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Community learning centres:
Towards inclusive lifelong learning for all

By Rika Yorozu, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

Community learning spaces, centres, and networks (CLCs for short) play a key role in providing access to relevant education and community development activities for adults, young people, and children. While there are different practices from one country to another, common features of CLCs are - (1) strong community ownership and participation, (2) provision of diverse learning activities at low cost, and (3) special attention given to marginalised people (UIL, 2017). The majority of CLCs are set up in rural areas and run non-formal education activities such as equivalency programmes for children and youth and literacy classes for adults. They often offer information and library services and organise training activities responding to demands from community members as well.

In the Asia-Pacific region, UNESCO has been playing a catalytic role in institutionalising CLCs in the national education system and capacity building of CLC personnel. The concept of CLCs is now widely accepted and integrated into the national education and development plans in Asian countries as well as in the Education 2030 Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4. When a multi-country project on CLCs was initiated by UNESCO in 1998, many countries in the region did not have government-supported permanent institutions at local levels providing education for adults. This may remind us about pictures of open-air literacy classes for adults. In countries where the operation of CLCs are included in national policies and annual budgets for education, CLCs

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have expanded nationwide and learning outcomes are accredited. Despite the varying degrees of success among and within countries and different types and practices of CLCs in the region, they have become an integral part of community life and a venue for lifelong learning in the Asia-Pacific region (NILE and UIL, 2017; Ahmed, 2014).

Current strategic directions to ensure that CLCs continue providing vibrant learning environments in ways that respond to people's demands for lifelong learning include capacity building, research, and forming alliances. The rapid expansion of CLCs in many countries did not necessarily mean that the capacity of new managers and facilitators at CLCs was developed as well. The first

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The concept of CLCs is now widely accepted and integrated into the national education and development plans in Asian countries as well as in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

priority for the effectiveness and quality of educational provision at CLCs, therefore, is to provide needs-based, contextually appropriate on-going training opportunities for managers and facilitators and to provide incentives for them to work for longer terms. If more facilitators reflect, learn, and improve their practices, individually and with fellow facilitators, the practice of community education can continue to improve. At the same time, CLC facilitation needs to be seen as a genuinely attractive profession rather than just an honourable endeavour. The Thai government's commitment to giving CLC facilitators equivalent working conditions with primary school teachers is a commendable attempt to do just this.

The second strategic priority is examining the effectiveness of CLC-based education and learning programmes with the purpose of generating reliable evidence to make a stronger case for public policy and financial support to CLCs, as well as to improve the quality of programmes/activities. A number of resources on CLCs are available, for example, an online CLCpedia (http://clcpedia.net) with a collection of 400 resources ranging from country reports/presentations and tools from Asia-Pacific countries over the last 25 years, and the UNESCO Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database (http://litbase.uil.unesco.org), which includes case studies featuring CLCs.

Existing documentation on grassroots interventions and innovative practices introduced by civil society and international development partners shows how CLC-based education and development activities are empowering community members, especially women and marginalised people, to exercise their active citizenship and to take initiatives for sustainable development. However, robust research studies could shed more light on the impact of learning activities organised and offered in these venues. Research on the effective governance and impact of CLCs when they have been scaled up nationwide in countries such as Indonesia, Nepal, and Viet Nam could provide deeper contextual insights to other countries, which have started piloting CLC models. Moreover, applied and longitudinal research by higher education institutions,

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in collaboration with CLC stakeholders, can generate evidence on understanding the factors that make CLCs important local institutions for lifelong learning and sustainable development. More solid evidence could surely mobilise much-needed resources to enhance CLCs and their sustainability.

The third strategic direction is about improving existing partnerships and networks of CLCs, while also establishing new ones. Networking among CLCs and resource centres for CLCs could stimulate the learning of CLC facilitators and experts and have a positive impact on the quality of educational services for communities. A few countries have a national association of CLCs but they need reinforcement and support from partners. A multi-sectoral network could be established with libraries, agricultural extension centres, IT centres, and other types of local institution providing learning and education services to the same group of participants. Organising conferences, facilitating horizontal learning among CLCs through exchange of information, study visits and online/offline platforms are still valid ways to network. Participation in such events gives people a chance to document, share, and learn from each other's experiences and to evaluate learning programmes across institutions. Partnerships are also required to set national standards and guidelines for the effective operation of CLCs and to build a system of recognition, validation, and accreditation of learning outcomes and pathways for further learning.

Let us strengthen our alliances to transform CLCs and build rich learning environments for people to learn and work together towards a fair, inclusive, and caring society.

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EDITORIAL

Community learning centres pave the way for Sustainable Development Goal targets

By Ehsanur Rahman, Executive Director, Dhaka Ahsania Mission (Bangladesh), and ASPBAE Executive Council Member representing South and Central Asia

Community Learning Centres (CLCs) have become a vibrant approach for lifelong learning and community development through an evolving process over the last three decades in the Asia Pacific region. CLCs provide learning opportunities to people through institutionalised information support services aiming to improve their quality of life. Community learning centres bring people of a community together, enabling them to network with non-government organisations (NGOs), and government and private sector agencies to access services that are available to them.

The UNESCO-Bangkok developed CLCPedia (a website that offers a one-stop resource for all community learning centres) describes CLCs as local educational institutions, usually set up and managed by local communities to provide various learning opportunities with the support of the government, NGOs, and the private sector. Literacy, post-literacy, income generation, life skills programmes, and basic education are typically offered at CLCs. The learning programmes in CLCs vary according to local needs and contexts in the community. The aim of a CLC is to empower individuals and promote community development through lifelong education for all people in the community, including adults, youth, and children of all ages. UNESCO estimates show that as of now, as many as 24 countries have established CLCs or similar non-formal education centres. The number of countries supporting CLCs has been steadily increasing. There are an estimated 170,000 CLCs and non-formal education centres in the Asia Pacific.

Insights from micro-macro perspectives on the functioning and effectiveness of CLC are illustrated in this issue of Ed-lines with particular reference to how CLCs are part of multiple learning pathways to education and lifelong and life-wide learning, and how they contribute to inclusive education and development across communities.

An essential feature of CLCs is that they are organised and managed at the local level by a community group and/or by the local government. The

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overall management becomes the responsibility of the management committee consisting of people in the locality. There is direct or indirect support from local government bodies and community leaders in programme planning and management. Over a period of time, the committee is equipped to develop plans, undertake activities (for example, training courses, networking activities, resource mobilisation, resolution of local problems, etc.), and ensure that the activities are implemented as per plan.

A key contribution of CLCs in reaching out to communities is the increased access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, to basic services, various

The aim of a CLC is to empower individuals and promote community development through lifelong education for all people in the community, including adults, youth, and children of all ages.

An essential feature of CLCs is that they are organised and managed at the local level by a community group and/or by the local government.

productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets, opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment, and sexual and reproductive healthcare services. CLCs, being managed at the local level, can reach the unreached, in particular, women and children, people from marginalised communities, including older persons and persons with disabilities. This provisioning makes CLCs a strong tool in supporting inclusiveness of development programmes and contributing to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets.

From a poverty eradication point of view, there are quite a number of targets under SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), and SDG 13 (climate action) where we can see how CLCs have been demonstrating significant roles in facilitating women's access to economic resources, growth of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, and access to financial services for economic activities. In the fields of health, and water and sanitation, for example, by reaching specific target groups and linking relevant services to them, CLCs can contribute to reducing neonatal mortality and under-5 mortality, stunting

and wasting, water-borne diseases, hepatitis and other communicable diseases, and epidemics such as AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases, to mention a few of the targets under SDG 2 (end hunger), SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), and SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation).

The proactive role of communities is seen as a key feature of the success of CLCs in the Asia pacific region. Strengthened community capacities is a pre-requisite to ensuring collective initiatives of the community to function as actors rather than just recipients of services. There are numerous

examples that demonstrate how strengthened capacities have played a key role regarding environmental challenges such as early warning systems; disaster risk reduction and management of natural disasters; in adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding, and other disasters; mitigation and adaptation to climate change and resilience to disasters; reducing food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses; and reducing waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, and reusing (SDG 12).

Education, information and communication, and skills development, including life skills, play strategic roles in bringing about these changes. Equitable, inclusive, and quality early childhood development, pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, literacy and numeracy, technical and vocational education for youth and adults leading to decent jobs, and entrepreneurship are essential pre-requisites to bringing education in the driver's seat in the journey of sustainable development.

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Community learning centres on-line: Defining emerging roles and challenges

There is no doubt that community learning centers (CLCs) can significantly shape how education and learning will take place in the near future. With the increased access to digital information and changing learning styles of children, youth, and adults, the flexibility, practical approaches to learning, and myriad programmes of CLCs can become appealing. In fact, CLCs, whether managed by government or non-government organisations (NGOs), have brought forth many innovations such as the SMART learning hubs of Indonesia and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy Centers in Thailand.

The potential of CLCs to facilitate education and interactions in the community, however, remains untapped to address the huge demand for lifelong learning. According to the 3rd Global Report on Adult Education (GRALE 3), *"in addition to the development of literacy, there is a vital need for lifelong learning (LLL) opportunities that support livelihoods, health and well-being, environmental sustainability, equality, civic understanding, and community ownership and solidarity.[1]"*

Cognizant of the potential and need to strategically position CLCs in the evolution of education systems in the Asia Pacific, UNESCO-Bangkok is implementing the

UNESCO-Bangkok is implementing the development of on-line learning contents for CLCs and lifelong learning (LLL) programmes.

Development of Online Learning Contents for CLCs and Lifelong Learning (LLL) Programmes. The initiative aims *"to support CLCs and contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) though knowledge-sharing and strengthening the capacities of CLC leaders, educators, and practitioners."[2]* The online contents will be disseminated widely through social media and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) targeting government, educators, CLC practitioners, and other groups intending to set up their CLCs.

To identify the core themes for online content, provide examples of best practices and innovations, and discuss dissemination strategies, UNESCO-Bangkok gathered experts from the field in the 2018 Experts' Meeting on Innovating Adult and Community Learning held from 23-24 April 2018. The group was composed of experts from government, NGOs, academe, and MOOC providers.

After much brainstorming, the Experts' Group agreed on 10 core themes for developing online contents that will promote CLCs and adult education, namely - (1) From Basic Literacy to 21st Century Skills; (2) Finance (public and innovative financing); (3) Leadership and Governance; (4) Capacity Building; (5) Target Groups – widening access and inclusion; (6) Data Gathering, Systems, Assessment, and Monitoring; (7) Skills for Learning; (8) Concept of Lifelong Learning; (9) Preparing for the Challenges of the Future; and (10) Community Development, Ownership, and Solidarity. In each of the themes, the groups discussed key messages based on interest of prospective users and trends in learning and education. They also selected examples on successful CLCs and policies that strategically positioned CLCs in the education system.

The level of financing for CLCs and adult education across countries in the Asia Pacific remains low.

1   Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE III), 2016 - cited in the concept note of the 2018 Expert Meeting on Innovating Adult and Community Learning.
2   Concept note and agenda 2018 Experts Meeting on Innovating Adult and Community Learning in Asia and the Pacific.

Preparing for challenges of the future involves how CLC programmes can help learners adapt and develop resiliency to confront challenges globally and locally.

EXAMPLES OF CONTENTS FOR CORE THEMES

From basic literacy to 21st century skills

The premise of the 21st century skills is *"learning how to learn constantly for work and life."* It also assumes that learning is not only an accumulation of knowledge and skills but that it involves learning, re-learning (adapting and learning new knowledge and skills in same field), and even unlearning (reviewing and changing mindset and practice).

The workshop identified four domains under 21st century skills that people need to develop. These are – communications skills, social skills, digital skills, and skills for adaptation. Basic literacy is foundational and integrated in these skills.

Finance (public and innovative financing)

The level of financing for CLCs and adult education across countries in the Asia Pacific remains low. To advocate for better and sustained financing, the workshop recommended four key messages under the theme -

1. OVERVIEW OF FINANCING will provide the overall situation of financing of CLCs and adult education to analyse the gaps and urgency. It will also show the types of financing schemes that effectively supported CLCs from government funding, including contributions from NGOs and corporate foundations.

2. MOBILISATION AND USE OF RESOURCES will promote strategies that will increase financial support. These strategies include advocacy on the benefits of adult learning and education and providing evidences of impact on the lives of learners, especially from marginalised communities. It will also show examples of local resource mobilisation, i.e. the role of local governments as well as collaboration with NGOs and corporate foundations that work in the communities.

3. POLICY MAKING can help ensure the sustainability and predictability of financing for CLCs and adult education. It will look at policies that promote equity in education and how CLCs are funded as education providers for learners from marginalised backgrounds. It will also look at showcase policies that promote equity.

4. INNOVATIONS will feature policies that enable the government to collect taxes for education (e.g. cess fund in India and Special Education Fund in the Philippines, sin taxes in Thailand).

Preparing for challenges of the future

Preparing for challenges of the future involves looking at how CLCs are better prepared to provide for the emerging education and learning needs, and how CLC programmes can help learners adapt and develop resiliency to confront challenges globally and locally.

There are three key messages that will be developed around the theme. These will include – (1) **Big changes**, such as globalisation, insecurity, scarcity of resources, changing job markets, emergence of artificial intelligence; (2) **Changes around you** that impact on the self and community such as exclusion, separation, climate change, and migration; and (3) **Role of CLCs in the changing world** which includes building skills and changing mindsets, thinking local and futuristic analysis while ensuring that CLCs are grounded on the needs of the people.

With both the challenges that people face and potentials of CLCs, the workshop reiterated the need for CLCs to evolve its decision-making and management. To illustrate this shift, there will be examples of CLCs that have balanced the top-down approach with vertical collaboration and networking with other organisations and stakeholders as well as communities. Digital technology can be harnessed to promote collaboration amongst CLCs across countries.

To ensure that the online contents on CLCs and adult education are used by the target audience, the participants recommended possible channels or venues to promote them such as the LLL associations, universities, schools, intergovernmental bodies (SEAMEO, SAARC), Udemy (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, UIL, networks), and UNESCO National Commissions.

The online contents on CLCs and adult education are a product of two days of dynamic and engaging discussions and even debates amongst the experts from the field from different backgrounds. What is important is that the contents do not only narrate existing practices and lessons but defined the future of relevant and sustainable CLCs.

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HELP Resources commits to new models for community learning centres in Papua New Guinea

By Elizabeth Cox, HELP Resources (HELP-R), Papua New Guinea

HELP Resources (HELP-R) is a local NGO, established at the beginning of the millennium, in the East Sepik Province on the north-west coast of Papua New Guinea, not far from the border with the Indonesian province of Papua. The acronym HELP originally derived from Health, Education, Livelihood and Participation. HELP-R operated out of the provincial capital for 12 years and for five years, provided rural branch in Ambunti, the mid to upper Sepik River Region - the remote, but renown cultural and artistic centre of the country.

During that period, HELP-R trained and resourced community-based adult educators in Community Based Health Care, Understanding Human Rights and Gender Equality, Sexual and Reproductive Health, HIV Prevention and Care, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response, Men as Partners in Gender-Based Violence and HIV Prevention, WASH and Food security, Nutrition and Food Sovereignty, and Self-Reliance and Programmes for Citizenship and Good Governance. Hundreds of women and men, including the youth, were trained and provided with training guides, toolkits, adult education skills and resources, and systems of networking and support.

In addition to this outreach, HELP operated two major community learning centres as support hubs for rural, community-based educators. Both centres had libraries (most

provinces and municipalities no longer have libraries), multi-sector programmes for adult and continuing education (including university extension services), and Training-of-Trainers in all of its thematic programme areas. Both centres provided an introduction to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and operated the country's first rural telecentres. Training was provided on request, in production of training materials, song and drama, graphic illustration and simple visual media. Participatory research was undertaken on the social and economic impact of key local development challenges: decline of rural electrification, a large-scale tuna fishing and processing factory, a short-lived boom in Vanilla production and rural incomes, the local market and informal economy, and HIV risk and responsibility in marginalised communities.

HELP-R also worked on local histories, including documentation of Sepik Comfort Women during the Japanese occupation of the region (1942-45), the

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'hidden history' of women providing lifesaving community-based health care along the Sepik River (1962-2017), and oral histories that enable today's generation to understand the dramatic challenges, change, trauma, and tribulations experienced by their people since colonisation in the late 1880s. In the process, several hundred young people learnt basic social research and writing skills, and many have gone on to good jobs in local and international NGOs. The learning centres and training also supported many 'informal educators' in community-based organisations and initiatives.

Much has changed in PNG's social, political, and economic context, and HELP-R has adjusted accordingly. The acronym HELP now denotes Hub for Enterprise, Learning and Participation. It is now much harder to secure direct funding support
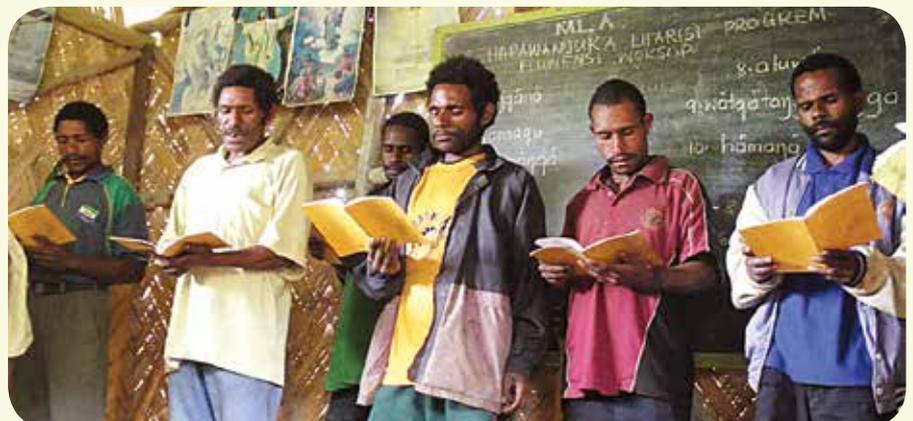
HELP-R operated two major community learning centres as support hubs for rural, community-based educators. Both centres had libraries, multi-sector programmes for adult and continuing education, and training-of-trainers.

HELP-R is exploring social enterprise options that will enable viable, appropriate, and accessible learning centres to emerge and sustain themselves.

for small, local NGOs, as all large-scale funding is directed to INGOs. Papua New Guinea has become an extractives-dependent economy. The government has failed to deliver on grand promises of fee-free access to education and health. In fact, there has been a dramatic decline in public sector governance and service delivery and in the quality of education and health facilities. In the Sepik Province alone, some 1000 teachers are currently off the payroll for more than a year due to maladministration.

Over the past decade, PNG has managed to develop new and stronger legislative and policy frameworks for the protection of women and children from violence and the development of the informal economy. These law reforms were significantly driven by civil society and, together with a revised policy on Community Development and Learning Centres (CLDCs), are to be administered and funded by the national Department for Community Development and Religion (DCDR). However, adequate budgets for implementation have not been realised in the current fiscal crisis and continuing low priority is given to social development. But local demand for information, education, knowledge and tools, networks and connectivity with social movements and people's power to influence and change development is great. We cannot wait for the government to deliver on these important rights, access, and opportunities for the majority of citizens who are currently missing out.

In this context, HELP-R is working with the new political and administrative leadership of East Sepik Province as a partner and catalyst to make key social policy and law and national and global development commitments known and understood by leaders and citizens. HELP-R will translate these critical frameworks into training tools, and programmes that fit the local context, meet local needs, and build on the various networks of local educators that have been put in place by various local organisations over several post-colonial decades.

HELP-R also plans to be a key partner for the provinces committed and dynamic community-based educators to work together, to establish and support CLCs in rural and urban areas that are low cost, sustainable, provide continuing education and empowerment of remote rural and marginalised urban individuals, networks, and communities.

In spite of UNESCO and UNICEF support to CLCs about a decade ago, there are few surviving models, with little knowledge built or lessons to learn from. HELP-R is exploring social enterprise options that will enable viable, appropriate, and accessible learning centres to emerge and sustain themselves in many parts of the province, in spite of the nation's seemingly overwhelming political and economic challenges. HELP-R is currently updating and re-releasing its key knowledge products and toolkits. These include translations of major Human Rights Conventions, and primers on key social and economic challenges – local and national. It is working in markets and with street traders and considering what kind of learning centres they need. HELP-R is also supporting local NGOs in other provinces to develop training programmes and tools.

HELP-R has experienced many challenges in recent years. It has survived many struggles and setbacks. The current prevailing operational context is much more challenging than previous decades. Without stronger civil society leadership and action to ensure government accountability, it is highly unlikely that PNG will succeed in achieving SDG 4. HELP-R, with its local partners, has much to contribute to increasing access to free, equitable, and continuing education, eliminating gender gaps, and providing social protection to women, children, the youth, poor, remote, and marginalised, and under-serviced communities.

Notwithstanding the knowledge, services, partners, and products it has and will build on, HELP-R needs and appreciates networks like ASPBAE to update, share, learn, and be able to do more with less, in its highly constrained and challenging operational environment.

Leaving no one behind – Community learning centres in Thailand

By Parichart Yenjai, Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), Ministry of Education, Thailand

Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in Thailand have a long history as there were developed from village reading centres after the literacy campaign that ran from 1971-1982. The implementation of CLCs in Thailand began fully in 1998. CLCs belong to and are operated by people in the community and are run for communities themselves. While schools are the learning base for the formal education system, CLCs are the learning base for the non-formal education system. There are currently 7,424 CLCs all over Thailand.

The Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) is the main set up, under the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Thailand, responsible for providing, promoting, and supporting non-formal and informal education, including lifelong learning, for 50 million out-of-school people. ONIE's centres especially reach out to the work force (15-59 years), a major target group for the organisation. ONIE is organised in 16 divisions/centres in the central administration, 77 provincial centres, and 928 district and sub-district non-formal education

CLCs are defined in Thailand as centres for enhancing learning opportunities, imparting knowledge, and sharing and learning from within the community.

centres. ONIE also operates a national CLC that serves as a lifelong learning hub for communities throughout the country.

There is legislation in Thailand that supports CLCs. First, the National Education Act of B.E.2542 (1999), Section 25, states that the State shall promote the running and establishment, in sufficient numbers and with efficient functioning, of all types of lifelong learning resources. Second, the Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act, B.E.2551 (2008), Section 18, states that an educational establishment shall perform the duties of promoting, supporting, coordinating, and providing non-formal and informal education in collaboration with network parties. The operations of an educational establishment may provide for a community learning centre as a unit organising and promoting learning activities for the community.

CLCs are defined in Thailand as centres for conducting various lifelong learning activities for community members. They are places for enhancing learning opportunities, imparting knowledge, and sharing and learning from within the community. Learning activities at the CLCs should be consistent with local needs and should cater to all target groups. There are many issues addressed at the CLCs including promoting democracy, providing information about the environment and encouraging sustainable living, and even how to use smart phones and the internet. CLCs facilitator are required to integrate agriculture, community development, health, HIV/AIDS, digital literacy, and environment information into non-formal and informal education activities. The aim of the activities at the CLCs is to promote self-reliance and strengthen and empower communities. Networking and cooperation amongst and within communities is the biggest factor contributing to the success of CLCs in Thailand.

Activities at the CLCs can be divided into three categories - non-formal education, continuing education, and

Parichart Yenjai, ONIE

informal education. For non-formal education, CLCs offer literacy programmes and basic non-formal education programmes (equivalency to grade 1-12) in the form of self-learning, weekend classes, and distance education programmes. For continuing education, CLCs offer vocational training programmes and education for life skills development programmes based on the needs of the community. Informal education programmes at the CLCs offer a book corner, an ASEAN information corner, a local heritage and local wisdom area, and radio and television educational media with CDs and manuals. Internet and free Wi-Fi are also available.

ONIE reaches its target groups according to the location of the CLC and the context of where it is located. For ethnic groups such as the Thai Hill tribes, the CLCs situated in mountainous areas are called 'Highland Community Learning Centres' or *Mae Fah Luang CLC in Thai'*. They are used as classrooms, multi-media libraries, and accommodation for CLC facilitators. There is at least one facilitator for each Mae Fah Luang CLC who organises, facilitates, and coordinates all the learning activities in the community. In addition, there is a non-formal education supervisor

Smart phones and the internet are increasingly playing an important role in non-formal and informal education, including in several of ONIE's community learning centres.

Amongst its many initiatives. ONIE's learning centres offer literacy programmes and basic non-formal education programmes in the form of self-learning, evening and weekend classes, and distance education programmes.

for each cluster (4-10 villages), coordinating the implementation of activities in the CLCs and overseeing the facilitators.

There are many examples of ONIE reaching out to different target audiences. For instance, in the case of factory workers, ONIE coordinates with the factory to use a small space in their premises for conducting education classes. With respect to learning for differently abled people, CLC facilitators go to the house of the learn or for prisoners they go to the prisons for conducting learning sessions. Some of the areas of learning include basic education and vocational training. In the case of the elderly, they are given life skills such as how to take care of themselves and their health and how to earn more money for independence and self-reliance. They are also encouraged to pass down their knowledge, skills, and experiences to younger learners in the CLC.

Smart phones and the internet are increasingly playing an important role in non-formal and informal education. The Royal Thai government has launched the Thailand 4.0 policy which promotes Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and innovation. ONIE has responded to this policy by signing a memorandum with the Ministry of Digital Economy Society (MDES) to provide free internet and Wi-Fi in selected CLCs all over the country. Now, non-formal education learners can use digital technologies to enhance their knowledge, skills, and capacities.

CLCs are structures that are very close to local Thai people. Activities are organised to serve every need of the community. CLCs in Thailand perform varied activities responding not only to SDG 4 (Sustainable Development Goals 4 on education) but also to the other SDGs. They provide equal education and support for people to acquire information and earn a living. No one is left behind in ONIE's CLCs.

Inclusive training and education for persons with disabilities on disaster preparedness and response in local communities in the Philippines

By Ramon Mapa, People's Initiative for Learning and Community Development (PILCD)

Community learning centers (CLCs) and community-based learning programmes play a significant role in shaping local development initiatives in the Philippines in the frame of sustainable development. Over time, community learning centers have expanded and evolved from a venue for learning to becoming a community hub for local development initiatives to take place.

The range of CLC initiatives in the Philippines, either government supported or CSO/NGO led, covers broad and diverse themes from basic literacy, alternative learning, skills training, good governance, human rights, environment, climate change, and disasters.

This article highlights the experience of the People's Initiative for Learning and Community Development (PILCD) in mainstreaming inclusion in its community-based disaster risk reduction education and training programme. The project illustrates a concrete experience in promoting inclusion and sustainable development – two key elements articulated by SDG 4.

The Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. An average of 20 typhoons hit the country every year. In 2013, it was hit by a

Ramon Mapa, PILCD

very powerful typhoon that made landfall in the central part of the country and brought catastrophic damages. The Philippines' geographical location along the typhoon belt and the pacific ring, combined with poor social economic conditions in remote communities, is a major factor of vulnerability.

It was in this context that PILCD's Disaster Risk Reeducation (DRR) education programme took shape in 2009 and evolved and expanded from post-emergency response to school and community-based disaster risk reduction education and training projects. These were primarily implemented in the northern part of the Philippines. The programme typically involved training of community members and local authorities to training of teachers and development of local trainers.

It was in 2015 when disability inclusion in its DRR education programming took shape. This was initiated in the cities of Calbayog and Catbalogan in Samar through the project on '*Strengthening Disability: Inclusive Community Participation in Disaster Preparedness and Response*', supported by Arbeiter Samariter Bund (ASB) and Aktion Deutchsland Hilft (ADH). The programme directly involved

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persons with disabilities in the trainings and activities on community-based disaster risk reduction and management.

Training of Trainers (ToT) on community-based disaster risk reduction and facilitation of community-based workshops are the core strategies of the project. The programme also involves training and capacity building of persons with disabilities to effectively engage and participate in local governance processes.

One major output of the programme is the development of trainers and educators on disaster risk reduction from amongst persons with disabilities along with other participants from different sectors and organisations including local government units, schools, and other civil society organisations. Participants represent those with visual and hearing disabilities, as well as those with mobility limitations.

The training of trainers addresses topics such as the national disaster situation, climate change, laws on disaster management, understanding concepts and processes involved in disaster management, and facilitating workshops on community risk assessments, early warning systems, disaster preparedness, and response planning.

After the ToT, the trainers organised and facilitated their own series of community-based disaster risk reduction workshops in 12 barangays (suburbs) as part of their training rollout. These community-based workshops resulted in –

- Awareness raising and training of barangay officials and community members on disability inclusion in disaster preparedness

- Mapping and identification of persons with disabilities in the barangays by persons with disabilities themselves who participated in the training of trainers and capacity development initiatives

- Development of hazard maps in the barangays, including information on persons with disabilities

- Development of inclusive early warning systems and contingency plans

- Formation of local disaster committees with the inclusion and representation of persons with disabilities, women, and the elderly

Community learning centres in the Philippines have expanded and evolved from a venue for learning to becoming a community hub for local development initiatives to take place.

PILCD has included disabilities in its disaster risk reduction (DRR) programmes and has developed trainers and educators on DRR from amongst persons with disabilities.

The programme also resulted in re-organising the federation of persons with disabilities in the two cities and facilitated the appointment of their representatives to work with disability affairs office in the local government. A network of trainers and advocates on disability inclusion from the two cities was formed as a mechanism to sustain and level-up the project outcomes.

Inclusive information, communication, and education materials were also developed for these local trainers to use in their communities. The development of the materials directly involved the participants (the project and its output materials, including photos, can be accessed at the programmes website on Inclusion Initiative at www.inclusion.pilcd.org)

The project provided an opportunity for persons with disabilities to be included in a training programme that matters for their welfare and safety. It also initiated the strengthening of their individual and collective capacity to engage and participate in local DRR activities and in larger governance and development processes.

The project brought together diverse groups of people from different communities and backgrounds in a learning experience that facilitated the establishment of new linkages and relationships - from the government, academe, schools, civil society organisations representing women, youth, and the elderly, church-based groups, and persons with disabilities.

To conclude, the project experience is a breakthrough in introducing and promoting inclusion in community-based learning programmes and larger development initiatives in the community. The scope, content, framework, and outcomes of the project strongly promote sustainable development. It is hoped that these types of initiatives will further expand and gain policy and funding support to ensure inclusive learning environments are built and that barriers to inclusion are addressed in all forms and types of learning.

Working towards accredited learning in community learning centres in Nepal

By Jyoti Rana, World Education (Nepal)

In Nepal, an estimated 1 million children under the age of 18 are out of school. An even greater number of youth have become adults without completing a basic education. Over the past 15 years, World Education (Nepal) has run two of Nepal's largest non-formal education projects. In one, community learning centres (CLCs) supported working children and adults who were engaged in exploitative work. Initially, large numbers of children working as domestic helpers, porters, in recycling work and in the transport industry, and in commercial sexual exploitation participated in the CLCs. Trained facilitators conducted group sessions or assisted the children with individual learning plans. The age of the children who attended the CLCs ranged from 12-18 years. Over 45,000 attended the CLCs for over 10 years. Over time, it became possible to have many of the young children return to school and to a formal education. The older youth, on the other hand, wished to undertake vocational training that the project either provided or that other projects which the youth were associated with provided.

As the number of children attending school in Nepal has improved, the profile of out-of-school working children has changed. Some are still illiterate, often due to learning disabilities or erratic school attendance. Others have reached a wide range of grades and abilities. It is becoming increasingly necessary for the CLCs to cater to them through a multi-level approach that reaches different learners. A big challenge for the CLCs is that they do not offer accredited courses for the youth who undergo training there. This was the reason many of them dropped out of the CLCs as they could not find a way to ultimately get into jobs to improve their lives. For many, simply learning is not enough!

For years, Nepal has debated creating an equivalency system for non-formal education (NFE) learners. However, with so many other challenges in the education sector, this has never been achieved. In 2016, World Education, UNICEF, and UNESCO joined hands to enable a high-level delegation to visit the Philippines to observe equivalency NFE programmes in action.

Now, finally, Nepal is working on developing an equivalency system of its own. In 2014, the Ministry of Education formed a National Coordination Committee to recommend the framework and the modality of the development of a National NFE Equivalency Programme. The Director of the Non-Formal Education Center (NFEC) is the committee coordinator and membership in the committee is represented by the Ministry of Education, Department of Education, Curriculum Development Center, National Examinations Board, Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training, UNICEF, UNESCO, and World Education. The work of refining the equivalency framework has been tasked to a separate Working Committee represented by NFEC, Curriculum Development Center, and World Education. Efforts are being made to ensure that the NFE Equivalency Framework is aligned with the

A challenge for many CLCs in Nepal is that they do not offer accredited courses for the youth. Many young people dropped out of the CLCs as they could not ultimately get into jobs to improve their lives.

National Qualifications Framework, which is yet to be finalised.

The Non-Formal Education Center (NFEC), World Education, and UNICEF have continued with further ground work related to what curriculum designs could contribute to NFE Equivalency Programme's learning outcomes, what available NFE materials can be consolidated into sample learning modules, and how a system of NFE learners' assessment and certification should be developed. The on-going ground work involves elaborating the Equivalency Framework by defining specifications of the learning outcomes, proposing sample learning modules building on existing materials and filling in gaps with new materials, and developing and piloting sample standardized tests to assess the achievement of the learning outcomes.

The process of carrying out this ground work is also feeding in to the NFEC's initiative with ideas and methods to develop a comprehensive programme document for the NFE Equivalency Framework. However, the initiative faces challenges of contextualising the Equivalency Programme with the new state structure of federalism in which the governance of basic and secondary education has been devolved to the local level. Nonetheless, NFEC is providing leadership to develop an equivalency programme for Nepal and take the NFE Equivalency agenda to a broader policy level.