



## GPE concludes governance review under its new Strategic Plan and Operating Model

[Full article](#)

## Asia Pacific CSOs assert centrality of education and gender equality in COVID-19 recovery efforts at the 8<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

The 8<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) action provided a regional perspective on the progress and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

[Read more](#)

## Young people call for intersectional, non-discriminatory, and participatory approaches to foster youth empowerment and leadership

Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) Regional Youth Forum 2021

[Full article](#)

## Harnessing collective voices in the Asia Pacific towards transformative education and development that leaves no one behind

Asia Pacific Peoples' Forum on Sustainable Development (APPFSD)

The Asia Pacific Peoples' Forum on Sustainable Development (APPFSD) provided an inclusive platform for civil society organisations and people's movements in the region to share positions on key sustainable issues. It aimed to harness the collective voice towards transformative development that leaves no one behind. - [Read more](#)

## Strengthening the voices of youth and students in the global education movement

Global Campaign Education (GCE) Virtual World Assembly

Over 350 participants, comprised of Global Campaign for Education (GCE) members and its partners, convened in the first GCE Virtual World Assembly, where the role of youth and students in the global education movement was significantly discussed.

[Read more](#)

## "We are ALE" campaign kicks off globally

Participants from across the globe met in a virtual forum for the kick-off event of the Adult Learning and Education (ALE) Campaign. Steered by the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), the "We are ALE" campaign represents an open alliance of ALE partners with the aim of making adult learning and education seen, understood and valued. - [Read more](#)

## Addressing public-private partnerships and widening inequalities in education

ASPBAE and its coalition members participated in the *Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC) Learning, Exchange, and Discussion* session where academics shared their recent research on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and provided an opportunity for PEHRC members to discuss how this can be used in their work. - [Read more](#)



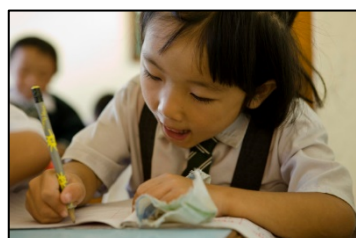
## ASPBAE organises side event at APFSD 2021 on Youth-led Action Research and impacts of COVID-19 on marginalised youth in 9 countries

[Full article](#)



## Enhancing youth advocacy for quality education and learning opportunities in Sri Lanka

[Full article](#)



## Optimising the Abidjan Principles to inform local and national education plans in Nepal

[Full article](#)



**Examining progress in Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in Southeast Asia in the lead-up to CONFINTEA VII sub-regional consultation**

[Full article](#)



**Analysing the impact of COVID-19 on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) participation, provisioning, and policies in South Asia**

**Sub-regional consultation for CONFINTEA VII 2022 in South Asia**

[Full article](#)



**ASPBAE emphasises role of transformative adult learning and education in addressing inequalities, exclusion and discrimination through a video message for IWD 2021**

[Full article](#)

**UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) webinar series - Equity, Privatisation, and the Right to Education**

ASPBAE and national education coalitions participated in a four-part webinar series organised by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) that aimed to examine the origins, spread, and outcomes of private sector involvement in education. - [Read more](#)

**ASPBAE's South Asia members call for increased financing for Adult Learning and Education (ALE) ahead of sub-regional CONFINTEA VII consultation**

In a sub-regional preparatory meeting for UNESCO's 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII), South Asia civil society organisations met for a consultation that aimed to orient ASPBAE members on the forthcoming CONFINTEA VII sub-regional consultation and for them to discuss key issues and recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) based on their country contexts. - [Read more](#)

**Education News and Views**

**The role of civil society organisations in supporting education and knowledge in shaping the society we want**

[Read more](#)



## Member of the Month

### **Hong Kong Women Workers' Association (HKWWA)**

The Hong Kong Women's Workers' Association (HKWWA), established in 1989, works towards organising working women, fighting for women's labour rights and interests, and working with women to create a space for development.

Some of the issues they work on include enhancing women's self-awareness and self-growth, advocating for laws that protect women's rights, and calling for social attention to women's labour issues. HKWWA works with women engaged in paid labour and homemakers engaged in unpaid housework.

## Photo of the Month



The theme for International Women's Day (8 March) this year was *'Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world'*.

## ASPBAE Lens

ASPBAE dedicates this space in the Bulletin to showcase photos its staff have taken to feature their perception of life around them and the interesting and inspiring moments they observe. In this edition of the Bulletin, we feature a photo taken by Lae Santiago, Research and Advocacy Officer.

### **Lae Santiago**

Research and Advocacy Officer



## Education News and Views

This section of the Bulletin is dedicated to highlighting news and events from the Asia Pacific and from around the world focusing on education and lifelong learning. For this edition, we highlight a report by UNESCO's Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 (CCNGO) Coordination Group on *'The role of Civil Society Organisations in 2050 and beyond'* to the Futures of Education Initiative.

### The role of civil society organisations in supporting education and knowledge in shaping the society we want



UNESCO's Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 (CCNGO) Coordination Group, representing around 300 national, regional, and international NGOs, has submitted an independent [report](#) on *'The role of Civil Society Organisations in 2050 and beyond'* to the Futures of Education Initiative reflecting on current and future global trends and the role of education and civil society organisations (CSOs) within it.

The report is timely ahead of the international review spearheaded by the Global Education Monitoring Report 2021/2 on non-state actors in education. It reflects on how CSOs in the education field will evolve in a world of rising inequality fuelling tensions, increased alienation from

automation and uncertainty caused by multiple crises, not least climate change. The report makes the case for CSOs flexibility and adaptability as increasingly valuable and necessary in the face of new challenges.

Presented in three main chapters, *'The role of Civil Society Organisations in 2050 and beyond'* firstly elaborates on education as a human right and transformative concept in the face of rising challenges, trends and future horizons. The second chapter describes CSOs as "critical friends and partners" to government and other actors in education. The third chapter looks at how CSOs support citizen empowerment and learning environments at community level.

The report showcases the role of CSOs in advocating for a humanistic vision of education in the reflection and development of policy, legislation and financing, with a lifelong learning perspective. It calls on CSOs to maximise resources, expertise and develop strategic partnerships to secure their place in future governance and decision-making arenas. It also emphasises their need to seek more formalised ways to cooperate, synergise and co-construct innovative, sustainable and coherent solutions alongside joint advocacy initiatives at sub-national, national, regional and international levels.

CSOs bring the vital human touch and human hand necessary for the co-construction of inclusive education, knowledge and policy frameworks. The report elaborates nine recommendations to guide and support CSOs and their partners towards shaping a sustainable future.

*The CCNGO is UNESCO's long-standing mechanism for dialogue, reflection and partnership with NGOs working in the field of education. Founded in 1984, the CCNGO is a network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) committed to ensuring that the voice of the community is strengthened and considered in diverse decision-making arenas.* [\[BACK\]](#)







The 8<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) highlighted the transformations that support a sustainable and resilient recovery that can take place in the aftermath of the pandemic.

In the Asia Pacific, at least 850 million lost almost half of the academic year by September 2020. While digitisation did allow for the continuity of public services and other operations, it further widened the already existing digital divide, especially in education.



Achieving SDG 4 requires ensuring equal access to education and learning for all learners, no matter the modality of its delivery.

## Asia Pacific CSOs assert centrality of education and gender equality in COVID-19 recovery efforts at the 8<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

23-26 March 2021, Bangkok, Virtual

ASPBAE and its members participated in the 8<sup>th</sup> [Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development \(APFSD\)](#) held with the theme ‘Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific.’ The Forum provided a regional perspective on the progress and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It highlighted the transformations that support a sustainable and resilient recovery that can take place in the aftermath of the pandemic and conducted an in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16, and 17.

The Forum noted that “the COVID-19 pandemic was a developmental, environmental, human rights, and security concern.” It affirmed that many member States were not on track to achieve the SDGs even before the pandemic. With the pandemic threatening to undermine the progress towards sustainable development, the Asia Pacific region is expected to experience drastic setbacks in poverty, health, gender, decent work, and education. While the region made great strides towards Goals 3 on good health and well-being and 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, it has made slow progress on Goal 4, as well as Goals 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 10 on reduced inequalities, and 17 on partnership for the Goals. Progress remains stagnant for the other Goals.

The region is also witnessing worsening inequality of opportunities in access to public services, including health care, social protection, and education. According to the Progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific, at the height of country lockdowns, nearly 1.5 billion students were globally affected by school closures. And in the Asia-Pacific region, at least 850 million lost almost half of the academic year by September 2020. The pandemic’s impact on digitalisation was also recognised. While it did allow for the continuity of public services and other operations, it further widened the already existing digital divide. In education, for instance, learners from marginalised and vulnerable groups are not able to access the required digital devices to continue online learning, let alone afford a stable Internet connection. Achieving SDG 4 requires ensuring equal access to education and learning for all learners, no matter the modality of its delivery.

Despite global commitments, the voices of marginalised and vulnerable groups, including women and youth, were not adequately reflected in national policies. Delegations of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders highlighted the need to uphold greater accountability of governments, supported by the United Nations system. They also called attention to “the loss of life among those asserting their civil rights, to reverse the trends of shrinking civic and democratic space and to promote inclusion in policymaking, transparency and accountability as well as to tackle systemic barriers, including global economic policies that countered progress.” Against the backdrop of shrinking civic spaces, it has become increasingly important to call on governments to protect civil society organisations



**Against the backdrop of shrinking civic spaces, it has become increasingly important to call on governments to protect civil society and citizens' spaces for engagements and ensure that there is transparent and accountable governance in delivering the full 2030 Agenda.**

(CSOs) and citizens' spaces for engagements and ensure that there is transparent and accountable governance in delivering the full 2030 Agenda.

The Forum also saw the launch of the SDG Partnership Report on '*Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leaving No Country Behind*,' which highlighted the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic and reviewed the existing vulnerabilities that it has exposed and magnified. The Report focused on the role of "digitalisation, digital financing and regional cooperation as key elements to building forward from COVID-19 for the SDGs" and pointed to the need to foster close cooperation among countries, specifically regional cooperation that supports people-centered development, to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

ASPBAE participated as an official delegate to APFSD with several of its members which include: ACTE (Tajikistan), ANEC (Afghanistan), CAMPE (Bangladesh), DAM (Bangladesh), COESI (Solomon Islands), PCE (Pakistan), PEAN (Papua New Guinea), NCE (Nepal), NCE (India), Azad Foundation (India), and TCF (Myanmar).

The APFSD was conducted mainly online where participants watched the event. Selected representatives from the Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (APRCSEM) were given slots to be in the Kudo Platform where they can engage and give comments in the APFSD plenary sessions. ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano and its member representative, Hawng Tsai (Ah Sai) of Thinking Classroom Foundation (TCF Myanmar), represented the Education Group in that platform. Ah Sai spoke on behalf of the NGO constituency, from the Education Group, in the session on the '*Review of Regional Progress on SDGs*' during the Forum on 25 March 2021.

SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 5 on gender equality were not included in the cluster of goals for review under the High-level Political Forum's (HLPF) theme of sustained recovery and resiliency. Ah Sai asserted that education and gender equality should be at the core of recovery efforts. Even in crisis situations, the right to education and learning must be protected as it is an indispensable strategy that enables children, youth, and adults to act individually and collectively to address the systemic barriers to development justice.

Ah Sai also challenged the APFSD on the lack of discussions on the increasing private capture of the SDGs, saying that the strategic investments for agriculture, education and public health systems, as well as for disaster and pandemic preparedness should never be profit-making enterprises for the private sector. Investments must come from the public sector and be provided as part of the basic rights of people.

Lastly, Ah Sai called attention on the need to analyse the root causes and strategies to break down global inequalities in wealth, power and resources, international economic, trade, monetary and financial frameworks, militarism and conflict as well as patriarchy and the resurgence of patriarchal authoritarian governance. She concluded her intervention by saying, "*As I come from Myanmar, I would like to emphasize that the issue of militarism and patriarchal authoritarian governance is a serious political issue that governments in the Asia Pacific must not ignore in APFSD.*" [\[BACK\]](#)



**Ah Sai of the Thinking Classroom Foundation (TCF), an ASPBAE member from Myanmar, spoke on behalf of the NGO constituency, Education Group of the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCSEM), in the session on the '*Review of Regional Progress on SDGs*' during the APFSD.**





**The regional youth forum was organised virtually for the first time and saw the participation of over 500 youth representatives from across the Asia Pacific region.**

## Young people call for intersectional, non-discriminatory, and participatory approaches to foster youth empowerment and leadership

Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) Regional Youth Forum 2021

14-16 March 2021, Virtual

The Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) organised a regional youth forum ahead of the APFSD. The regional youth forum was organised virtually for the first time and saw the participation of over 500 youth representatives from across the Asia Pacific region.

The theme for this year's APFSD was '*Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific*'. The diverse youth representatives, consisting of young people with disabilities, youth from indigenous communities, ethnic and minority groups including Dalits, young people living with HIV, and young people belonging to various sexual orientation, gender, identity, expression and characteristics, among others, coming from various social movements, youth-led, feminist and allied organisations, came together to amplify voices of the youth from the region.

This strong youth delegation discussed the impacts of COVID-19 in their contexts at local, national, and regional levels. They have also recommended youth-inclusive recovery solutions to accelerate the transformation of the 2030 Agenda in the Asia Pacific region.

Sivananthi Thanenthiran (ARROW), Legee Tamir (Youth LEAD), Sangeet Kayastha (YPEER Asia Pacific), Sai Jyothirmai Racherla (ARROW), and Wardarina (APRCM), the co-conveners and APRCEM members respectively opened the forum by welcoming, introducing, and setting the context.

The opening address was delivered by Katinka Weinberger (UNESCAP) where she emphasised the significance of collaborative efforts and active youth engagement in the context of the COVID pandemic, and beyond.

The first session aimed to build an understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic from the youth perspective where ASPBAE's Sunil Gangavane presented the key research findings and recommendations from the Youth-led Action Research (YAR) study conducted in nine countries in the Asia Pacific region (India, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Mongolia, Vanuatu, and the Philippines). Sunil highlighted the impacts of the pandemic and lockdown of economies on education opportunities, exclusion patterns from online education, increased cases of violence against children and women, loss of livelihood, and the negative impact on the emotional wellbeing of young people.

Throughout the regional forum, participants actively engaged in discussions around youth, sexual and reproductive health and rights, labour force participation, inclusion, climate change, and a sustainable present and future from a youth lens.



**Participants engaged in discussions around youth, sexual and reproductive health and rights, labour force participation, inclusion, climate change, and a sustainable present and future from a youth lens.**

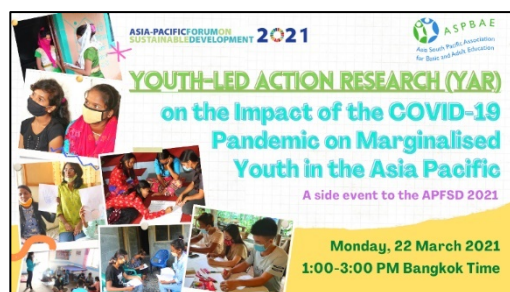
Discussions and recommendations culminated in the regional Youth Call to Action ahead of the inter-governmental Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) where youth called for member states to adopt an intersectional, non-discriminatory, and participatory approach.

These invaluable discussions and recommendations culminated in the regional Youth Call to Action ahead of the inter-governmental Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) where youth called for member states to adopt an intersectional, non-discriminatory, and participatory approach. The approach can further foster youth empowerment and leadership and enable youth to collectively address various issues such as gender inequality, poverty, socioeconomic divides, and sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination, amongst others.

These recommendations and youth demands were compiled in regional and national call-to-action briefs for further advocacy and action work. [\[BACK\]](#)

## ASPBAE organises side event at Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2021 (APFSD) on Youth-led Action Research and impacts of COVID-19 on marginalised youth in 9 countries

22 March 2021, Virtual



ASPBAE organised a virtual side event at the APFSD where the key findings and recommendations of the Youth-led Action Research (YAR) study were presented.

Strengthening the voice and agency of the youth in education policies and processes, especially during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, has been an important part of ASPBAE's intergenerational approach in pursuing the right to education.

With the commitment to listen to youth experiences and document their lived realities, ASPBAE, along with its members in nine (9) countries, conducted a youth-led action research (YAR) study to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of marginalised youth.

ASPBAE specifically focused on the experiences of young people around health, education, and livelihood amidst the pandemic. The study revealed significant insights and recommendations from a youth lens which were documented in a [regional report](#) and a [short film](#). ASPBAE has been disseminating the report and engaging various partners in a dialogue around advocacy and actions offered in the report.

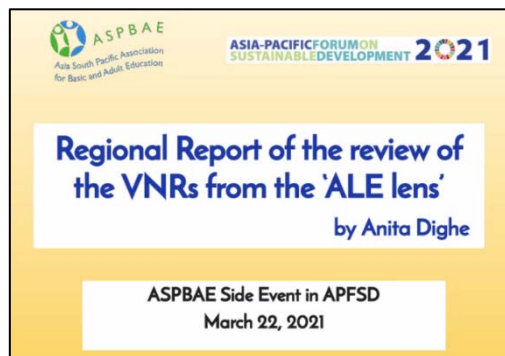
ASPBAE organised a virtual side event at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2021 (APFSD) where the key findings and recommendations of the study were presented. Discussions focused on the important measures that governments, decision-makers, and other relevant stakeholders can take to finance and prioritise recommendations of youth.

ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, welcomed all the participants to the side event where she emphasised that through the YAR study on the impact of COVID-19 to marginalised youth, ASPBAE has stayed true to its commitment to always put into the spotlight the situation of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups. This enables them to have a voice, freedom and to exercise their own agency to articulate their perspectives on what the current contextual challenges mean to them and how they can be empowered to pursue actions to help contribute in improving their situations, and actively contribute to changes in their communities and society.



The Youth-led Action Research (YAR) study aimed to understand the impact of COVID-19 on marginalised youth.





A report on ASPBAE's analysis of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in the region, presented by Anita Dighe, senior research consultant from India, aimed to assess the progress of governments in implementing youth and ALE agenda in SDG4 and in the SDGs.

The ASPBAE side-event was a forum for young people to share what they and their organisations have been doing to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, and to share learnings, successes and challenges in their work.



Vichelle Yumuya of E-Net Philippines, and ASPBAE's Thea Soriano facilitated a discussion on the significance of financing of education, targeting marginalised youth in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community youth researcher, Manisha Gangode from Abhivyakti Media for Development, India, along with ASPBAE's Sunil Gangavane, facilitated the first session.

Aside from presenting the key research findings, they also shared follow-up local actions and advocacies carried out by youth groups in the nine countries covered by the study (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Timor-Lester, Vanuatu, and the Philippines) highlighting the significance of their role in relief work, raising awareness, and providing first-level psycho-social support to communities.

Anita Dighe, a senior research consultant from India, presented ASPBAE's analysis of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in the region through an Adult Learning and Education (ALE) lens. The report aimed to assess the progress of governments in implementing youth and ALE agenda in SDG 4 as well as efforts in embedding youth and ALE in SDGs.

Initiated in 2020, ASPBAE analysed the VNRs of 12 countries (Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Philippines, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and Vanuatu) with a specific focus on SDG 4.4 on skills development for decent work, SDG 4.5 on eliminating inequalities in education, and SDG 4.6 on youth and adult literacy.

Anita also articulated the importance of the integration of youth and adult learning and education towards the stronger implementation of SDGs.

Vichelle Yumuya of E-Net Philippines, and ASPBAE's Cecilia "Thea" Soriano facilitated a discussion on the significance of financing of education, targeting marginalised youth in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and beyond.

Thea moderated an open forum where participants shared lessons from their work in their respective countries. Batchimeg Batzorig, All For Education! (AFE) Mongolia, shared AFE's youth engagement strategies and ongoing work within the coalition.

The side event was a vibrant platform that brought together youth from the Asia Pacific to talk about the issues that impact them the most, particularly in the current context of COVID-19.

It was also a forum for young people to share what they and their organisations have been doing in their communities to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, and to share learnings, successes and challenges in their work. [\[BACK\]](#)



**The APPFSD provided an inclusive platform for CSOs and people's movements in the region to share positions on key sustainable issues and harness collective voices towards transformative development that leaves no one behind.**

ASPBAE and national education coalitions participated in the Asia Pacific Peoples' Forum on Sustainable Development (APPFSD) which was held with the theme, *'Beyond Agenda 2030: Asia and the Pacific for Transformative and Genuine Change.'*



**Speakers raised concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic's unprecedented strain placed on economies, public health systems, and education. Among its multi-layered consequences include worsening inequalities.**

## Harnessing collective voices in the Asia Pacific towards transformative education and development that leaves no one behind

Asia Pacific Peoples' Forum on Sustainable Development (APPFSD)

17-22 March 2021

ASPBAE and national education coalitions participated in the Asia Pacific Peoples' Forum on Sustainable Development (APPFSD) organised by the [Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism](#) (APRCM) as part of the preparations for the engagement in the annual [Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development](#) (APFSD).

Against the backdrop of shrinking civic spaces and digital divide brought about by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the People's Forum took up the theme *'Beyond Agenda 2030: Asia and the Pacific for Transformative and Genuine Change.'* It provided an inclusive platform for civil society organisations (CSOs) and people's movements in the region to discuss and share positions on key sustainable issues and aimed to harness the collective voice towards transformative development that leaves no one behind.

The six-day Forum gathered over 100 participants from different organisations in the Asia Pacific engaged in sustainable development at local, national, and regional levels working on economic, social, and environmental issues. It featured a series of presentations and workshops on the regional progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agenda2030, and on challenging the framework of its implementation and sharpening its analysis through the lens of Development Justice.

Speakers discussed the regional trends, issues, and barriers that impact the achievement of sustainable development in the region. They raised concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic's unprecedented strain placed on the economy, public health systems, and education. Among its multi-layered consequences include the worsening inequalities in different dimensions, which were also a recurring theme in most of the presentations.

It was reported that there is uneven progress towards the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific. While there has been some progress towards a few SDGs in the sub-region, specifically SDG 1 (no poverty) in East and North-East Asia and SDGs 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) in North and Central Asia, progress in other SDGs, such as Goals 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 12 (responsible consumption and production), and 15 (life on land), has been stagnant in most regions.

It is also alarming to note that progress towards SDGs 13 (climate action), 14 (life below water), and 16 has been regressing in the sub-regions. And with the profound impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that the strides made over the last years will be significantly reversed, which does not bode well for the final decade of action to deliver on the SDGs. In this scenario, the pandemic's impacts make the overall picture of the SDGs seem bleak. However, the crisis also brings forth new opportunities to address the key problems that have





ASPBAE's Thea Soriano, who spoke at the APPFSD, pointed to the need for recovery and stimulus to focus on human capacities and well-being, recommending that recovery be measured by social and environmental indicators, including a gender dimension in COVID-19 responses and learning continuity of those left behind.

plagued the region in order to accelerate transformations towards inclusion, resilience, and sustainability, with careful attention to the needs of the most marginalised.

During the session on the *'Peoples' Priorities: Unpacking the Goals'*, ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano presented the highlights of the Fact Sheet on COVID-19 Recovery Funds that ASPBAE produced as part of the Fact Sheets on the SDGs for APRCEM. She highlighted that fiscal response to the pandemic is insufficient, with fiscal expenditure, as a share of GDP for the available high-income economies in the Asia Pacific region, at 24%, compared to only 7% for low- and lower-middle-income economies, which exacerbates inequalities among countries in the region.

Thea also raised concerns over the near absence of green policies in Asia's COVID-19 stimulus packages and the focus on a V-shape recovery, which follows the old normal and prioritises big businesses and big-ticket infrastructure in an attempt to recover losses and jumpstart the economy, instead of strengthening the public services such as education and supporting the marginalised sector. She also pointed to the need for recovery and stimulus to focus on human capacities and well-being, recommending that recovery be measured by social and environmental indicators, including the rate of acceleration of dropout reduction, reduced child labour, reduced inequality gap, inclusion of the gender dimension in COVID-19 responses, learning continuity of those left behind and other related indicators.

Hawng Tsai (Ah Sai) of Thinking Classroom Foundation (TCF Myanmar), a member organisation of ASPBAE, spoke at the Forum, during the session on Monitoring and Accountability at the national level - VNR and Shadow Report - where she shared the dismal situation in Myanmar due to grave violations of human rights and urged participants to stand in solidarity with Myanmar and its people as they fight for democracy.

Also discussed in the session on Reviewing CSOs' Engagement in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process was the experiences of select CSOs in Marshall Islands, Thailand, and Indonesia, among others, in engaging in the process. Effective engagement in the VNR process remains a challenge for many organisations. One noted that people on the ground, such as marginalised groups, are absent in the process, while another said that the voices and inputs of CSOs, shared through spotlight reports, were not integrated into the final VNR.

Speakers underscored the need to increase CSO presence and involvement in the government-led monitoring process of the SDGs, including the VNR, highlighting their role in holding governments accountable to their commitments to the 2030 Agenda.



Regarding country Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) in several countries, it was noted that marginalised groups are absent in the process and that voices and inputs of CSOs, shared through spotlight reports, were not integrated into the final VNR.

ASPBAE and its members - ACTE Tajikistan, AED Kyrgyzstan, ANEC Afghanistan, CAMPE Bangladesh, COESI Solomon Islands, PCE Pakistan, PEAN PNG, NCE-Nepal, NCE-India, DAM-Bangladesh, Azad Foundation, and TCF Myanmar - are official delegates to the People's Forum. ASPBAE provided updated information to its members and encouraged them to engage actively in the People's Forum. [\[BACK\]](#)



**GCE President, Refat Sabbah, addressing the virtual World Assembly that was themed on 'Strengthening the Role of Youth in the GCE Movement and Beyond'.**



**Kajal Boraste of Abhivyakti Media for Development, an ASPBAE member in India, addressed GCE's virtual world Assembly where she spoke about youth-led action research of marginalised youth during the COVID-19 pandemic.**



**ASPBAE's Sunil Gangavane briefed GCE's virtual World Assembly on ASPBAE's interventions in growing its youth constituency, including developing a core group of youth leaders and providing mentoring and support.**

## Strengthening the voices of youth and students in the global education movement

Global Campaign Education (GCE) Virtual World Assembly

23-25 March 2021, Virtual

*By Philani Ndebele, Communications Officer, Global Campaign for Education (GCE)*

Over 350 participants, comprised of [Global Campaign for Education](#) (GCE) members and its partners, convened in the first GCE [Virtual World Assembly](#) on 23-25 March 2021. Apart from a robust debate on critical issues related to the GCE movement, the role of youth and students in the education movement was significantly discussed, where youth representatives from GCE's membership were provided a space to speak and share their insights. This was followed by discussions on policy, advocacy, campaign, communication, and research priorities for the movement, including membership engagement efforts.

It is important to highlight that GCE members and partners convened virtually at this critical juncture in the global education movement - a time when education continues to be threatened by the COVID-19 impacts and other contextual challenges. Therefore, the GCE Virtual World Assembly served as a platform for members and partners to *REFLECT, CONNECT, STRATEGISE, ORGANISE, MOBILISE, LEARN, EXCHANGE, CONSOLIDATE* and *TRANSFORM* on all pertinent issues related to education. Furthermore, in line with a resolution passed during the 6<sup>th</sup> GCE World Assembly on November 2018, GCE voted for the addition of a second seat for the youth constituency in the GCE Board.

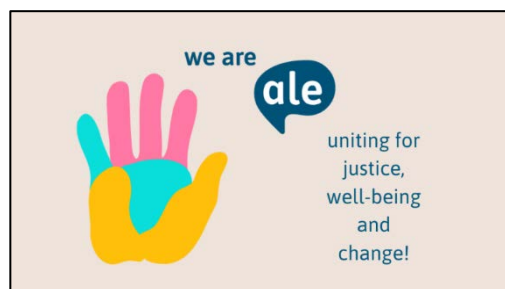
The first day focused on reflections on the journey of youth and students since the Youth Caucus in Nepal. Key thematic discussions focused on the following areas - mapping and developing representative structures and spaces for youth and students around the world, allyship and inter-generational ways of working, draft youth strategy discussions, and youth and student's community of practice.

ASPBAE's staff, Sunil Gangavane, and its member representative from Abhivyakti Media for Development's (India), Kajal Boraste, provided presentations on youth-led action research of marginalised youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other ASPBAE staff and members actively participated in the discussions during the World Assembly.

The second day, through group discussions, focused on GCE policy, advocacy and campaigns work. Discussions centered around GCE's harmonized Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns (PAC) plans. The last day tackled GCE's communication processes. The discussions revolved around deepening GCE's political objectives, influence and impact through communication, emphasising opportunities and challenges. It also focused on accelerating membership engagement, collaborative initiatives and partnership through communication. The GCE Membership Engagement, Knowledge and Learning Hub platform was also presented as a concluding highlight of this day.

The Virtual World Assembly Resource Pack is available [here](#). [\[BACK\]](#)





**“We are ALE” is a call to action to make ALE visible and valued as a significant part of the lifelong learning agenda and a critical component in attaining the sustainable development goals.**



Steered by ICAE, the “We are ALE” campaign represents an open alliance of ALE partners (networks, associations and organisations) with the aim of making adult learning and education seen, understood, and valued.

## “We are ALE” campaign kicks off globally

22 March 2021, Virtual

By Shermaine Barrett, International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) Vice-President for the Caribbean Region

Around 375 participants from across the globe met in a virtual forum for the kick-off event of the Adult Learning and Education (ALE) Campaign. Steered by the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), the “We are ALE” campaign represents an open alliance of ALE partners (networks, associations and organisations) with the aim of making adult learning and education seen, understood and valued.

“We are ALE” is a call to action to make ALE visible and valued as a significant part of the lifelong learning agenda and a critical component in attaining the sustainable development goals. This includes three key domains of learning and skills: (1) literacy and basic skills (2) continuing education (3) vocational skills, including liberal, popular and community education and citizenship skills, for youth and adults including the elderly.

ICAE calls upon ALE advocates, organisations and practitioners globally to join this 5-year global action campaign to make the work of advocates, adult educators and learners visible. It also calls for increased involvement and support by governments, donors, international organizations, social movements and other stakeholders.

The time is now. The current global crisis has shown that much is at stake by not recognising and valuing ALE as a key area for continued investment even as so much of the world’s adult population have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the concomitant overtake of technology in the way people live, work and socialise. All of these taking place within contexts of increasing uncertainty, and heightened tensions around issues of race, gender, and governance to name a few. Adults will need to be learning new ways to live, work and to be. Only then can sustainable future be achieved.

Join this ALE Campaign to unite for justice, well-being and change!

You can watch the recording of the event [here](#). [\[BACK\]](#)

## GPE concludes governance review under its new Strategic Plan and Operating Model

16-17, 19 March 2021

The Board of Directors of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) held a virtual meeting to deliberate and decide on the propositions that emerged from the GPE Governance Review process conducted between the latter part of 2020 and early 2021.

Prior to this meeting of the GPE Board, the civil society constituency members from developing countries (CSO2 Constituency in GPE) held consultation calls to





**The CSO2 constituency positions revolved around preserving and upholding the existing governance mechanisms in GPE, which draws on the strengths of constituencies to support the Partnership.**

**CSO2 Board representatives, Laura Giannechini (CLADE) and ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, led and facilitated CSO2 constituency consultations.**



**The CSO2 constituency in particular, working in multiple languages and with cross-regional and cross-national membership, will need to strategise on its ways of working to ensure that members are engaging meaningfully in processes at the national, regional and global levels.**

share analysis and collectively inform the constituency positions on a range of changes proposed by the consultants hired by GPE to support this process. The CSO2 Board representatives, Laura Giannechini (CLADE) and ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, led and facilitated these constituency consultations. They have also reached out to other GPE Board constituency representatives to exchange perspectives and analysis on the implications of the proposed changes to GPE's committee structures and Board decision-making on GPE grants.

## **New committees and governance implications of GPE Operating Model**

The CSO2 constituency positions revolved around preserving and upholding the existing governance mechanisms in GPE, which draws on the strengths of constituencies to support the Partnership. In particular, CSO2 has asserted the continuation of GPE constituency-based representative standing committees and that the core functions of the Grants and Performance Committee (GPC) and the Strategy and Impact Committee (SIC) should be preserved and upheld.

However, there was a majority support from other Board constituencies on the propositions made by the GPE consultants for major changes in GPE's committee structure and governance processes. These changes were adopted in the Board decisions which include the following:

### *a. Roles, structure and mandates of GPE Board and Committees*

From the previous five (5) committees, GPE will only have three (3) committees consisting of the following:

- Executive Committee (ExCo)
- Performance, Impact and Learning Committee (PILC)
- Finance and Risk Committee (FRC)

The term of those who will be elected to the Board and appointed to Committees has been increased to three years (from the current two-year term).

### *b. Governance implications of the new GPE Operating Model*

Under the new committee structures, there will no longer be a dedicated committee for grant review and assessment which used to provide support to the GPE Board in its decision-making on GPE grants. GPE grant review and decision-making will now be done by the Board in three key stages (Stages 1-3) with specific documents, timeframes and voting procedures in each stage to decide on grant applications of developing country governments for GPE's System Transformation Grant (STG).

Given the very limited time (ten calendar days) provided for the Board to review the grant documents in each stage, there will be significant pressure and huge draw on Board representatives' time and energy to fully and meaningfully engage in these grant decision-making processes.

The CSO2 constituency in particular, working in multiple languages and with cross-regional and cross-national membership, will need to strategise on its ways of working to ensure that the members are engaging meaningfully in these processes at the national, regional and global levels.





**The reality remains that Local Education Groups (LEGs) are not functioning well in many contexts. This will be an ongoing concern for civil society constituencies which have presence and engagements on the ground.**

**An inclusive and transparent process at the national level should be one of the key parameters for the GPE Board to consider when assessing grants.**



**There is also a need to ensure the participation of marginalised groups in the LEGs, especially when deliberating the priorities for education.**

The new Board decision-making process on GPE's grants and the GPE Operating Model will also greatly depend on the strength and integrity of in-country processes, especially through the local education group (LEG), where much of the deliberations on application for GPE's grants and its accompanying documents and requirements will take place. However, the reality remains that LEGs are not functioning well in many contexts. This will be an ongoing concern for the civil society constituencies which have presence and engagements on the ground.

The CSO2 Board representatives have asserted during the Board meeting and in prior governance review consultations that in contexts where the LEGs are not fully functioning and are convened just for formality, there should be a recourse through the GPE governance mechanisms to address key issues in grant applications.

Further, an inclusive and transparent process at the national level should be one of the key parameters for the Board to consider when assessing grants. There is also a need to ensure the participation of marginalised groups in the LEGs, especially when deliberating the priorities for education under GPE's requirement for a partnership Compact. These will be part of key concerns of CSO2 constituency members when they engage in national-level processes supported by GPE under its new Operating Model.

A copy of all the decisions made in this Board meeting is available [here](#).

## End of term and facilitating nominations for new Board and Committee representatives

The term of the current GPE Board and Committee representatives ends by 19 April 2021. As such, the call for nominations and conduct of elections have been shared with CSO2 Constituency members by the Secretariat of the Global Campaign Education (GCE), which was tasked to facilitate the process of nominations and elections for CSO2 (CSOs from Southern/Developing countries) and CSO1 (CSOs from Northern/Developed countries) constituencies.

With this, the CSO2 Board representatives, Laura and Helen, have delivered their full and final report to the CSO2 Constituency after the GPE Board meeting. They have expressed their appreciation to CSO2 members for their active engagements which tremendously helped the CSO2 Board representatives in framing and asserting their positions in the GPE Board.

Both Laura and Helen have acknowledged that it has been their great honour and privilege to have served the education movement in this capacity. They have also committed to support the next CSO2 Board and Committee representatives to GPE. [\[BACK\]](#)

## Enhancing youth advocacy for quality education and learning opportunities in Sri Lanka

16-17 March 2021, Sri Lanka

*By Dinithi Alahapperuma, Project Officer, Coalition for Educational Development (CED), Sri Lanka*



**The Coalition for Educational Development (CED) Sri Lanka, with support from ASPBAE, conducted a Youth-led Action Research (YAR) to identify the education issues faced by marginalised communities in the country.**

The constitution of Sri Lanka affirms that education is a fundamental human right and that the government is mandated to provide equal access to free quality education for all irrespective of race, religion, language, social status, and disabilities. Although the government has ensured free education from grades 1 to 13, a huge disparity remains in terms of accessing free quality education. The different standards in quality and uneven provisioning of facilities in schools can be ascribed to political and geographical factors, among others, and certain measures adopted by the State itself. As a result, increased drop-out rates, erratic student attendance and poor academic performance have been observed especially in schools situated in remote areas that do not have basic infrastructure.



**Selected youth researchers from two districts were mobilised for the workshop to conduct the youth-led action research.**

In this context, the Coalition for Educational Development (CED) Sri Lanka, with support from ASPBAE, conducted a Youth-led Action Research (YAR) to identify the education issues faced by marginalised communities in the country. In addition, the YAR initiative aims to develop youth researchers as change-makers in their communities. Selected youth researchers from Kaluthara and Rathnapura districts, who were interested to learn the tools of action research and interact with others in their communities, were mobilised for the workshop to conduct the YAR.

The main objectives of the workshop were to develop capacities of the youth in terms of: (a) theoretical knowledge and practical implementation of the action research; (b) data collection analysis techniques and reporting skills; (c) building leadership capacities of the youth; and (d) mobilising local and external resource to address the challenges. This was designed as a follow-up to the Training of the Trainers (ToT) conducted by ASPBAE for CED Sri Lanka in December 2020.



**The youth demonstrated their ability to identify problems, verify and analyse information, and address the challenges by offering solutions.**

The youth were asked to make observational field visits in and around in their communities before the workshop. They shared their insights during the workshop, and through the presentations, they demonstrated their ability to identify problems, verify and analyse information, and address the challenges by offering solutions.

Some youth shared that several community members were resistant to their research and expressed lack of trust in their ideas and voices. The absence of youth societies or youth clubs made the research even more challenging especially when developing collective youth voices as part of the research process.

Some of the issues identified were: poor infrastructure to access schools (unsafe road construction and deterioration), long distances to schools from remote





**Facilitators worked on building the potential of the youth by equipping them with tools and knowledge for enhanced leadership skills.**

The workshop was a good opportunity for youth researchers, mentors, and CED Sri Lanka to deepen understanding of the challenges faced by youth and the changes they recommend.

villages, unavailability of postal services, poor mobile networks, and lack of necessary devices and technology to avail online education.

Additional challenges identified that affect the well-being of families, community development, and social harmony were: increased consumption of alcohol, inadequate income, and lack of livelihood opportunities.

CED facilitators motivated the youth to look at existing issues with a critical lens and explore alternative options that can be adopted. Through these interventions, the facilitators worked on building the potential of the youth by equipping them with tools and knowledge for enhanced leadership skills.

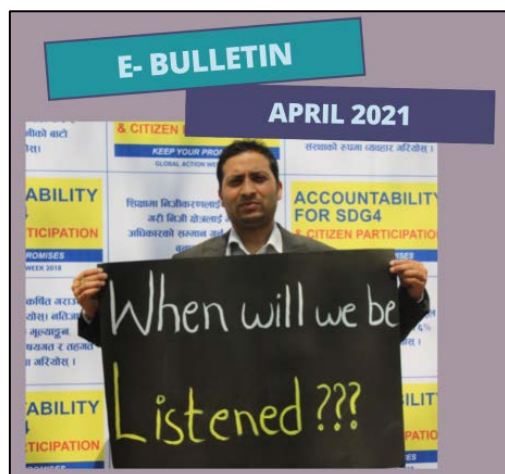
During the workshop, the youth participants developed questionnaires and interview guides for collecting data from parents, youth, and community leaders. They also explored techniques to mobilise communities and plan for field research and advocacy initiatives.

The workshop became a good opportunity for youth researchers, mentors, and CED Sri Lanka to deepen their understanding of the challenges being faced by the youth and the changes they recommend. CED believes that youth-led action research is a strong tool to promote positive transformation in communities, and to enhance advocacy for quality education and learning opportunities. [[BACK](#)]

## Optimising the Abidjan Principles to inform local and national education plans in Nepal

25 March 2021

*By Ram Gaire, National Campaign for Education, Nepal (NCE Nepal)*



**Ram Gaire of NCE Nepal, an ASPBAE member, who has been actively involved in national and grassroots level advocacy on implementing the Abidjan Principles and addressing the need to regulate private actors in education.**

The National Campaign for Education, Nepal ([NCE Nepal](#)), a national education coalition of 409 civil society organisations and an ASPBAE member, has been working at the national and grassroots level on the implementation of the [Abidjan Principles](#) since its adoption in February 2019. In the context of COVID-19, more than 2,500 stakeholders, including policy makers, have been sensitised on the need to regulate private actors in education, especially during the pandemic, and the importance of State obligations with regard to strengthening public education.

Radio and online discussions on the role of local governments in monitoring private actors in education have been organised in more than 15 districts. These initiatives focused on disseminating the provisions of the Abidjan Principles and sensitising stakeholders in applying them for the improvement of quality education in public schools during COVID-19, and on how the local government has to ensure its accountability to monitor and regulate private actors in education. Local governments were made aware of the Abidjan Principles, to take these as guidelines in the formation of the local education policies and Acts at the local level.

On the occasion of International Human Rights Day 2020, NCE Nepal district coordination committees in 25 districts advocated at the local level for the adoption of the major provisions of the Abidjan Principles, as well as strongly



The role of the State in monitoring private actors of education in addressing issues around privatisation in education, and in strengthening the public education system has been included in Nepal's National Education Policy.

affirming 'Education as a human right', amidst the pandemic. The Abidjan Principles were contextualised and translated into local language and disseminated to federal, provincial and local governments, civil society, journalists, parents and those in the academe.

As a result of the continuous engagement of NCE Nepal, positive changes have been observed. The role of the State in monitoring private actors of education, in addressing issues around privatisation in education, and in strengthening the public education system has been included in Nepal's National Education Policy, the fifteenth 5-year plan of Nepal, as well as on some local education acts and policies.

This article appeared on the [Right to Education](#) website. [[BACK](#)]

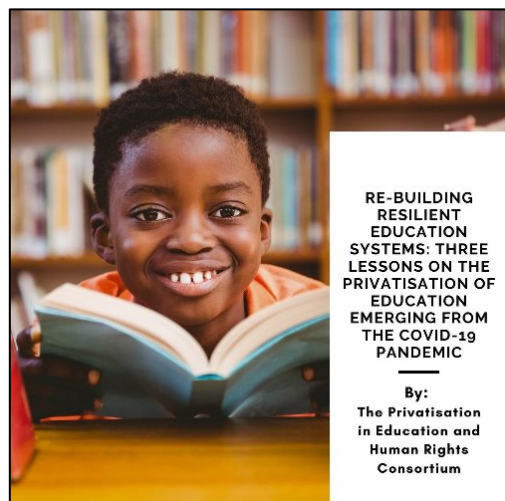
## Addressing public-private partnerships and widening inequalities in education

22 March 2021

ASPBAE and its coalition members participated in the *Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC) Learning, Exchange, and Discussion* session. This event gathered academics who shared their recent research on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and provided an opportunity for PEHRC members to discuss how this can be used in their work. This was also attended by education rights advocates who are campaigning against the privatisation and commercialisation of education observed in countries around the world.

Among the panel of speakers were *Adrián Zancajo*, British Academy postdoctoral fellow at the School of Education of the University of Glasgow (UK); *Clara Fontdevila*, research associate at the University of Glasgow and a PhD candidate at the Department of Sociology of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; and *Antoni Verger*, professor at the Department of Sociology of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), who spoke on the background paper for the next Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) on non-state actors in education.

Adrián Zancajo said that there has been an emerging consensus on the negative impact of policies on privatisation and marketisation policies on equity. There are debates around the regulatory frameworks in education and the development agenda, including the active promotion of privatisation and PPPs by some international actors and the increasing relevance of equity in the international agenda. He noted that policy documents and recommendations by international organisations are based on two main regulation strategies: (a) "*command and control*", which means advocating for regulation and capacity development of States to reinforce regulations to and impose sanctions on private providers and; (b) "*market-based*" strategy, which emphasises the role of the market and market mechanisms to guarantee that private providers achieve quality standards and performance. One glaring issue, however, is the scarcity of evidence on the effects of regulations and regulatory policies. Pertinent questions include which policy design is better for equity and what does regulation entail in the education sector.



ASPBAE and its coalition members participated in the *Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC) Learning, Exchange, and Discussion* session, a platform where academics shared research on public-private partnerships.

The PEHRC session was also attended by education rights advocates who are campaigning against the privatisation and commercialisation of education observed in countries around the world.



**In countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, India, and the Philippines, PPP arrangements have proliferated in the education sector with very little regulation and lacking enforcement.**

ASPBAE's Rene Raya spoke about the rising privatisation of education in the Asia Pacific region, noting that a popular entry point is a partnership with the public sector in contracting the delivery of education services. He noted that PPPs have further widened inequity in education and promoted segregation based on economic and social status



**For regulatory strategies to be effective, technical capacities will need to be developed, and for regulatory reforms to succeed, these will need to be systemic.**

Clara Fontdevila said that the objective of the research is to identify which regulatory options have the potential to mitigate or remove the detrimental effects of PPPs on equity. She identified the main dimensions of regulations that have an impact, which include the authorisation of providers, school choice and admissions, funding, teachers, and evaluation and accountability. She also mentioned that one risk of private schools is that sometimes they do not align with the system-level objectives of the government.

Antoni Verger briefly presented the policy implications of the research, saying that there are reasons to be skeptical of PPPs, which are very diverse policy schemes with various institutional configurations. There are instances where regulation may be considered satisfactory, but the enactment of regulations goes into unexpected dimensions. He asserted that even in countries with strong regulatory power, both private actors and public actors compete against each other due to pressure, thereby triggering opportunistic behaviour and taking a more selective approach.

For regulatory strategies to be effective, technical capacities will need to be developed and for regulatory reforms to succeed, these will need to be systemic. Antoni also said that market-like PPPs often generate more inequalities and recommended to identify different regulatory mechanisms to reduce the market pressure and the opportunistic behaviours in the educational system. He further added that they need to conduct further studies to identify what works in the context of educational reforms.

Elaine Unterhalter, a professor of Education and International Development at the University College London (UCL) Institute of Education and the Co-Director of Centre for Education & International Development (CEID), presented her book '*Critical Reflections on PPPs*'. Some of the cross-cutting themes that emerged from it included the discourse that PPPs are thought to be able to deliver more, give better education and better housing. She highlighted that PPPs are often associated with newness, sometimes deemed as 'shiny, new solutions.' She also discussed the issues of inequalities associated with PPPs, emphasising that there are "different threads of inequalities" beyond poverty, including deep-seated social inequalities, such as inequalities associated with location, disability, caste, race, gender and so on.

ASPBAE's Rene Raya spoke about the rising privatisation of education in the Asia Pacific region, noting that a popular entry point is a partnership with the public sector in contracting the delivery of education services. In countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, India, and the Philippines, PPP arrangements have proliferated in the education sector with very little regulation and lacking enforcement. Rene noted that PPPs have further widened inequity in education and promoted segregation based on economic and social status.

The learning session ended with participants expressing interest in pursuing the debate related to addressing PPPs in education and how to regulate and reform existing partnership arrangements to mitigate, if not eliminate, the adverse impacts on equity in and the quality of education. [\[BACK\]](#)



**Frank Adamson, Assistant Professor of Education Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University, presented the different forms of privatisation and contemporary examples of pathways, mechanisms, and the saturation of privatisation within and across countries.**

ASPBAE and representatives from national education coalitions participated in a four-part webinar series organised by IIEP-UNESCO on Equity, Privatisation, and the Right to Education.

## UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) webinar series - Equity, Privatisation, and the Right to Education

17 & 24 February 2021, 3 & 10 March 2021

ASPBAE and representatives from national education coalitions participated in a four-part webinar series organised by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) on Equity, Privatisation, and the Right to Education. The webinar series aimed to examine the origins, spread, and outcomes of private sector involvement in education.

IIEP-UNESCO believes that education is a human right and envisages a world in which all can benefit from quality learning opportunities. It provides training in educational planning, research, and in-country capacity development for educational bodies.

The first three webinars discussed key concepts related to education privatisation, while the final webinar provided participants with an opportunity to discuss how States can address the emerging issues brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the role of teachers, the challenges of distance learning, and the growing influence of the private sector in technology.

The first webinar of the series on the '*Introduction to the privatisation of education: forms and diffusion*' covered the definition and a brief historical perspective on education privatisation. Frank Adamson, Assistant Professor of Education Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University, presented the different forms of privatisation and contemporary examples of pathways, mechanisms, and the saturation of privatisation within and across countries.

In India, for instance, it was found that there is underinvestment in public education, which led to the dearth of public schools and a higher proportion of private schools. Frank Adamson also identified some of the challenges in tracking and mapping education privatisation, including the lack of data on the number of pupils private providers of education have served; the lack of data of OECD, World Bank, and UNESCO on education privatization and its definitional categories, such as funding, management, and ownership; and the operation of private providers without State recognition or knowledge.

The second part of the series took up the theme '*Comparing approaches: lessons from different education systems*'. Using the lens of education equity, the webinar examined evidence from different countries and regions on how educational approaches, namely public investment and privatisation, functioned in various locations.



**Antoni Verger, Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) revealed that empirical research on education PPPs seem to find more negative than positive effects and explained that for-profit motives are more associated with negative effects, especially in terms of equity.**

Antoni Verger, an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), presented the findings of his study on '*How and why policy design matters: Understanding the diverging effects of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in education*', which revealed that empirical research on education PPPs seem to find more negative than positive effects. He





**Ashina Mtsumi of the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR), situated the Abidjan Principles, equity, and education privatisation in the context of SDG4 on quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.**

There is a need to ensure that the teaching profession is valued and recognised, that the idea that there is no money for education should be deconstructed, and that domestic financing should be tapped to strengthen public education systems.



**Camilla Croso, Director of the Education Programme at OSF, asserted that even in times of crisis, public education, public health, and other fundamental services cannot and should not be de-financed.**

explained that for voucher programmes and charter schools, for-profit motives are more associated with negative effects, especially in terms of equity.

The third session was held on 3 March under the theme ‘*Moving forward: delivering on education as a human right*’. This addressed the issues of education privatisation within the broader framework of states’ obligation to protect and respect human rights, particularly in education and in the context of the Abidjan Principles.

Ashina Mtsumi, a Human Rights Advocate working with the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR) as part of the Secretariat of the Abidjan Principles, situated the Abidjan Principles, equity, and education privatisation in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.

Ashina presented a brief background of the Abidjan Principles, including its drafting and adoption processes. She explained that it is a legal text and a practical tool that provides concrete guidance to States and other education stakeholders to implement the right to education in the context of the rapid expansion of private actors’ involvement in education. She also highlighted the importance of monitoring, transparency and making information available on the impact of private schools on the systems, including the challenges in the public systems, to hold these entities to account.

The final webinar on 10 March 2021 explored different perspectives on the role of both the State and private actors in education.

Camilla Croso, Director of the Education Programme at the Open Society Foundations (OSF), underscored the need to “value that which is public,” such as public health and public education systems, and build public awareness on the importance of financing of education. She urged participants to look closely into domestic financing for education and understand how legislations are protecting education budgets. Camila asserted that even in times of crisis, public education, public health, and other fundamental services cannot and should not be de-financed.

Camilla also drew attention to the value of teaching and education professions. Without which, it would be impossible to have robust and equitable public education systems and holistic learning outcomes that respond to the right to education. Students, among other education stakeholders such as teachers, should have a seat in decision-making processes. Systems have to deliver on the right to education from early childhood to higher education as regression is considered a violation of human rights.

In closing, Camila reiterated the call to ensure that the teaching profession is valued and recognized, that the idea that there is no money for education should be deconstructed, and the need to tap into domestic financing to strengthen public education systems. [\[BACK\]](#)



**The South Asia preparatory CSO meeting was designed to orient ASPBAE members on the forthcoming CONFITEA VII sub-regional consultation and for them to discuss key issues and recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) based on their country contexts.**

**ASPBAE members from 50 organisations - from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka - participated in the preparatory meeting.**



**Participants provided key recommendations highlighting good practices and civil society perspectives that were presented at the main South Asia sub-regional CONFITEA VII consultation organised by UNESCO-New Delhi.**

## ASPBAE's South Asia members call for increased financing for Adult Learning and Education (ALE) ahead of sub-regional CONFITEA VII consultation

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021, Virtual

ASPBAE organised a series of sub-regional preparatory meetings for UNESCO's Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFITEA VII) sub-regional consultations. The South Asia preparatory CSO meeting was designed to orient ASPBAE members on the forthcoming CONFITEA VII sub-regional consultation and for them to discuss key issues and recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) based on their country contexts. ASPBAE members from 50 organisations, including from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka, participated in the meeting.

Participants provided key recommendations highlighting good practices and civil society perspectives that were presented at the main South Asia sub-regional CONFITEA VII consultation organised by UNESCO-New Delhi. Furthermore, ASPBAE members deliberated on the challenges around Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in their respective countries, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and proposed recommendations to improve ALE in the region.

Meenu Vadera, ASPBAE Executive Council member representing South Asia, facilitated a session to build consensus based on the recommendations of civil society organisations (CSOs). Highlights of the recommendations from South Asia CSOs included the following:

- Ensure political commitment by governments and international bodies and platforms such as CONFITEA, the UN leadership within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)
- Increase financing of ALE
- Expand the limited definition of ALE
- Address data gaps to properly monitor ALE progress
- Support local solutions to ensure mechanisms to reach out to disadvantaged communities
- Address barriers for girls, people with disabilities, and marginalised communities to ensure access to public provisioning of ALE programmes
- Contextualise skills with links to livelihoods and market needs
- Enable creative use of technology to benefit people with disabilities
- Strengthen capacities of ALE institutions, trainers, local governments, and other supporting agencies in delivering quality and gender-responsive ALE programmes online and through blended approaches during the pandemic and into the future, ensuring that marginalised communities have access to these ALE platforms
- Conduct evidence-based research on ALE

In conclusion, ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano linked the challenges and the recommendations with the Belem Framework for Action. She summarised that ALE policies should be well-informed by credible data and defined in the context of the needs of diverse learners, especially including marginalised communities;

**ALE must address pressing and emerging issues such as climate change, conflict, health, digital literacy, ageing populations, and, in the light of these emerging needs, there is a need for capacity building of ALE educators and government agencies.**

that rethinking is needed to address the issues in ALE delivery systems, with special attention to understanding the learning loss of adults during the pandemic; that quality ALE must address pressing and emerging issues such as climate change, conflict, health, digital literacy, ageing populations, and, in the light of these emerging needs, there is a need for capacity building of ALE educators and government agencies; that national and local governments should deliver on their commitment for ALE through adequate financing for ALE and; finally inter-agency coordination and a whole government approach is needed to advance LLL including ALE.

Ehsanur Rahman, ASPBAE Executive Council member representing South Asia, was nominated to represent ASPBAE and share civil society recommendations for ALE in the official South Asia sub-regional consultation on CONFINTEA VII, organised by UNESCO New Delhi on 30 March 2021. [\[BACK\]](#)

## **Analysing the impact of COVID-19 on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) participation, provisioning, and policies in South Asia**

**Sub-Regional consultation for CONFINTEA VII 2022 in South Asia**  
30 March 2021, Virtual



**The South Asia sub-regional consultation for CONFINTEA VII emphasised the impact of COVID-19 on ALE participation, provisioning, and policies, and suggested areas and mechanisms for sub-regional cooperation.**

The UNESCO New Delhi Cluster Office and the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok, in cooperation with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), hosted the South Asia sub-regional preparatory consultation for the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII).

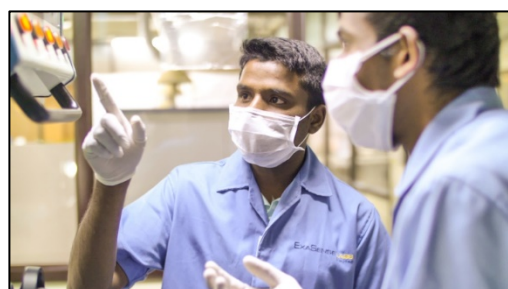
Government representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, together with civil society organisations in the sub-region, came together to discuss innovations, challenges, and forward-looking strategies to renew policies and action in youth and Adult Learning and Education (ALE).

This South Asia sub-regional consultation for CONFINTEA VII emphasised the impacts of COVID-19 on ALE participation, provisioning, and policies, and suggested areas and mechanisms for sub-regional cooperation.

The meeting began with an opening remark by Eric Falt, Director and UNESCO representative, New Delhi, who highlighted the process towards CONFINTEA VII.

Ichiro Miyazawa of UNESCO Bangkok shared the objectives of the regional and sub-regional consultation. Country presentations emphasised the achievements and challenges of ALE and lifelong learning.

Werner Mauch, Team Leader, Monitoring and Assessment of Lifelong Learning (MALL), UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL), moderated a session on issues related to ALE, ALE innovations, and the implementation of SDG 4.6 (literacy and numeracy) targets and alignment of policies and strategies at the national level.



**Country presentations emphasised the achievements and challenges of ALE and lifelong learning.**





**Ehsanur Rahman, ASPBAE Executive Council member representing South Asia, shared civil society recommendations emphasising policy development, financing, access, content and quality education, capacity development, and addressing data gaps in ALE.**

Outcomes of sub-regional consultations will feed into the CONFINTEA VII Asia-Pacific Regional Conference and, ultimately, CONFINTEA VII itself, which will take place in Morocco in 2022.



**ASPBAE members from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam took part in Southeast Asia CSO Preparatory Meeting in the lead-up to the main CONFINTEA VII Southeast Asia Sub-Regional Consultation.**

Rich discussions during the meeting brought forth a set of recommendations, highlighting the good practices and perspectives from civil society organisation.

Linking the issues and challenges of ALE, Ehsanur Rahman, ASPBAE Executive Council member representing South Asia, shared civil society recommendations emphasising policy development, financing, access, content and quality education, capacity development, and addressing data gaps in ALE. A total of 10 ASPBAE member representatives and 6 ASPBAE staff participated in this main sub-regional consultation.

The Kingdom of Morocco is set to host CONFINTEA VII, which is expected to be attended by over 1,000 participants to examine effective Adult Learning and Education policies from a lifelong learning perspective, within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Participants will jointly work on a new framework for action that will replace the Belém Framework for Action (BFA), adopted at CONFINTEA VI in 2009.

During CONFINTEA VII, Member States will be encouraged to enact policies, learning incentives, regulatory frameworks, and institutional structures and mechanisms to contribute to a human rights culture, social justice, shared values and sustainable development. In recognition of continuing advancements in artificial intelligence, special attention will be paid to using information and communication technologies to promote access to ALE and inclusion.

Outcomes of sub-regional consultations will feed into the CONFINTEA VII Asia-Pacific Regional Conference and, ultimately, CONFINTEA VII itself, which will take place in Morocco in 2022. [\[BACK\]](#)

## Examining progress in Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in Southeast Asia in the lead-up to CONFINTEA VII sub-regional consultation

31 March 2021, Virtual

ASPBAE held a Southeast Asia CSO Preparatory Meeting in the lead-up to the main CONFINTEA VII Southeast Asia Sub-Regional Consultation which brought together ASPBAE members for a dialogue on key issues and recommendations on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) based on their country contexts.

ASPBAE members from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam took part in this preparatory meeting. The rich discussions during the meeting brought forth a set of recommendations, highlighting the good practices and perspectives from civil society organisations.

The preparatory meeting aimed to: (1) Examine the contexts of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in the Southeast Asia since CONFINTEA VI and in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic; (2) Discuss contributions of civil society organisations (CSOs) in implementing ALE in the sub-region and draw lessons on how ALE can benefit the most marginalised communities; and (3) Build consensus on key recommendations for the future of ALE in the sub-region that will be presented in the main sub-regional consultation to be organised by UNESCO-Bangkok.



ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, addressing the Southeast Asia CSO Preparatory Meeting for CONFITEA VII.

Key recommendations to advance ALE included the need to develop and implement comprehensive, robust, and explicit policies promoting ALE; develop better practices of recognition and accreditation of quality ALE programmes provided by CSOs and NGOs; and ensure digital equity by providing free and open access to appropriate technologies and tools.

Some key recommendations offered to advance ALE included the following:

- Governments and education policymakers must develop and implement comprehensive, robust, and explicit policies promoting ALE within a lifelong learning framework that can stand on its own and specifies concrete budget plans, ALE programmes, and publicly-led systems of delivery.
- Develop better practices of recognition and accreditation of quality ALE programmes provided by CSOs and NGOs to enable formal recognition of learners' skills, knowledge, and competencies gained from these programmes.
- Establish a unified and dedicated agency that governs ALE-related matters and is responsible for policy development and implementation, budget allocation, data management, and coordination of programme delivery.
- Ensure digital equity by providing free and open access to appropriate technologies and tools and build the capacities of youth and adults in using the online learning platforms.
- Enhance the capacities of teachers and educators for ALE in facilitating blended learning through training on developing materials for online platforms, skills in using digital technology and education apps for teaching.
- Address the massive financing gap between formal education and non-formal education and ALE by increasing and allocating public funding to the development, implementation, and monitoring of ALE policies, plans, and programmes that cater to the learning needs of all learners, especially the most marginalised and vulnerable groups.



Recommendations were made for ALE in response to COVID and beyond, including the need to urgently accelerate ALE programmes to address learning loss of youth and adults.

Furthermore, several recommendations for ALE in response to the pandemic and beyond included – (1) Urgently accelerate ALE programmes to address learning loss of youth and adults and institute new learning programmes that will enable people to combat the impacts of the pandemic; (2) Mobilise the Ministry of Women, Social Work, Police and other related agencies in developing ALE programmes to build awareness on legal remedies and protection of women and children as well as in promoting gender awareness and on the rights of the child; and (3) Develop ALE programmes that promote democratic values, peace-building, active citizenship, and respect for diversity and human rights to combat racial discrimination, intolerance, and bigotry.

The consultation also aimed to encourage ALE practitioners and advocates to join the global “[We are ALE](#)” campaign that was recently launched by the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), ASPBAE, and other ALE organisations across the world, together with DVV International. [[BACK](#)]

## ASPBAE emphasises role of transformative adult learning and education in addressing inequalities, exclusion and discrimination through a video message for IWD 2021



**ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, emphasised that the theme for this year's Women's Day celebration called for the need to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality, and to recognise the contributions by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

In celebration of International Women's Day 2021, ASPBAE Secretary-General, Helen Dabu, contributed a [video message](#) to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) emphasising ASPBAE's core belief that a transformative adult learning and education (ALE) plays a critical role in addressing systemic and intergenerational inequalities, exclusion and discrimination in the Asia Pacific region and elsewhere in the world.

Helen emphasised that the theme for this year's Women's Day celebration called for the need to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality, and to recognise the contributions by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

And as governments and the global education community come together for the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII) in 2022, Helen expressed that this important moment in adult learning and education will help in putting in place strong policies, frameworks and financing commitments that will contribute in poverty eradication, social justice, gender equality, sustainable development and lasting peace. [\[BACK\]](#)

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

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