducing the share of budgets allocated to education, as this would be a betrayal of the next generation and a violation of human rights commitments. All international education actors should use their own resources and influence to incentivise governments to maintain or increase the share of domestic budgets allocated to education.

### 2. Increase the size of the budget through action on fair tax

Countries should work towards a minimum tax-to-GDP ratio of 20% in order to provide quality public services. The IMF estimates most countries could raise their tax-to GDP by 5% in the coming years, which would allow a doubling of spending on health, education and other essential services. Post-Covid there is extra urgency for raising taxes in a fair and progressive way, including through setting new global rules for ensuring companies pay their fair share, raising taxes on excess profits and wealth, ending harmful tax incentives (through which developing countries lose \$138 billion a year), preventing aggressive tax avoidance (through which developing countries lose at least \$200 billion a year) and stopping illicit financial flows. Actors concerned with education justice must connect more closely with those working on tax justice.

### 3. Harness existing resources in national treasuries by action on debt service

There is a looming debt crisis that could starve education at a time when billions of young people living in poverty face the prospect of permanent unemployment and destitution. According to UNCTAD, in 2020 and 2021 alone developing countries will be forced to hand over up to \$1 trillion in external debt payments, money that is desperately needed for education and other frontline services if we want to avoid massive increases in poverty and inequality. So G20 leaders, IFIs, and private sector lenders must commit now to extend a moratorium on debt payments to all developing countries in need, at least through to the end of 2022. Longer term there also needs to be a new compact on debt restructuring: suspended debts must be permanently cancelled so that no country is spending more on servicing debts than they do on spending on education or on health, and a wider approach must be taken to debt sustainability which considers long terms needs for financing, with debt negotiations premised on countries investing in the SDGs, climate goals, human rights and gender equality commitments; and donors and creditors committing to full transparency and accountability in giving and taking out future loans.



**Call to Action - All international education actors should use their own resources and influence to incentivise governments to maintain or increase the share of domestic budgets allocated to education.**



**Call to Action - Actors concerned with education justice must connect more closely with those working on tax justice.**

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**Call to Action** - Spending on public services like health and education, and investments in quality public services, should be seen as part of the solution to the crisis rather than part of the problem.



**Call to Action** - Aid to education should be a particular priority in the post-COVID period, part of a revaluing of public systems, with for equity, both in the distribution and allocation of aid.



**Call to Action** - Trusts and Foundations need to recognise the crucial role they can play in strengthening public systems, seeing private provision as a symptom of failure rather than a sustainable or equitable solution.

## 4. Push back against decades of austerity

In recent decades, the IMF have encouraged austerity policies in developing countries, placing greater priority on holding down inflation and deficits than allowing countries to invest in development goals. There are some positive signs that the IMF is changing its rhetoric but in the face of the Covid-19 economic crisis, these changes need to be accelerated and delivered in practice. Spending on public services, like health and education, should be regarded as part of the core social infrastructure of a country, that should be protected – and investments in quality public services should be seen as part of the solution to the crisis rather than part of the problem.

## 5. Resist public sector wage bill constraints to recruit more teachers (and nurses)

To deliver SDG 4 targets and keep up with population growth, over 17 million new professional teachers are needed in Africa alone by 2030. However, in the past 3 years, the IMF have advised countries to freeze or cut public sector wage bills, sometimes unintentionally blocking recruitment of urgently needed teachers, doctors, nurses and other essential public service employees. COVID has increased awareness of the importance of a public sector ethos and it is thus time to challenge any unconscious biases and reappraise attitudes to public sector employment. The IMF needs to urgently review its policy advice and loan conditions in this area – and developing country governments should explore seek alternatives, seeing investment in teachers (and health personnel) as a key part of building back better.

## 6. Reverse the decline in aid to the countries most in need

The COVID-related fall in GDP around the world is likely to lead to a fall in aid budgets next year. This comes on top of the trends towards donors using their aid to advance their own trade and security interests rather than the needs of the poorest countries. Aid budgets needs to be protected and redirected towards countries facing the biggest challenges. Aid to education should be a particular priority in the post-COVID period, part of a revaluing of public systems, with a clear priority for equity, both in the distribution and allocation of aid.

## 7. Harmonise and align aid behind strengthening public education systems

Too often in the past we have seen national disasters or crises used as opportunities to dismantle public systems and advance privatisation. Covid-19 must be different. It is a global crisis and it is already clear that government action and public systems will be key to the rebuilding and reform of education on the scale that is required. Aid from bilaterals and multilaterals needs to better harmonise and align behind strengthening government systems, following the positive model of the Global Partnership for Education. Trusts and Foundations need to recognise the crucial role they can play in strengthening public systems, seeing private provision as a symptom of failure rather than a sustainable or equitable solution.



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**Call to Action** - Civil society can play a crucial role in tracking budgets, making sure that money allocated arrives and decisions are made transparently. Strengthening civil society voices - and the political space for those voices to be heard - is essential.

## 8. Ensure education budgets prioritise inclusion, equity and transformation

Central to building back better must be a recognition that existing education systems are inequitable, excluding girls and children with disabilities and disadvantaging the poorest or most excluded communities. As the GEM 2020 report notes, the promise of reaching the furthest behind first is not being kept", and "children with disabilities are particularly at risk of exclusion from education". Covid-19 could exacerbate these existing inequalities or could be used as a pivotal turning point where a gender and inclusion lens is applied to all aspects of education, including planning, budgeting and expenditure - to advance equality and inclusion in access, retention and achievement at all levels. A focus on equity and inclusion is central to effective education spending. Too often education systems contribute to replicating the inequalities and injustices within the societies that they serve, yet education has the potential to be the most powerful equalising force within a society, if the system itself is genuinely equitable at all levels. Post-COVID, let us renew a transformative vision for effective education systems.

## 9. Increase transparency and accountability – as key to effective and efficient spending

Too often education budgets fail to reach the schools in the most disadvantaged communities. Unless there is independent scrutiny, budgets are misused or go astray. COVID-19 is already placing extra strains on budgets and on oversight systems to ensure they are transparently and effectively utilised. Civil society actors can play a crucial role in tracking budgets, making sure that money allocated arrives and decisions are made transparently at the appropriate level. Strengthening civil society voices - and the political space for those voices to be heard - is essential. Post-COVID, there needs to be a revolution in public accountability of education systems both at local level and at national level – a public-public partnership so that public systems facilitate and respond to public engagement.



**Call to Action** - Recognize that existing education systems are inequitable, excluding girls and children with disabilities and disadvantaging the poorest or most excluded communities.

## 10. Work across sectors to defend public services and engage Ministries of Finance

COVID-19 has made it clearer than ever that education advocates need to work closely with health advocates – and other public sector supporters. We will not win strategic breakthroughs on financing one public service when others are being cut.

There are strong common areas of concern – around tax, debt, austerity and the public sector workforce. We need to learn to work with others to engage in higher level strategic discussions with Ministries of Finance.



**Call to Action** - With just ten years to go to the 2030 deadline for the SDGs, the COVID crisis must represent a turning point in the financing of education.

With just ten years to go to the 2030 deadline for the SDGs, the COVID crisis must represent a turning point in the financing of education. We commit to working together to mobilise the resources needed to deliver on SDG 4, using international resources to expand rather than displace sustainable domestic financing.

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**We need public education to help forge a new generation of active global citizens that care about sustainable development.**

International support can play a crucial role when it is used to leverage or incentivise the predictable domestic financing needed to achieve real transformations in public systems.

As we respond to this COVID crisis, let us keep in mind too, the existential challenges presented by the climate crisis. We need public education to help forge a new generation of active global citizens that care about sustainable development.

We commit to work together to build public education systems that are sustainably financed and that contribute to building economies and societies that can truly care for both people and the planet.

You can read a blog about this Call to Action [here](#).

You can read the ten-point call to action [here](#) - which includes the full list of 190 signatories.

You can listen and see the recording of the webinar on the domestic financing of education beyond the Covid-19 pandemic [here](#).

*This write-up draws from information appearing on the [ActionAid website](#). [BACK]*

## Skills for a resilient youth in the era of COVID-19 and beyond

World Youth Skills Day

15 July 2020



**Distance training has become the most common way of imparting skills, with considerable difficulties regarding, among others, curricula adaptation, trainee and trainer preparedness, connectivity, or assessment and certification processes.**

World Youth Skills Day 2020 took place in a challenging context. The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures have led to the worldwide closure of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, threatening the continuity of skills development.

It is estimated that [nearly 70% of the world's learners are affected by school closures](#) across education levels currently. Respondents to a [survey of TVET institutions](#), jointly collected by UNESCO, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank, reported that distance training has become the most common way of imparting skills, with considerable difficulties regarding, among others, curricula adaptation, trainee and trainer preparedness, connectivity, or assessment and certification processes.

Prior to the current crisis, [young people aged 15-24 were three times more likely than adults to be unemployed](#) and often faced a prolonged school-to-work transition period.

In post-COVID-19 societies, as young people are called upon to contribute to the recovery effort, they will need to be equipped with the skills to successfully manage evolving challenges and the resilience to adapt to future disruptions.

**Young people will need to be equipped with the skills to successfully manage evolving challenges and the resilience to adapt to future disruptions.**



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**Rising youth unemployment is one of the most significant problems facing economies and societies, for developed and developing countries alike.**

TVET is expected to address the multiple demands of an economic, social, and environmental nature by helping youth and adults develop the skills they need for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship, promoting equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and supporting transitions to green economies and environmental sustainability.



**TVET can equip youth with the skills required to access the world of work, including skills for self-employment.**

## Why is World Youth Skills Day important?

Rising youth unemployment is one of the most significant problems facing economies and societies in today's world, for developed and developing countries alike. The latest [Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs](#) shows that since 2017, there has been an upward trend in the number of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET).

In 2016 there were 259 million young people classified as NEET – a number that rose to an estimated 267 million in 2019, and is projected to continue climbing to around 273 million in 2021. In terms of percentage, the trend was also slightly up from 21.7% in 2015 to 22.4% in 2020 – implying that the international target to reduce the NEET rate by 2020 will be missed.

[Designated by the General assembly](#) in 2014, the World Youth Skills Day is an opportunity for young people, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, and public and private sector stakeholders to acknowledge and celebrate the importance of equipping young people with skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship.

## What Role Does Technical and Vocational Education and Training Play?

Education and training are central to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The vision of the Incheon Declaration: Education 2030 is fully captured by [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#) - "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Education 2030 devotes considerable attention to technical and vocational skills development, specifically regarding access to affordable quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); the acquisition of technical and vocational skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship; the elimination of gender disparity and ensuring access for the vulnerable. In this context, TVET is expected to address the multiple demands of an economic, social, and environmental nature by helping youth and adults develop the skills they need for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship, promoting equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and supporting transitions to green economies and environmental sustainability.

TVET can equip youth with the skills required to access the world of work, including skills for self-employment. TVET can also improve responsiveness to changing skill-demands by companies and communities, increase productivity and increase wage levels. TVET can reduce access barriers to the world of work, for example, through work-based learning, and ensuring that skills gained are recognised and certified. TVET can also offer skills development opportunities for low-skilled people who are under- or unemployed, out of school youth and individuals not in education, employment and training (NEETs).

*This write-up draws from an article on the [United Nations website](#). [BACK]*

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## ASPBAE holds cluster meetings of members on its strategic review, planning and other governance processes related to its 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

July 2020, Virtual

ASPBAE organised cluster meetings with its members as follows: Cluster 1 - South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia; Cluster 2 – Central Asia; and Cluster 3 – South Pacific.



Participants of one Cluster Meeting 1 organised for ASPBAE members.

These cluster meetings were held to prime its members for the country-level consultations on the strategic review and planning on ASPBAE's work, the proposed Constitutional amendments, and the overall governance processes involved in the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of ASPBAE taking place this year, notably on the Executive Council (2021-2024) elections.

While welcoming participants to the meetings, ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, appreciated the significance of the valuable work of civil society organisations (CSOs) amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic. She highlighted that, *"We need to transform the current crisis into an opportunity to reshape and reform our work, particularly our work on education and lifelong learning, so that they can contribute more to a better world we all dream of"*. Nani encouraged members to fully participate, share ideas, raise questions, and avail of their rights to be actively involved in ASPBAE's decision-making processes.

ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, presented ASPBAE's milestone achievements over the last four years in accordance with the Objectives and strategies shaped during the last General Assembly. She stressed that ASPBAE was able to assert a stronger CSO voice for SDG 4 and the wider SDG debates at national, regional, and global levels. ASPBAE advocated for the full SDG 4 agenda, facilitated strong engagement with the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) and other SDG roll out processes (e.g., in 2019, sixteen CSO spotlight reports were published), and presented at international forums such as the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), and the Asia Pacific Meeting on Education and Development (APMED).

ASPBAE was also successful in expanding efforts on domestic resource mobilisation to strengthen public education systems and in the wider engagement with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and its efforts in challenging privatisation of education. Maria further stated that ASPBAE's engagement with the GPE intensified with the election of ASPBAE's Secretary-General (Maria) to the GPE Board as one of the CSO representatives (Alternate) from the CSO2 constituency.

Furthermore, ASPBAE expanded its capacities and advocacy efforts on Adult Learning and Education (ALE), sustained several efforts for capacity building for advocacy, and continued to facilitate cross-country capacity building initiatives. ASPBAE was also able to expand its work with youth and youth leaders through

Cluster meetings organised by ASPBAE were held to prime its members for the country-level consultations on the strategic review and planning on ASPBAE's work, the proposed Constitutional amendments, and the overall governance processes involved in ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly taking place this year, notably on the Executive Council (2021-2024) elections.



ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, appreciated the significance of the valuable work of civil society organisations amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic.



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**Quazi Faruque Ahmed, Initiative for Human Development (IHD), Bangladesh, participating in Cluster Meeting 1.**

the Youth-Led Action Research (YAR) initiative and ASPBAE's flagship training programme, the Basic Leadership Course (BLDC) Course.

Members appreciated ASPBAE's commitment to its work. Several of them asked questions related to ASPBAE's diverse portfolio, advocacy initiatives, and information communication strategies. They also expressed a desire to be actively involved in ASPBAE's on-going work.

ASPBAE's Helen Dabu briefed members of the 3 cluster meetings on the proposed Constitutional amendments, informing the members on the overall purposes of the amendments: 1) to update and better cohere the language of ASPBAE's Constitution to the more current thinking, aspirations, and work of the organisation in the field of basic education, adult learning and education (ALE), and lifelong learning; 2) sharpen and clarify certain provisions by deleting redundancies and clearing up ambiguities; and 3) to update its governance mechanisms to keep in step with the laws and regulations in its country of registration - the Philippines.

ASPBAE's Anita Borkar updated members on the governance processes involved in the upcoming 8<sup>th</sup> GA. While outlining the role of the general assembly, Anita highlighted that one of the critical roles of the GA, that is to hold elections for the members of the ASPBAE Executive Council: the ASPBAE President and two representatives for each of ASPBAE's five (5) sub-regions, one man and one woman.

For 8<sup>th</sup> GA, ASPBAE has 124 accredited organisational members, 7 individual and 89 life members. These members are spread through 29 countries in five sub-regions –

**South Asia (SR 1)** - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

**East Asia (SR 2)** - China, Hongkong SAR, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea

**South East Asia (SR 3)** - Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam

**South Pacific (SR 4)** - Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu

**Central Asia (SR 5)** - Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

Anita described the rights of accredited members in ASPBAE's GA processes. Accredited members can – (1) Nominate or endorse nominees for the elective positions of the ASPBAE Executive Council and President; (2) Elect Country Voting Representatives; and (3) Participate in activities related to the 8<sup>th</sup> GA.

Executive Council members offered a vote of thanks at the end of the each of the cluster meetings and reiterated the next steps and preparations for organizing the GA this year. [[BACK](#)]



**ASPBAE Executive Council Member representing South Asia, Meenu Vadera, speaking at a Cluster Meeting held for ASPBAE members.**

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**Participants of the Pacific cluster meeting highlighted a need to promote self-determination and recognise and support indigenous movements, and to continue working to prevent exploitation and oppression.**



**Members in the Pacific stressed that young indigenous people need to be supported to design their own ways of learning from a position of self-determination and power, including challenging existing education systems and promoting independent self-determined indigenous schools.**



**The importance of adult education was emphasised as we face phenomena such as a global pandemic, racism, fake news, and shrinking civil society space.**

## Strengthening education for learning, and learning for resilience

Cluster meeting of ASPBAE's members in the South Pacific

14 July 2020, Virtual

A sub-regional cluster meeting of ASPBAE's members in the Pacific was held as one of three sub-regional consultations as part of ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly process. The consultation consisted of 15 Pacific participants from 7 Pacific countries - Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, New Zealand, and Australia, in addition to 11 ASPBAE staff and ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni.

The cluster consultation began with welcoming words from Nani, followed by a presentation from ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, on ASPBAE's milestones for the period 2017-2019. Inputs were also provided on ASPBAE's constitution, and in relation to the General Assembly process by ASPBAE's Helen Dabu and Anita Borkar.

The discussion about key issues facing education in the Pacific was lively, engaging, and participatory. This also included thoughts about aspects of ASPBAE's work were most relevant to Pacific members.

There was a need to promote self-determination and recognise and support indigenous movements, also in other sub-regions, and to continue working to prevent exploitation (for example, of identity, languages, and resources), and oppression, including in relation to labour outsourcing of Pacific Island labourers to Australia and New Zealand. CSOs need to break their silence on these issues. It was noted that recent racial debates are strongly gendered.

Young indigenous people need to be supported to design their own ways of learning from a position of self-determination and power. This includes challenging existing education systems and promoting independent self-determined indigenous schools. On this, ASPBAE could build its connections with Indigenous communities in Australia, New Zealand, and in the Philippines and reflect on what a self-determined education system could look like. ASPBAE could continue to promote the voices of Indigenous peoples and work to ensure that they are represented in global dialogues.

Other issues raised included sustainable development and global citizenship. For Pacific and indigenous peoples, the link between water, land, and people is very integrated and important, so we can no longer ignore the importance of protecting the oceans, land, and species. Our wellness is connected with the wellness of the land and seas.

The importance of adult education was emphasised as we face phenomena such as a global pandemic, racism, fake news, and shrinking civil society space. We need to strengthen and prepare governments and communities through education for learning and learning for resilience in this time of uncertainty. Many governments are lagging behind.



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**ASPBAE was encouraged to further strengthen Pacific linkages and participation in events, and to facilitate developing a more robust agenda and strategy for the Pacific, members, and constituencies.**

Participants mentioned that most relevant contributions to their work from ASPBAE included its work in advocating for SDG 4 and adult education, particularly in lifelong learning as an important framework to address social issues. Also appreciated was ASPBAE's technical support to coalitions and providing important information updates to its members regarding regional and international education developments, and facilitating strategic partnerships. ASPBAE was especially congratulated for its work in promoting quality youth participation, and in promoting voices from the grassroots communities in Asia and the Pacific so that they are heard.

Another recommendation that was supported by participants was for ASPBAE to refer to the 'Pacific' for the sub-region rather than the 'South Pacific'. This was also linked to a request for ASPBAE to consider involvement of other small island countries in the Pacific within its membership and analyses, including Micronesia and more of Polynesia. ASPBAE was encouraged to further strengthen Pacific linkages and participation in events, and to facilitate developing a more robust agenda and strategy for the Pacific, members, and constituencies.

Participants supported the suggestion that the Pacific sub-region should have a '*talanoa*' to contextualise the implications of SDG 4.7. *Talanoa* is a term used across the Pacific to refer to a process of inclusive, participatory, and transparent dialogue. It involves the sharing of ideas, skills, and experience through storytelling. It was also agreed that Pacific CSOs can take the initiative themselves, and don't need to wait for ASPBAE's initiatives to organise such *talanoas* or linkages between organisations in the Pacific. For example, members could hold monthly webinars to progress the conversations.

The meeting closed with appreciation for the work of ASPBAE and the opportunity to articulate Pacific issues. Participants noted the sense of hope that comes from a common set of values and priorities, and ASPBAE was viewed as an important network and platform to promote and advocate for these important causes.

[\[BACK\]](#)

Participants of the cluster meeting for the Pacific mentioned that most relevant contributions to their work from ASPBAE included its work in advocating for SDG 4 and adult education, particularly in lifelong learning as an important framework to address social issues.



**Participants of the Cambodia national consultation identified education issues such as the lack of access to education by poor families, ethnic minority groups, students, especially girls in remote areas, and especially students with disabilities.**

## Creating opportunities for learning and exchange

**Cambodia National Consultation for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

24 July 2020, Virtual

Cambodia's ASPBAE members met via Zoom for a national consultation as part of ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly process. The two accredited organisations were NGO Education Partnership (NEP), and Flifly.

Participants identified education issues such as the lack of access to education by poor families, ethnic minority groups, students, especially girls in remote areas, and especially students with disabilities. This was exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19 where there was limited access to continuous learning or e-learning for disadvantaged groups due to limited internet reach and access to television and radio.

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**Cambodia members expressed that ASPBAE could assist by sharing lessons from civil society responses to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in other countries, and bringing members together to exchange learning on how to advocate for education and to monitor implementation of education policies.**

Many businesses closed down, so parents lost their jobs, unable to repay their loans. Consequently, many young students were required to help in income generation, thereby lose their learning opportunities.

Members at the national consultation stressed that the government needs to be more flexible and address basic livelihood needs by distributing food, listening to vulnerable groups, supporting teachers, and providing e-learning training; and encouraging parents and students to follow e-learning classes through television and radio. Many NGOs organised themselves to monitor the issues to discuss and identify the solution to fill in the gaps.

Members expressed that ASPBAE could assist by sharing lessons from civil society responses to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in other countries, and bringing members together to exchange learning on how to advocate for education and to monitor implementation of education policies. It can support members to advocate to the government to keep investing in flexible learning and make available technology for sharing and learning and to re-open schools.

The two voting members selected were Mok Sarong, Board member, FliFly, and Seng Hong, Executive Director of NEP. [\[BACK\]](#)

## Engaging with members in Central Asia for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly processes

### Central Asia cluster meeting and National Consultations

13 July 2020, 24 July, 27 July, 3 August, Virtual



**ASPBAE's members from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan participated in the Central Asia cluster meeting.**

The consultation with ASPBAE members in Central Asia as part of the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly was held in two phases – (1) an online sub-regional cluster meeting; and (2) In-country national level meetings with members.

The Central Asia sub-regional cluster meeting provided a briefing to Central Asia members on ASPBAE's governance processes related to the upcoming 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (GA), proposed Constitutional Amendments, and ASPBAE's activities and future directions. This was held on 13 July 2020 with participation of ASPBAE's members from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, presented the milestones of ASPBAE's work over the past 4 years highlighting achievements under the four core strategies of ASPBAE. Referring to specific activities in the Central Asia sub-region in the past years, Maria highlighted that the focus has been on coalition building and strengthening. The efforts aimed to help members come together and develop a strong front as education coalitions and engage with governments in pursuing their advocacy mission to promote basic, youth and adult learning and education (ALE) within a rights-based, lifelong learning framework as outlined in SDG4.

With regards to the proposed Constitutional Amendments, it was suggested to make reference to people with disabilities being one of the marginalised groups. ASPBAE's Helen Dabu mentioned that the full definition of the Adult Learning and

**The Central Asia sub-regional cluster meeting provided a briefing to Central Asia members on ASPBAE's governance processes related to the upcoming 8th General Assembly (GA), proposed Constitutional Amendments, and ASPBAE's activities and future directions.**



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Three main common challenges were raised owing to COVID-19 in Central Asia – lack of access to the internet and lack of teacher training on online systems; increased domestic violence; and return migration causing an increase in unemployment and economic instability.

ASPBAE's members in Central Asia recommended the capacity building of members in the sub-region; promotion of youth programmes; sharing and learning opportunities; and capacity building on training on adult learning and education.



The national consultations were facilitated by the appointed country coordinators in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and by ASPBAE in Uzbekistan.

Education (ALE) captured the entire learning process, including formal, non-formal and informal education and learning, and the importance of equity, justice, gender, and social mobility. The lifelong learning process has also been articulated in the Constitution. She added that the core strategies and activities of ASPBAE have strong components of equity and inclusion.

Responding to governance related queries, Maria explained the nomination and voting process as codified in ASPBAE's Constitution and By-laws as referenced in the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Communiqués sent to all accredited members. Responding to a question, she described the right of all accredited member organisations to nominate candidates for the ASPBAE Executive Council elections based on their knowledge of the nominee's leadership abilities and their understanding and capacity to analyse and articulate issues of the sub-region and the Asia Pacific as a whole.

The national consultations were each organised in Kyrgyzstan on 24 July, Tajikistan on 27 July, and Uzbekistan on 3 August. These were facilitated by the appointed country coordinators in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and by ASPBAE in Uzbekistan since all members in that country were very new. The consultations saw the participation of most members in each country. Discussions from all the countries emphasized three main contextual issues:

- There has been a transition from face-to-face to online education due to the pandemic. However, access to internet has been a barrier, in addition to lack of teachers training on online systems that has impacted the home learning of students.
- All countries in the sub-region reported an increase in domestic violence, where enforced confinement in families has had severe implications on women and children safety. Limited or no legal and counselling services due to mobility restrictions also had adverse effects.
- A majority of the population from the region migrates to Russian and other countries for their livelihood. However, with the pandemic, migrant workers returned to their own countries, further adding to increasing unemployment and economic instability.

As a new sub region, recommendations of ASPBAE members were as follows -

- Strengthening the capacity of members in the region
- Promotion of youth programmes in the region
- Sharing and learning opportunities at regional and sub-regional levels
- Support in developing capacities of members on Adult Learning and Education, mainly as trainers.

[\[BACK\]](#)

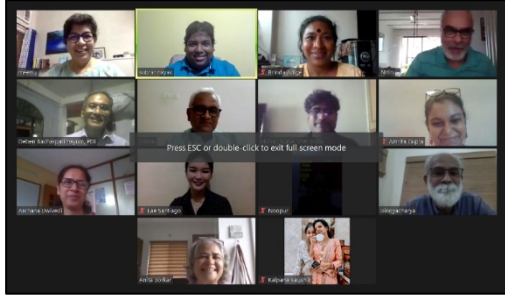
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## ASPBAE members in India prepare for 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

28 July 2020, Virtual



**National consultations are one of the most important prerequisites for the General Assembly as they provide a platform for members of a particular country to come together and share their views on ASPBAE's strategic plan in their own education and development contexts.**

ASPBAE's General Assembly (GA) is held every four years where its members convene to review and discuss the work of the organisation and build a shared agreement on its strategic focus for the next four years. An Executive Council is also elected during a GA.

A series of preparatory activities feed into the GA. National consultations are one of the most important prerequisites for the General Assembly as they provide a platform for members of a particular country to come together and share their views on ASPBAE's strategic plan in their own education and development contexts.

ASPBAE's members in India held a national consultation where 16 out of 20 members came together virtually. Meenu Vadera, ASPBAE Executive Council member and Founder Director of Azad Foundation, hosted the consultation and facilitated the discussions in her designated role of Country Coordinator.

**ASPBAE's members in India held a national consultation where 16 out of 20 members came together virtually where they identified several contemporary development issues that education should address such as inequality, centralization of power, obscure financing in education, irrelevant education agendas, lack of life skills training, amongst others.**

The three objectives of the India national consultation were to –

1. Identify and acknowledge the development and education challenges and opportunities in India and in the region, and recommend to ASPBAE the future directions of its education work.
2. Draw suggestions/agreements on the proposed amendments to ASPBAE's constitution which will be ratified in the upcoming General Assembly.
3. Elect/nominate country voting representatives who would cast their votes in the General Assembly on various matters.

Members identified several contemporary development issues that education should address. They included - inequality, centralization of power, obscure financing in education, irrelevant education agendas, lack of life skills training, high number of untrained teachers, invasion of private players in the education sector for profit-making, lack of inclusive education, insensitivity towards the people with special needs, displacement, and land grabbing.



**Regarding the impact of COVID-19 on education and development in India, members highlighted issues such as reverse migration which has led to an increase of incidences of child abuse and child marriage.**

Regarding the impact of COVID-19 on education and development in India, members highlighted issues such as reverse migration which has led to an increase of incidences of child abuse and child marriage. Children who have returned from other states face challenges related to the curriculum, syllabus, and language which may contribute to them dropping out of school. Members also expressed concern that the anticipated economic recession may lead to an increase in child labor in the unorganized sector.

Addressing the issues of digital education, India members stressed that this seems to be only a platform to connect with children, but it lacks avenues to real learning. Realities of the digital divide and inaccessibility to technology and equipment are major concerns. Furthermore, the members stressed that the increasing deterioration of mental health amongst people has not been addressed adequately by the government.



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**Members in India stressed that realities of the digital divide and inaccessibility to technology and equipment are major concerns. They also highlighted that the increasing deterioration of mental health amongst people has not been addressed adequately by the government.**



**Recommendation - ASPBAE can leverage the strength of its members and build a stronger community of advocacy and research.**



**Recommendation – ASPBAE must advocate and promote investing in digital literacy for adult education.**

There is also a concern that the government is using the pandemic to push regressive ideas. The issue of gender diversity and inclusion needs renewed engagement. Adult education has become all the more important in the wake of the pandemic. Unpaid care work has increased and it impinges on access to education.

Discussions also focused on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. On the issue of finance and infrastructure, members reiterated that an investment of at least 6% of the GDP towards education is the need of the hour to ensure quality of education and that both education and health sector budgets need to be strengthened, especially in rural areas and for marginalised communities. Other issues such as the need to examine the content of education from the perspective of inclusion and to focus on the provision of adult education for women, which provides them with functional skills, were discussed. Members also stressed the need to invest in research-based evidence that indicates how behaviors of the family changes with literacy levels of women and to include marginalised groups on issues more relevant to them such as inclusivity in education and learning opportunities, access to education while addressing the challenge of the digital divide, structural norms such as patriarchy and early marriage – all calling for the government to be more accountable to these challenges and to strengthen adult education and public education systems. Members suggested that local panchayats be given more power to ensure that children and girls from marginalised communities are admitted to and attending school and that alternate ways of education are promoted.

India members at the national consultation offered several recommendations on the education agenda and ASPBAE's future work and directions. They included-

**Advocacy:** ASPBAE can leverage the strength of its members and build a stronger community of advocacy and research. ASPBAE and its members can engage with governments to advocate and promote the importance of a decentralized approach to quality education and lifelong learning and ensure the importance of civil society organisations (CSOs), especially during disasters and emergencies. Collaboration amongst CSOs needs to be promoted. ASPBAE must advocate for a strong regulatory mechanism for digital education to balance the digital divide.

**Influencing practices on the ground:** Food security must be priority. Apart from improving the mid-day meal scheme in schools, there is a larger need to include public health and hygiene as a part of education. ASPBAE must advocate and promote investing in digital literacy for adult education.

**Learning and knowledge-sharing:** ASPBAE can promote peer learning and experience-sharing. It can also invest in a space for sharing alternate knowledge amongst partners and with the larger community. ASPBAE, through its members, can strategize and advocate to promote the process of decentralization to create a space for local communities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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**Recommendation - ASPBAE can promote peer learning and experience-sharing. It can also invest in a space for sharing alternate knowledge amongst partners and with the larger community.**

**Greater engagement with member's work in-country:** ASPBAE can promote documentation of members' work and practices in the region to build knowledge from their experiences. Local understanding and experiences can contribute to the understanding of macro issues nationally and regionally.

Members play a big role in advancing the work of ASPBAE. India members agreed that they can map specific vulnerable communities who are left out of the education process and align with the 'leave no one behind' campaign by providing last-mile connectivity. Further, they can involve youth organisations involved in education work and include the experience of the elderly. Members can create a discourse in the national education coalition (National Coalition for Education, NCE, India) on issues that ASPBAE will prioritise at the regional level and contextualize the agenda at the national level through a research or concept paper.

Binoy Acharya, of UNNATI - Organisation for Development Education (India), provided a thoughtful closing note to the very stimulating discussions at the India national consultation. Mr. Acharya referred to the work of the Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD) and other youth organisations who have used the power of technology to the increasing combat domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Members agreed that inclusive education is the crying need of the hour and communities should be at the forefront of deciding what kind of an education would benefit them the most.**

Members agreed that inclusive education is the crying need of the hour and communities should be at the forefront of deciding what kind of an education would benefit them the most. Over the past few months, members noted that self-help groups, or other community organisations, have come together with panchayats and have functioned as a strong force. Members stressed that education work should focus on bringing together vulnerable groups to ensure they have access to quality education and learning opportunities.

India Members unanimously agreed to the proposed amendments to ASPBAE's constitution and agreed to the nomination of Brinda Adige of Global Concerns India and Deben Bachaspatimayum of CALL-Manipur as the country voting representatives. [[BACK](#)]



**TCF and Equality Myanmar representatives reflected and shared their analysis on their country's education and development context and how it should inform ASPBAE's work.**

## **Equitable access to quality education, non-discrimination, non-formal education, and education budgets highlighted by Myanmar members as advocacy priorities**

Myanmar National Consultation for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

24 July 2020, Virtual

Accredited members of ASPBAE in Myanmar, Thinking Classroom Foundation (TCF) and Equality Myanmar, held a virtual national consultation as part of their participation in informing the next strategic plan of ASPBAE. Through the national consultation, the member also took part in ASPBAE's General Assembly-related processes which included discussing the proposed amendments to ASPBAE's Constitution and selecting their country voting representatives to vote on these amendments and on the contested position in ASPBAE's Executive Council (EC).



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**Key contextual issues Myanmar members shared included ongoing civil wars and how children in these conflict areas are not able to access education, low budget for education, and lack of attention to non-formal education and lack of a lifelong learning framework for education.**



**Addressing the impact of COVID-19 on education members said that teachers were not provided with adequate support and were not capacitated to deliver education through online modalities as needed during this time of pandemic.**



**Members called for access to education without any form of discrimination, equal importance of non-formal education, aligned of education budgets with international benchmarks, support to ethnic education, and respect for diversity in education.**

To feed into ASPBAE's strategic planning process, TCF and Equality Myanmar representatives reflected and shared their analysis on their country's education and development context and how the realities from the ground should inform the work of ASPBAE as a regional civil society movement for education.

Key contextual narratives they shared include the ongoing civil wars in the states of Rakhine, Shan and Kachin, how children in these conflict areas are not able to access education, the consistently low budget allocation for education in the country which puts into question the implementation trajectory of the government in meeting their commitments under SDG4, and the lack of attention to non-formal education and the overall lifelong learning framework for education.

The impact of the COVID pandemic was a cross-cutting contextual piece of the discussion wherein the general assessment was that the education actions and budget in the country in response to this crisis have been very weak and slow. Teachers were not provided with adequate support and were not capacitated to deliver education through online modalities as needed during this time of pandemic.

Equity and inclusion issues were also strongly highlighted during the consultation which included the fact that non-discrimination policy and laws in education based on sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, disability, and ethnic groups, including the Rohingya, are not yet in place.

As such, in articulating inclusive and equitable quality education, both TCF and Equality Myanmar offered the following input:

- ✓ Ensure access without any form of discrimination in terms of gender and sexual orientation, ethnicity, social status, disability, religion, and age
- ✓ Non-formal education should be given equal importance as formal education
- ✓ Ensure the education budget is aligned with the international financing benchmark of 15-20% of national budget
- ✓ Education budget has to be equitably distributed to ensure it will reach the most marginalised and vulnerable sectors
- ✓ Right to quality education should be guaranteed, even in times of crisis or pandemic
- ✓ Ethnic education, which implements mother-tongue based multilingual education, should be supported and recognized by the state system
- ✓ Respect for diversity in education

Myanmar members also recognised the important role ASPBAE plays in bringing in the voice of civil society organisations (CSOs) in various platforms. They have recommended for ASPBAE to continue offering a space for international solidarity and sustain its identity as a productive and effective regional and international platform to discuss and raise national education issues such as non-formal education, adult learning and education, education financing, quality public education, inclusive education, recognition of ethnic education, and emergency responses to education in conflict areas.

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The learning that ASPBAE facilitates among its members and partners have been valuable and the members in Myanmar offered their active participation and support to ASPBAE's policy advocacy work and regional learning exchanges.

Especially in this time of the COVID pandemic and in other forms of crises, international solidarity is important. The learning that ASPBAE facilitates among its members and partners have been valuable and the members in Myanmar offered their active participation and support to ASPBAE's policy advocacy work and regional learning exchanges.

In the succeeding part of the national consultation, both TCF and Equality Myanmar have expressed their support to the Constitutional Amendments endorsed by the ASPBAE EC and they have jointly agreed on their country voting representatives for the ASPBAE election that will be conducted in October.  
[\[BACK\]](#)

## Quality education and lifelong learning opportunities central to ensuring a full and productive life to all

Pakistan National Consultation for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (GA)

27 July 2020, Virtual



On the impact of COVID-19, members of the national consultation in Pakistan pointed out that there is a real fear of increase in school drop-out rates and incidence of child labour, especially among girls.

The ASPBAE members' consultation in Pakistan was conducted virtually by Qamar Bashir (GCDF), the Country Coordinator for Pakistan. Of the six accredited members in Pakistan, four members – Bunyad, GCDF, Khwendo Kor and IRM were present in the online meeting. Qamar Bashir, however had requested responses and received them ahead of the meeting from the member, Youth for Human Rights, Pakistan. The only member who was absent was SAQE, the national education coalition of Pakistan.

The meeting began with welcome and introductions of the members present – Qamar Bashir (GCDF), Nuzhat Amin (Khwendo Kor), Saima Fayyaz (Bunyd), and Iram Anees (IRM). The first set of discussions were around development in Pakistan. The members expounded on the main issues identified by them, viz. Illiteracy, especially among women, poverty, over population, political instability, incessant sexual violence on women, gender disparities in opportunities for education and work, low alternatives for flexible learning strategies, unskilled youth, and child labour were also cited as development issues in Pakistan. All members stated that education plays a significant role in addressing and alleviating these issues.



Another concern raised by the members was the marked reduction in the financing of education as health has become a priority in the context of the pandemic.

On the impact of COVID-19, members pointed out that all learning and education facilities, including schools, community learning centres, and vocational training institutes have closed down, resulting in loss of educational opportunities for all. There is a real fear of increase in school drop-out rates and incidence of child labour, especially among girls. There has been a rise in gender-based violence in these times. Online education that has been initiated is currently not feasible, both for financial and technological reasons. Another concern that was identified was the marked reduction in the financing of education as health has become a priority in the context of the pandemic.

Responding to what would it mean to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" in Pakistan, members highlighted the following -



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**Members in Pakistan highlighted that even when more children are enrolled, many do not acquire the basic skills. Quality education is hampered by the lack of trained teachers and adequate school facilities.**

- Collaboration between government, private sector, and NGOs in planning, implementing, and executing activities aligned with the SDGs and trying to contribute towards achieving the SDGs, especially SDG 4;
- Promotion and accelerated efforts towards SDG 4, especially target 4.6;
- Quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all are central to ensuring a full and productive life to all individuals and to the realization of sustainable development. Despite considerable progress in school enrolment, millions of children remain out of school, especially where educational systems struggle to keep up with population growth. Even when more children are enrolled, many do not acquire the basic skills. Quality education is hampered by the lack of trained teachers and adequate school facilities. Achieving SDG 4 will thus require intensified efforts.

Recommendations to ASPBAE were -

- ASPBAE should have more presence and visibility in Pakistan as there have been hardly any events organised in the country in the recent past. For existing members in Pakistan to be engaged and membership to increase, there is a larger footprint of ASPBAE needed in Pakistan.
- Provide a decent platform to enrich members in Pakistan. This can be achieved through online learning to promote literacy and skills development for members.
- Involve members from Pakistan in ASPBAE activities regionally to replicate lessons learned from other countries and apply/replicate them at the country level.
- Build capacities of members on disaster management and distance learning solutions.
- Developing ownership in ASPBAE's work, among members in Pakistan, through collaborative efforts.
- Advocate for increased financing for education in Pakistan.
- Increased attention to the effects of the pandemic, especially on gender-based violence and child labour.
- Solicit contributions from members on issues that ASPBAE is working on – e.g. ESD, peace education, women's empowerment, among others.
- Support in linkages with donors, especially for girls' education.



**Recommendation – Provide a platform for online learning to promote literacy and skills development for members.**

Members committed to providing information when required by ASPBAE, to lobbying and networking to increase membership in Pakistan, to sharing and promoting ASPBAE's vision and role in promoting adult learning and education and lifelong learning. Members further stressed that they would continue these efforts for wider opportunities for civil society to push for the right to education and lifelong learning that is embedded directly in the efforts to end poverty and achieve social justice, gender equality, sustainable development, and a lasting peace.

Members in Pakistan agreed to the proposed amendments in ASPBAE's Constitution. The meeting concluded with the unanimous selection of Qamar Bashir and Iram Anees as the two country voting representatives for Pakistan in the 8<sup>th</sup> GA of ASPBAE. [\[BACK\]](#)



**Recommendation - Build capacities of members on disaster management and distance learning solutions. Advocate for increased financing for education in Pakistan.**

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**ASPBAE members in Samoa - the Samoa Education Network (SEN) and the Matuaileoo Environment Trust Incorporated (METI) - held a consultation in Apia to identify key education issues facing Samoa and offer recommendations for ASPBAE's future work.**

## Rethinking and redefining education with a lifelong learning perspective - Samoa ASPBAE members consult on ASPBAE's future plans

**Samoa National Consultation for ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

*31 July 2020, Apia, Samoa*

ASPBAE members in Samoa - the Samoa Education Network (SEN) and the Matuaileoo Environment Trust Incorporated (METI) - held a consultation in Apia to identify key education issues facing Samoa and offer recommendations for ASPBAE's future work. Participants included a representative each from the Samoa National Teachers Association and the Tauoo Village Farmers' Cooperative.

The members agreed with SEN's recent summary of education issues facing Samoa. While progress has been made by the Government of Samoa in education in some areas, there are still many challenges.

Samoa has faced school closures in 2019 due to a measles epidemic and then in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the education system promptly adapted, delivered school lessons online, and used e-learning materials, many children, some in the urban schools, many in rural schools and in remote areas and poorer children did miss out. However, this was somewhat addressed by schools and teachers preparing print materials which were distributed periodically to the children.

Nonetheless there has been a decline in literacy and numeracy rates, and poor results in most subjects, including science, maths and languages, and poorer results, especially for boys.

Samoa has an inclusive education policy and strategies as outlined in its Education Sector Plan 2019-2024, and there has been an increase in the number of children with special needs or a disability attending school between 2015-2019.

However, generally access to education is still a concern. While there is 100% enrolment in primary school, the drop-out rate is 20%. For secondary school, there is an enrolment rate of 78% however there has been a decline in completion rates between 2016 and 2018 for both males and females.

Samoa faces a high level of gender-based violence and domestic violence which needs urgent and concerted effort. Apart from a violation of basic human rights, especially to women and children, this has a negative impact on all aspects of life including education and learning.

The Samoa Voluntary National Review (VNR) comments on Samoa's limited capacity for the collection, analysis, and timely reporting of quality data and the capacity challenges regarding management at all levels and uncoordinated partner support efforts to achieve the SDGs.



**Members in Samoa noted that there has been a decline in literacy and numeracy rates and poor results in most subjects, and poorer results, especially for boys.**



**Samoa has an inclusive education policy and strategies and there has been an increase in the number of children with special needs attending school.**



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A challenge is to ensure meaningful implementation of SDG 4.7, which requires rethinking and redefining the purpose of education to see it from a lifelong learning perspective so that it can become a key enabler for a sustainable future.

A big challenge is to ensure meaningful implementation of SDG 4.7, which requires rethinking and redefining the purpose of education to see it from a lifelong learning perspective so that it can become a key enabler for a sustainable future. Learners need to be equipped with the 'knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours and values they need to engage creatively and responsibly with our ever more rapidly changing world'.

The Samoa members applauded the activities of ASPBAE over the past several years and supports its programmes and the information it sends as relevant to their work.

Walter Vermeulen of SEN and Aloema Leaupepe of METI were selected as the Voting Representatives for the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. [\[BACK\]](#)

## National consultation in Timor-Leste sees members commit to continuing advocacy and capacity building work amidst COVID pandemic

22 July 2020, Dili, Timor-Leste

The Civil Society Education Partnership (CSEP) hosted a face-to-face national consultation of ASPBAE members in Timor-Leste.

Staff and youth volunteers of CSEP were joined by ASPBAE members from Action for Change Foundation (ACF) and Many Hands, One Nation (MAHON) who actively took part in the discussion to feed into ASPBAE's strategic planning process and participate in its 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (GA)-related processes.

Members from Timor-Leste shared their reading of their context, especially how the COVID pandemic has affected and worsened the pre-existing education and development issues and challenges in the country.

Even before the onset of COVID-19, Timor-Leste's education had been suffering from years of neglect, inadequate facilities, and not being accessible to many people, especially the marginalised sectors and those living in rural areas.

The recent conversion of some public secondary schools into technical-vocational schools without improving and addressing the lack of even the most basic school facilities and requirements such as classrooms, chairs, desks, libraries, laboratories and qualified teachers, has shown the weaknesses in the country's education system and responses.

The COVID pandemic, and the pressures of delivering education and learning through various modalities, such as online and digital platforms (using mobile phones and computers), television, radio and other distance learning strategies, have further worsened the already limited access of students and learners to education. Due to limited classrooms, chairs, desk, teachers and sanitation facilities, even the strategy to distribute classes into two (morning and afternoon sessions) did not fully comply with the need to maintain social distancing in school.



Members from Timor-Leste shared their country context, especially how the COVID pandemic has affected and worsened the pre-existing education and development issues and challenges in the country.



The COVID pandemic, and the pressures of delivering education and learning through various modalities, such as online and digital platforms and other distance learning strategies, have further worsened the already limited access of students and learners to education.

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**ASPBAE's members in Timor-Leste emphasised the need to support the most marginalised and vulnerable sectors, including those in rural areas.**



**Members underscored that the right to education of people with disabilities and marginalised groups should be guaranteed by the government and that no one should be left behind in education.**



**Members expressed their support to ASPBAE by committing to actively engage in its advocacy work in strengthening public education systems.**

The country's limited capacity and weak education response to this enormous challenge will persist and will impact the country's development prospects in the future.

Adding to this is the existing political instability in the country where it meant in late 2019, the current Government was unable to guarantee a parliamentary majority to ensure the passing of its 2020 government programme and budget. As such, for 2020, Timor-Leste did not have an approved state budget and the government is only spending according to the country's duodecimal system. Article 31 of the Budget and Financial Management Law allows spending to continue according to a duodecimal system which is 1/12 of each budget line per month to sustain government operations.

With this enormous education and development challenges, ASPBA's members in Timor-Leste emphasised the need to support the most marginalised and vulnerable sectors, including those in the rural areas of the country. Particularly in education, they have highlighted that the right to education of people with disabilities and marginalised groups should be guaranteed by the government and that no one should be left behind in education.

For the next strategic plan of ASPBAE, members in Timor-Leste suggested the following:

- Continue supporting the Youth-led Action Research (YAR) initiative
- Continue conducting ASPBAE's flagship training programme, the Basic Leadership Development Course (BLDC), as a strategic space to develop leadership skills within the membership and for learning exchange that build on the experiences of members from various countries in Asia Pacific region
- Continue engaging with members on advocacy and capacity building to strengthen the CSO partnership at the regional level

Members expressed their support to ASPBAE by committing to actively engage in its advocacy work in strengthening public education systems and to continuously share information and data that may be relevant to ASPBAE's work and engagements in various advocacy platforms.

On the constitutional amendments that were endorsed by ASPBAE's Executive Council (EC), Timor-Leste members expressed their agreement to these changes. They also shared that participating in ASPBAE's General Assembly (GA) and strategic planning processes have helped them reflect on their own coalition and NGO processes and gave them valuable experiential learning how to improve their institutional and governance systems in the future. They expressed appreciation that ASPBAE's processes were participatory and that each member at the country level was given an opportunity to speak during national consultations and that ASPBAE listens to each of them and their voices become a valuable part of ASPBAE's future plan and activities.

Towards the end of the consultation, members agreed on their voting representatives, male and female, to vote on behalf of Timor-Leste members in ASPBAE's elections in October. [\[BACK\]](#)



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**Discussions of ASPBAE's members in Vietnam to inform ASPBAE's next strategic plan highlighted how the rapidly changing global context due to digital technology, climate change, migration, and the COVID pandemic have impacted the country.**



**Diverse channels and methodologies of non-formal education and lifelong learning have been utilised during the social distancing period in some localities in order to reach more learners.**



**Vietnam members stressed the importance of a special focus and advocacy for the marginalised and vulnerable groups to ensure they benefit from education and development.**

## At national consultation, ASPBAE members in Vietnam look to push ahead with focus on youth and adult learning and education, lifelong learning, and knowledge sharing

29 July 2020

In support of ASPBAE's 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (GA) and strategic planning processes, ASPBAE members in Vietnam held their national consultation in a blended mode, virtual and face-to-face, hosted by the Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA).

ASPBAE members who converged face-to-face together with VAEFA staff were representatives from the Centre for Non-Formal Education and Community Development (CENEV) and Research Centre for Inclusion (RCI), while representatives from Centre for Community Development and Social Work (CODES) joined them virtually via Zoom.

The depth of the members' contextual discussion to inform ASPBAE's next strategic plan highlighted how the rapidly changing global context due to digital technology, climate change, migration, and the COVID pandemic have impacted Vietnam. Despite remarkable achievements in economic and social development over the last decade, inequalities are still crucial issues to be addressed in Vietnam. Marginalised groups needing support and attention include the poor, ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disability, the LGBTQI community, women, and girls. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and has pushed some marginalized groups into a desperate situation.

The first wave of COVID-19 in Vietnam caused the closures of educational institutions at all levels for approximately three months from February to the end of April 2020. Although the government and many schools have tried to switch to distance learning mode, including online lessons and education through radio and television, it was a great challenge to ensure learning continuity, especially for learners with disabilities, learners from remote, rural and ethnic minority areas, and learners from poor families. Limitations of formal schooling have been revealed by the pandemic. It was notable that the diverse channels and methodologies of non-formal education and lifelong learning have been utilised in varying extent during the social distancing period in some localities in order to reach more learners.

Vietnam members also highlighted how climate change-related migration has been and will continue to be a strong underpinning context in the coming period in Vietnam and in the world. Recent years have witnessed increased number of extreme weather phenomenon in every part of the world including Vietnam.

As these contexts impact on education and development in the country, the members highlighted the need to ensure inclusive education by focusing on the most marginalised groups and advocate for addressing their specific issues and challenges. Without specific focus and advocacy for the marginalised and vulnerable groups, the country may appear like it has already solved its problems



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**Recommendation – ASPBAE should maintain its focus on youth and adult learning and education (YALE) and lifelong learning (LLL), especially non-formal education, and enhance members' joint work on YALE and LLL.**

Vietnam members offered and committed to keep sharing their knowledge, experience, findings and concerns from local and country levels to ASPBAE and its members.



**Recommendation - Explore how to continue bringing in the voices of marginalised and vulnerable groups who can join other advocates. ASPBAE's youth-led action research (YAR) is an activity with this innovation in advocacy.**

when in reality there remains segments of society who have not been reached or benefited from education and development in the country.

Among the recommendations offered by Vietnam members to ASPBAE going forward include the following:

- Maintain ASPBAE's focus on youth and adult learning and education (YALE) and lifelong learning (LLL), especially non-formal education, and enhance members' joint work on YALE and LLL.
- Reflect on and review the ways of working to continue to find new methods or new elements of conducting advocacy to enhance effectiveness. Explore how to continue bringing in the voices of marginalised and vulnerable groups who can join other advocates. ASPBAE's youth-led action research (YAR) is an activity with this innovation in advocacy. The innovation elements of advocacy should be promoted in various platforms (e.g. in UN and other organisations).
- Organize regular community education forums at regional levels. It can be a platform to gather evidence from different communities in the region which can be used for advocacy.
- Digital-based education will play a big part in the future. Most of digital learning platforms now are developed by corporations/private sector which now hold considerable number of critical and private information of its users and the general public. ASPBAE can take the lead in advocating the governments for the development of reliable and safe digital education platforms that can protect privacy rights of learners and teachers. Schools and students should be trained on how to protect their information.
- Nowadays and especially in the time of COVID, the concepts of online learning and distance learning should be clarified. Different methods of distance learning can be collected, documented, and shared among ASPBAE members and other stake holders.
- Funding for civil society organisations (CSOs) has become more and more scarce and this situation could be worsened by the COVID pandemic. Many CSOs and even UN organizations turn to the private sector to seek fund to sustain their work. More research on partnership with private sector should be conducted by ASPBAE to share the pros and cons, and to guide CSOs how to assess the situation and what precautions should be in place.
- ASPBAE should take into consideration the climate change-related migration trend and whether we need to integrate it in ASPBAE's work and how.

Vietnam members offered and committed to keep sharing their knowledge, experience, findings and concerns from local and country levels to ASPBAE and its members. They have also expressed strong commitment to actively join ASPBAE's initiatives.

The members reviewed the Constitutional Amendments endorsed by the ASPBAE Executive Council (EC) and have agreed to all the changes made. The members have also selected their male and female voting representatives who will represent Vietnam in the ASPBAE elections in October. [\[BACK\]](#)

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## Goodbye ASPBAE office in Mumbai. Thank you for the memories.

*By Maria Khan, ASPBAE Secretary-General*

Today - 29 July 2020 - the last of the 70+ odd boxes of 25 years of ASPBAE's life in India found their way to their new homes.

Through the kindness and generous support of our member, Abhivyakti Media for Development, we have found a safe space in Nashik where our old journals will be reliably stored; where ASPBAE's archival material will sit until they can be posted to the ASPBAE Secretariat in Manila; and where our collection of books, learning materials, other publications accumulated through the years can be kept until better times usher in - more conducive to sharing these with libraries, resource centres or any who will find meaning and value in these.

Today, I just want to mark this moment with a proper salute to this space that was our abode of many years - the site of our ferocious work pace for nearing 2 decades, where we co-created many new ways of thinking, of resistance and transformation; where we broke bread; welcomed weary travellers; grew old; made lifetime friends; spun dreams and many tales; made fond memories, heavy with laughter and kinship.

To mark this occasion, I share perhaps the last picture of Aveline, Sandeep, and Santosh in our office - on the final day of sorting and storing, the proud record of our 25 years of thriving and being. There they are at the entrance, with that unmistakable door marker of "five steps up" (as our landlord called it, even as I count 6!). If they look long suffering, it is because they have reluctantly indulged me a pose at the tail end of three intense weeks of braving Mumbai's unrelenting COVID-19 lockdown, the pouring monsoon rains, hours of travel to the office from their homes, my stress and panic - to give the ASPBAE Mumbai office, the closure and the send-off it fully deserves.

This day rightly belongs to remembering them - the sometimes exasperating but wonderfully endearing quirks that will forever form part of ASPBAE lore, their dedication, their loyalty, their care, and their quiet competence we simply couldn't have done without.

Aveline, Santosh, Sandeep, take a bow.

With our deep gratitude, admiration, and affection. [\[BACK\]](#)



**L-R: Aveline Cabrol, Sandeep Joshi, Santosh Satpute - Mumbai Secretariat staff on the day ASPBAE closed down its office in India. Take a bow you three, for the years of loyal dedication and service you gave to the organisation. We will forever be grateful.**

**ASPBAE bid a tearful farewell to its Secretariat in Mumbai in July 2020. Colaba, the area where the Secretariat was located, will never be the same again.**

**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.

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