



PERSUADING POWERS II

A Regional Compendium of
Good Practices in Civil Society Education Advocacy



Asia South Pacific Association
for Basic and Adult Education

Learning Beyond Boundaries

PERSUADING POWERS II

A Regional Compendium of
Good Practices in Civil Society Education Advocacy



Asia South Pacific Association
for Basic and Adult Education

Learning Beyond Boundaries

About ASPBAE

The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) is a regional association of more than 200 civil society organisations and individuals operating in 30 countries of the Asia-Pacific. Established in 1964, ASPBAE advocates for the right to quality education and transformative and liberating lifelong adult education and learning for all. ASPBAE promotes education as an empowering tool to combat poverty, exclusion and discrimination, enables active and meaningful participation in governance, and builds a culture of peace and international understanding.

ASPBAE works to ensure that the internationally agreed goals and especially Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education is translated to robust education sector plans at the country level attentive to the needs especially of marginalised and vulnerable groups, the resources required to meet the full agenda are mobilised and judiciously applied, and that the processes and mechanisms for accountability and monitoring of Education 2030 are set up, with the institutionalised participation of civil society, including representative organisations of learners, teachers/educators, parents, and youth.

A significant part of ASPBAE's capacity building work is oriented to strengthening the capacities of CSOs – especially broad fronts of national-level education campaign coalitions – in advocacy on the right to education and lifelong learning to hold governments, donors and other decision-makers to account. The main platform for these efforts from 2009 was the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) initiative, coordinated by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) in partnership with its regional members, including ASPBAE. •





About GCE

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) was founded in 1999, in the lead-up to the World Education Forum in Dakar, 2000, to provide a platform to unify and coordinate civil society voices in relation to the global education agenda. Since then, GCE has grown significantly, in particular through the expansion and consolidation of national civil society coalitions. GCE now represents over 100 national and regional education coalitions and international civil society organisations (CSOs). Its membership is comprised of a broad range of CSOs such as teachers' organisations, women's groups, organisations for people with disabilities, youth and student groups, academic or research institutions and child rights campaigners. The membership of GCE's national coalitions encompasses thousands of CSOs including the largest global teachers union Education International (EI), and represents millions of individuals worldwide. •

Acknowledgements

This collection of stories of national education civil society coalitions was produced by the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) with support from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) through its Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF). CSEF was managed globally by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).

This publication was compiled, developed and edited by Bernie Lovegrove and Nashwa Shakeel with support from Medha Soni, ASPBAE Capacity Support and Advocacy Advisers (CSAAs) Helen Dabu, Cecilia Soriano, Rene Raya, Susmita Choudhury and Peter King, and under the overall guidance of ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Lourdes Khan.

Support was also received from independent contractors Zeldania Soriano for final editing, Nadine Postigo for coordination support, and Reynaldo Pacete for design and printing services.

Lastly, ASPBAE would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions from the following national education coalitions featured in the collection:



Afghanistan National Education Coalition (ANEC); Campaign for Popular Education-Bangladesh (CAMPE); NGO Education Partnership-Cambodia (NEP); National Coalition for Education-India (NCEI); Network for Education Watch-Indonesia (NEW); Association for Education Development-Kyrgyzstan (AED); All for Education-Mongolia (AFE); National Network for Education Reform-Myanmar (NNER); National Campaign for Education-Nepal (NCEN); Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE); Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network (PEAN); Civil Society Network for Education Reforms-Philippines (E-Net); Samoa Education Network (SEN); Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI); Coalition for Education Development-Sri Lanka (CED); Alliance of CSOs in Tajikistan for Education (ACTE); Civil Society Education Partnership-Timor-Leste (CSEP); Kolisen Blong Leftemap Edukesen-Vanuatu (KoBLE); Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA). •

Copyright © 2019 Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education. ASPBAE publications form an integral part of ASPBAE's information, education, and advocacy activities and efforts, and seek to support sharing and learning among education stakeholders, advocates, practitioners, analysts, and policymakers. Readers are requested to duly acknowledge ASPBAE when they use the material contained herein for reproduction, adaptation, and translation. We welcome being informed about use of our material and receiving feedback that could help in further improving these publications.



Table of Contents

ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL OVERVIEW - REFLECTIONS ON COLLABORATION, CAPACITY SUPPORT, AND CHALLENGES FACING NATIONAL EDUCATION COALITIONS.....	10
1. NEPAL	20
Broad Membership and Grassroots Evidence Gave Coalition Leverage in Engagement with the Government	
2. INDIA	23
Judicial Activism on the Right to Education - An Effective Strategy	
3. TIMOR-LESTE	26
Coalition Meeting with the President Led to Increased Education Commitment	
4. CAMBODIA	28
Coalition Collaboration and Engagement with the Government and Development Partners Led to reforms	
5. PAPUA NEW GUINEA	31
Education Coalition Engaged Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships to Promote Quality Education	
6. SOLOMON ISLANDS	33
Learning Exchange Showcased COESI's Membership Diversity and Networking Approach to Influence Government Policy	
7. VANUATU	35
Building Partnerships, Connecting with Communities, and Utilising Informal Contacts to Promote Education	
8. PHILIPPINES	37
Review of a Vintage Teachers' Law Led to Successful Advocacy for Policy Change on Teachers' Right	
9. MYANMAR	40
Advocating for Education Policy Reform through Public Engagement and Empowerment	

10. VIETNAM	42
National, Regional and Global Civil Society Action: An Integrated Approach to Influence SDG 4 Processes	
11. BANGLADESH	44
Coalition Influenced SDG 4 Strategic Framework through Active Engagement with the Ministry of Education and UNESCO	
12. MONGOLIA	46
SDG 4.7 - From Public Discussions on Curriculum Change to Contributing to the SDG Voluntary National Review	
13. SRI LANKA	49
A Collaborative Civil Society Approach to Assessing Progress on the SDGs	
14. AFGHANISTAN	52
Promoting Youth and Adult Literacy and Education to Reduce Poverty in Rural Areas	
15. KYRGYZSTAN	55
Raising Awareness on the Issue of Early Marriage that Limits Girls' Education Opportunities	
16. INDONESIA	57
Media Engagement is a Key Advocacy Strategy for Quality Education for All	
17. PAKISTAN	59
Utilising International Advocacy Platforms to Promote the Regulation of Privatisation of Education	
18. SAMOA	61
Coalition Engages the Government to Include Healthy Eating in the Primary School Curriculum	
19. TAJIKISTAN	63
Advancing Inclusive Education for People with Disabilities	





Asia Pacific Regional Overview - Reflections on collaboration, capacity support, and challenges facing national education coalitions

Introduction

Persuading Powers 2 is a compendium of good practice stories of national education advocacy coalitions in the Asia Pacific region, and of regional collaboration, produced by the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE). It is a follow-up to the compendium, Persuading Powers 1 that ASPBAE published in 2011.

The brief stories in this collection reflect the richness and diversity of the work of the national education coalitions (NECs) in different parts of the Asia Pacific region. They describe various strategies to promote improved education policy and implementation in national contexts. By sharing these stories, ASPBAE aims to inspire other civil society actors, foster mutual learning and to increase the visibility of national education advocacy coalitions and their good practices. It also aims to raise awareness of some of the challenges that education coalitions face, the role of ASPBAE as a regional advocacy organisation and provider of capacity support to the coalitions and also the value of civil society collaboration at national, regional and international levels for common education advocacy objectives.

Asia Pacific - a changing regional context

With over 60% of the world's population, and spanning an enormous area of land and ocean, the Asia Pacific consists of a huge diversity of contexts, cultures, languages, religions, political systems and sizes of country populations. Over the decade, the Asia Pacific region has seen many political, economic, social and environmental changes and trends that have presented challenges for CSOs in advocating for improved education policies. This includes a rise in authoritarian and



“Many CSOs have faced increased governmental controls, and restrictions to their meaningful participation in policy processes. This has limited their space to effectively conduct activities, discussions and debates on education policy.”



populist regimes, which has led to the shrinking of democratic space in many countries. Many CSOs have faced increased governmental controls, and restrictions to their meaningful participation in policy processes. Laws and regulations have been passed in countries such as India, Pakistan and Myanmar to restrict the activities of NGOs and their access to resources. This has limited their space to effectively conduct activities, discussions and debates on education policy.

Some governments and politicians have used race, ethnicity or religion as a pretext to justify oppression and exacerbate conflict and prejudice. An example is the systemic violation of the human rights of the Rohingya by the Myanmar Government where 27,000 people fled to Bangladesh leading to cross-border tensions. In such a situation it is extremely difficult to ensure access to quality education on both sides of the border. Extrajudicial killings occur in both Myanmar and the Philippines. Student activists, political opposition figures and journalists have faced harassment and politically motivated prosecution in countries such as Malaysia, Myanmar, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea. The internal conflict in Afghanistan, including attacks by terrorist groups has had an adverse effect on education, such as displacement of teachers and students, damage to schools and properties, and due to fear for their safety, parents kept their children from school.

The Asia Pacific is a natural disaster-prone region with many earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions in countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Vanuatu and Nepal. Apart from natural disasters, the impact of human induced climate change is becoming more evident via increasing greenhouse gases which has led to record land and sea temperatures. Pollution of the ocean, air, land and water is worsening, and more intense and more frequent hurricanes and cyclones, floods, droughts, fires are occurring. Increasing smog and smoky air

reduces the health of citizens. The collective lack of political will to address the root causes of these problems and reduce greenhouse emissions, has a disruptive effect on every aspect of social life, including the capacity to provide quality education.

The rise in privatization of education is undermining the commitment of governments to advance and invest in public education, which is chronically underfunded. National debt accrued by many governments also affects the ability to make education a priority as governments are required to service foreign debt first before spending on public services.

According to UN ESCAP's Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report, 2019, progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) achieved to date is insufficient. By its current trajectory, the region will not achieve any of the 17 SDGs by the international target of 2030. For more than half the SDGs, progress in the region is stagnant or heading in the wrong direction. While there is some progress in relation to SDG4 (on education), countries in the Asia Pacific region are significantly off target. It is within this dynamic region and context that NECs and ASPBAE as a regional organisation operate as they undertake their education advocacy work.

The CSEF programme and ASPBAE's capacity support role to coalitions

CSO education advocacy at national, regional and global levels was significantly enhanced by the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF), a programme initiated and coordinated globally by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) with much appreciated funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) since 2009. The CSEF programme closed at the end

of 2019, however a GPE funded programme, Education Out Loud (EOL) which started in 2020, provided some continuity of support to eligible national education coalitions.

In the Asia Pacific region, the CSEF programme was coordinated by ASPBAE, which provided capacity support for what grew to become 19 national education coalitions (NECs) during the decade. The range of ASPBAE's capacity and advisory support to the NECs has been broad, including network building, updating on regional and international education developments and advocacies, strategic planning, campaign strategising, policy research and analysis, accompanying coalitions in their national policy events, and meetings with government officials, and with their public-facing initiatives including media conferences, and mobilisations of constituencies.

In addition, ASPBAE has provided coalition institutional strengthening support in relation to program management, coalition governance and strategising for resource mobilisation. ASPBAE has also provided tool kits, regional syntheses and reports on selected thematic issues, fostered cross-country coalition exchanges and held training events at the sub-regional level. It also organised annual regional consultations involving all NECs, at which GCE and representatives from other regions such as Latin America, Africa and the Arab region also participated, offering their rich perspectives. This integrated multi-dimensional support has enhanced the chances of each coalitions' survival, and resulted in increased skills, confidence, and effectiveness in education advocacy.

Connecting NECs to regional and international forums, platforms and mechanisms

ASPBAE has played a facilitative role in connecting the national work of NECs to regional and global level education campaigning and advocacy initiatives. This involved a two-way flow of information and engagement, whereby ASPBAE supported NEC representatives themselves to participate in regional and international forums, and in international campaigns and advocacy initiatives organised by GCE. Here they would voice their own concerns, issues and recommendations from their experiences on the ground, meet with representatives from other NECs and develop common advocacy agendas and strategies. At the same time in the other direction, ASPBAE ensured a steady flow of information about developments regarding global and regional education policy debates, process and key stakeholders and discussing these with national coalitions.

The annual **Asia Pacific Meeting on Education (APMED) in Bangkok**, organised for the last five years from 2015 to 2019 by UNESCO and UNICEF was a good example of regional level CSO influence, collaboration and capacity building involving NECs. ASPBAE successfully negotiated with UNESCO and the Asia Pacific Technical Working Group for Education 2030, the institutionalisation of participation of national CSO coalitions in the annual APMED events through an agreed mechanism.

As its usual annual practice at the APMED meetings, ASPBAE organised a CSO Pre-Meeting to ensure there was a strong CSO consensus on the issues and recommendations to take to the APMED V meeting itself, and to strategise on maximising civil society influence. In the weeks and months prior to APMED V, ASPBAE negotiated and proposed experienced relevant civil society speakers and moderators for the plenary, parallel and sub-regional sessions. This bore fruit as there were four civil society presenters in plenary sessions and eight presenters or moderators in the parallel sessions. The visibility, quality of inputs and positive feedback enhanced the credibility of civil society as an important stakeholder.

Based on the key points of the CSO Pre-Meeting consensus, ASPBAE developed an issues and recommendations paper that was distributed to country delegations and was drawn upon by CSO delegates when making interventions in various sessions. Many officials commented on the usefulness of the CSO paper for their own discussions and consideration. It was also drawn on during the meetings of the APMED Drafting Committee, which included an ASPBAE representative. To assist in coordination, the CSO contingent met at the end of each day to reflect on the day's efforts, identify arising issues and strategise about how to contribute to the next day's sessions. This regional good news story of 'learning by doing', participatory, and collective advocacy has been and will continue to be a valuable CSO approach.

Another recent example of national-regional-global collaboration was the production of 16 **Spotlight Reports by NECs and a Regional Synthesis Report** by ASPBAE. The Spotlight Reports provided a civil society critique on the status of SDG4 implementation at national and sub-national levels, highlighting the policy framework, financing strategies, SDG indicators, and monitoring systems. Spotlight reports were produced by the coalitions in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Vietnam, as well as in non-CSEF funded countries of Australia and Japan. The process took a year to prepare as all coalitions consulted their grassroots member organisations, including marginalised youth, NGOs and other education stakeholders to develop their analysis and recommendations.

ASPBAE steered the process of jointly agreeing the research framework with the partner coalitions, provided the coalitions with a template to structure their reports, offered liaison and editing support on the individual reports, and organised the launch of these in the public events convened on the sidelines



“ASPBAE has played a facilitative role in connecting the national work of NECs to regional and global level education campaigning and advocacy initiatives. “





“ASPBAE successfully negotiated with UNESCO and the Asia Pacific Technical Working Group for Education 2030, the institutionalisation of participation of national CSO coalitions in the annual APMED events.”



of or during the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York in July 2019.

ASPBAE also organised for a number of the Spotlight Reports to be reviewed from a gender perspective. The aim was to support a more in-depth gender analysis in the process and enhance capacities for gender mainstreaming in the coalitions developing the Spotlight Reports. This was undertaken in India, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Timor-Leste, Mongolia, and Cambodia. In the latter three countries, governments submitted Volunteer National Reviews (VNRs) in the HLPF 2019.

A further emerging dimension at the national, regional and global levels that ASPBAE has fostered is for **education advocates to participate in broader SDG forums, platforms and mechanisms**, so that education (SDG4) is prominently placed in the broader agenda, and that there is recognition that achieving inclusive quality education for all is an underlying enabler for all the other SDGs. To this end over the last few years ASPBAE has engaged in regional mechanisms such as Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM), the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), and the related Asia Pacific Peoples Forum on Sustainable Development (APPFSD). As an important strategy and as an arena for coalition capacity support, ASPBAE has facilitated the involvement of national education coalitions in these broader regional SDG processes. In turn, at the national level, some coalitions such as CED Sri Lanka, NCE India, CAMPE Bangladesh, E Net Philippines, NCE India, to name some, have begun to engage in broader national SDG platforms to promote the education agenda to a larger constituency.

Successes, Trends and Challenges facing national education advocacy coalitions

Despite their growing skill level, confidence and ability to influence in education advocacy, the NECs in the Asia Pacific region face many challenges, some in common, and some relevant to particular coalitions, given their contexts.

Sustainability of CSO advocacy work is an ongoing challenge for all coalitions. The last decade has seen a decline in the number of donors supporting CSO work, and this in turn has affected education CSOs. Longer-term, multi-year donor funding which included institutional support for salaries and

overheads has become much rarer, being replaced by short-term, activity and outcomes oriented projects, for lesser amounts, but with a significant increase in reporting and accountability expectations for those funds.

Reduced funding has led to increased competition, including at times with international NGOs (INGOs) that have greater capacity to win funding than national NGOs. This has meant that NECs needed to spend more time writing proposals and writing reports, thereby reducing the time available for advocacy work. The trend over the last decade has been towards increased processes of due diligence, and more complex monitoring and narrative and financial reporting documents and requirements, even for relatively small amounts of funds. For very small coalitions with only two staff, this was very time consuming. Nevertheless to their credit, overall there has been an improvement in NEC competence to meet these reportorial requirements, but the improvement has been uneven, with some coalitions still struggling to meet these demands. It has also required a great deal of effort from ASPBAE and GCE to support them.

Often donor funding priorities change, requiring CSOs to adjust and creatively repackaging their core work. Coalitions in countries such as those in Central Asia and the South Pacific have, to date, only one funder, which makes their future insecure. The current non-eligibility for GPE funding for the coalitions in Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia has led to a scaling down of staffing, program activities and advocacy. The challenge is on for all NECs to mobilise resources from other sources, draw on in-kind contributions and make do with less.

A regular challenge for coalitions is when there is a **change of government**. At these times, policy settings and assumptions can change, often for the worse, while new education ministers and public servants

can dramatically change the spaces for engagement, quality of discourse, the level of trust in civil society contribution and the chances for influence. Often a new cycle of work is required by NECs to cultivate the new government and ministry officials, and demonstrate coalition credibility.

Internally, **changes of key personnel in coalitions**, can lead to a new round of training and capacity support in coalition management, network building, stakeholder engagement, policy research, analysis and advocacy, since key new staff and / or Board members may have come in from another sector. A key challenge is to ensure there is no loss of institutional memory, knowledge transfer and skill levels.

For **smaller, more fragile coalitions** such as in the low population Pacific countries of PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Samoa, when they experience changes of key personnel it can make the difference between surviving quite well and seriously struggling. Capacities for organisational management, policy analysis and writing are difficult to access. In such contexts, coalition and network building is challenging and previous good work undertaken can easily be dismantled, often requiring cycles of rebuilding and retraining.

Some of the larger, longer-standing coalitions such as CAMPE, Bangladesh, E-Net Philippines and NCE Nepal, show impressive **resilience, capacity and stability** than others, in terms of withstanding internal and external changes. However, even strong coalitions such as NEP Cambodia, face challenges to rebuild after a significant departure of staff and Board members.

Campaign and advocacy strategies are also changing. Partly due to historical, cultural factors, and more recently, mounting restrictions on civil society to protest and campaign in safety in many countries, there are less coalitions openly able to or choosing

to hold mass street protests and marches advocating for education. In many countries such as former Soviet influenced Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Mongolia, as well as those with socialist traditions such as Vietnam and Cambodia, mass street protests were always less likely to be a strategy of choice. Such demonstrations are also not common practice in the small Pacific island countries of PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa.

A common and increasing strategy is for most NEC representatives to **work with government officials and win them over** as credible contributors to policy reform. NEP Cambodia has been very successful with this 'working with' strategy for many years. However, an ongoing challenge for NECs is the danger of being 'coopted' and silenced by their government, and to discern where to draw the line to maintain independence, especially when governments are authoritarian and violate human rights.

The decade has seen a welcome increase in the number of coalitions that are members of, and **participate more actively in, Local Education Groups (LEGs)** and other key government policy committees. Unsurprisingly, the more they contribute with competent recommendations, the more NECs are called upon to join a larger number of government committees and other policy processes. NECs need to be able to adeptly mobilise the expertise available not only in their staff. They should inspire engagement by their Board and wider membership, drawing on their volunteer time to capture important opportunities for policy influence.

Another key dimension that has emerged in campaigns and advocacy is **the increased use of social media** to reach large numbers to galvanise support, but also to put pressure on governments, whose officials often pay attention to media posts. NECs are becoming increasingly more savvy in this regard, although the degree of competence, the levels of technology available, and the size of the

social media audience is uneven across the region. There is also a divide between city and rural and remote communities regarding access and the types of media used.

The membership of national coalitions over the last decade has seen **an impressive increase in inclusion and diversity**, with many having member organisations including women's groups, youth groups and people with disability groups. With ASPBAE's encouragement and providing learning opportunities, NECs are more conscious of gender issues and mainstreaming gender equity in their organisations, including leadership. However, there is still a long way to go on this. More coalitions have raised awareness about the importance of enabling youth participation in their advocacy efforts. A number of ASPBAE initiatives, including its Youth-led Action Research (YAR) program has helped galvanise interest and awareness on mobilising youth from marginalised communities in particular, in countries such as India, Philippines, Timor-Leste, Mongolia, Nepal and Vanuatu. VAEFA, Vietnam has led the way especially in relation to attention to inclusive education with the strong and active engagement of disability groups in their network such as the Hanoi Association of the Deaf.

Regarding thematic issues, over the decade there has been an increase in awareness about the negative impact of **privatisation of education** amongst NECs, in part due to workshops and collaborative research with NECs that ASPBAE has initiated. There is high recognition of the need to scale up work on domestic resource mobilisation to close the gaps in the financing of public education systems. Advocating with governments to increase their budgetary allocations to education, attentive to quality and equity concerns has been a priority of many NECs. Several have therefore been conducting **national budget analyses**. Resistance of governments to share data, data gaps, the lack of timely data have posed challenges

to budget tracking work in a number of contexts in the region such in the South Pacific.

A significant focus for many coalitions is policies and programs that promote **inclusion**, especially in relation to women, youth and people with disabilities. While there are many other issues addressed, a key priority for all coalitions has been the **promotion of the full SDG4 agenda** and advocacy to push their governments align their national policies and programs to address all the SDG4 targets, especially those that usually miss out such as youth and adult literacy and post-school learning opportunities.

This brief scan can only touch on some of the main successes, trends and challenges facing national coalitions. No doubt the following set of stories will also surface many others, and leave the reader with a sense of the richness and diversity of the work of the coalitions.

About the Coalition Stories

Many of these coalition stories focus on the strategies and activities undertaken to advocate for education policy reform. Through its constructive involvement, NCE Nepal has been able to earn its dedicated space in various government-led forums and is a strong member of the Local Education Group (LEG), the main education decision-making committee in Nepal since 2014. The critical inputs of NCE Nepal are acknowledged and taken into consideration during the formulation of national policies. The Civil Society Education Partnership (CSEP) in Timor-Leste has been playing a key role in connecting grassroots efforts with policy advocacy at the highest level as they shared their concerns related to teachers' unions, people with disabilities, women and youth with the president of the nation, requesting him to champion and speak up on the need for the government to prioritise investing in education, which he has done.

The rights of teachers were also brought to public and legislative attention as E-Net Philippines campaigned for the implementation of Magna Carta for Public School Teachers. The Coalition sought to look into the condition of teachers to see if this special law has contributed to uplifting teachers' rights and status. Their review and continued advocacy on the implementation of this law has led to changing the landscape and the uplifting of the condition and dignity of Filipino teachers.



“The membership of national coalitions over the last decade has seen an impressive increase in inclusion and diversity, with many having member organisations including women’s groups, youth groups and people with disability groups.”





“Over the decade there has been an increase in awareness about the negative impact of privatisation of education amongst NECs, in part due to workshops and collaborative research with NECs that ASPBAE has initiated.”



The National Coalition for Education (NCE) in India has employed strategic litigation methods to advance the right to education (RTE). The coalition has been monitoring the implementation of provisions of the RTE Act both at the national and state levels and in making targeted interventions through judicial advocacy. They have filed Public Interest Litigation (PIL) cases with the Supreme Court of India with successful results in some states.

NEP Cambodia has focused on education financing, and has continuously engaged the government which has led to policy and budget gains. The coalition joined the annual Consultative Workshop on Education Sector Development between the Ministry of Economy and Finance and lobbied for an increase in the national education budget and mobilised support for increasing the education budget to at least 20%.

PCE in Pakistan has been advocating within UN human rights mechanisms at the international level on the issue of privatisation. They have been engaged with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) and have provided parallel reports highlighting the issue of rapid commercialisation of education across Pakistan. The Coalition argued that low public spending on education is one of the reasons for the involvement of the private sector, which is threatening to undermine the right to education.

The media remains an important stakeholder and plays an important role in influencing education. This was demonstrated by NEW Indonesia as they used this as an effective tactic to bring attention to the issue of discriminatory policies of schools. The coalition shared information with the media and provided evidence-based information to policymakers to advocate for state provision of equal education opportunities for the poor and for children with disabilities who face greater difficulties in accessing education.

Many of the national South Pacific coalitions have been re-invigorated (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), or are still very new (Samoa). They have needed to give a great deal of attention to institutional strengthening and capacity development. ASPBAE has supported learning exchanges between the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea to share their experiences in increasing their scope of work and ways of incorporating diverse membership into their networks.

Additionally, the PEAN has built up its participation in broader CSO forums, multi-stakeholder education policy events, and

meetings with officials from Government departments. In the Solomon Islands, COESI coordinated a meeting of the multi-stakeholder National Literacy Network and proposed the theme for International Literacy Day. In Vanuatu, the coalition KoBLE focused on using informal communication systems to reach stakeholders and influence policy. This is because extended family or community connections often assist in the process of collecting documents and reports on policy and its implementation.

The Samoa Education Network (SEN) also increased its awareness of the importance of advocacy at multiple levels. At the international level, SEN was able to send a letter to the Samoan Ambassador to the UN in 2017, urging him to improve and strengthen the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) document in relation to SDG 4 on education. With the help of the network members, SEN is also advocating to include healthy eating awareness in the primary school curriculum since obesity remains a major issue in the country.

ANEC Afghanistan, through its members, has advocated for and implemented adult learning programs in several areas, assisting women in improving their lives through adult literacy programmes.

The Association for Education Development in Kyrgyzstan (AED) has been holding awareness raising sessions in rural areas to counter the tradition of early marriages, which hinders the education of girls.

The Alliance of CSOs in Tajikistan for Education (ACTE) have been focusing on inclusive education as it conducted a comprehensive analysis on disability issues with financial and technical support from the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNITI). The government incorporated results of this analysis into its strategies related to children with disabilities.

NNER Myanmar successfully held public facing events and discussions on the review and analysis of the National Education Strategic Plan 2016-2021 and SDG 4. Since there are limited spaces for civil society discussion in Myanmar, NNER took the responsibility to raise awareness on SDG 4 as the government is not playing its role in disseminating information to its people.

In Bangladesh, CAMPE facilitated the process of developing an SDG 4 Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Bangladesh together with the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the UNESCO Dhaka Office. This process identified some strategic priority issues and provided a vision for achieving SDG 4 by 2030. Similarly, in Vietnam the government issued the National Action Plan on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. VAEFA and UNESCO-Vietnam helped coordinate the consultations around the National Action Plan on SDG 4 on Education, which was included as a result of the lobbying efforts of VAEFA since the first Asia Pacific Meeting on Education (APMED) in July 2016.

CED Sri Lanka formed the Sri Lanka SDG Stakeholder Platform with CSOs to initiate dialogue on developing an alternative mechanism for reviewing implementation of the broader SDGs. This civil society platform comprises 14 CSOs and conducted several meetings to strengthen the voice of civil society in order to identify the gaps that are hindering the development of the SDGs. AFE Mongolia has been actively working with government agencies and non-state actors in advancing the SDG 4 goal and its targets. Member organisations have been successfully engaging with their constituencies and target groups, and amplifying the coalition's advocacy by translating the SDG 4 goal and its targets into their core activities. •

1. NEPAL

Broad Membership and Grassroots Evidence Gave Coalition Leverage in Engagement with the Government

The National Campaign for Education Nepal (NCE Nepal) has a membership of 364 organisations and 26 district coalitions, which includes community based organisations, international NGOs, teachers' organisations, local NGOs and journalist groups. Through constructive engagement, NCE Nepal has earned credibility as CSO voice in various government-led forums. It is a strong and active member of the Local Education Group (LEG) which is the education decision-making committee in Nepal led by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST). The critical and positive inputs of NCE Nepal are acknowledged, discussed and taken into consideration in policy formulation.

NCE Nepal participated in LEG forums and platforms provided by development partners, where it presented grassroots evidence and policy recommendations. Over time, the coalition contributed inputs to the national sector development plan by presenting its positions that were backed up and echoed by previously "unheard of" communities. NCE Nepal has seen the



NCE representatives submit recommendations to the Minister of Education, Science and Technology



District coalition members of NCE engage in data collection

value of gathering credible data and research as a basis for engagement and advocacy. Thus, it has been expanding its research, focusing on tracking government budget and commitments, and looking at issues relevant to strengthening public education. In generating grassroots evidence, NCE Nepal mobilised its members and district coalitions as well as its volunteers from the academe. The research, therefore, was participated in by a lot of members and in that sense the process has a multiplier effect in encouraging public participation.

NCE Nepal's prompt analysis of policies during policy-making and policy monitoring has effectively assisted the government in the preparation of its plans and programs.

The coalition's recent research on the financing gap in the education sector was a first and was highly appreciated by the government. The research was noticed in the Budget Review Meeting (BRM), one of the annual meetings of the LEG which reviewed progress against the funds invested. Additionally, soon after the adoption of the SDGs in Nepal, NCE Nepal worked as a member of the thematic committee for the preparation of the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP). Since the implementation of the SSDP, the coalition

has been actively engaged in monitoring the indicators and targets set, and presented the SSDP review status in the last Joint Annual Review Meeting (JAR).

Nepal has experienced a structural transformation from unitary to federal system. Three tiers of government - local, provincial and federal - are now responsible for the overall education system. Education up to secondary level is in the hands of local governments. Contributions for the new Education Act and policies are being drafted at the local, provincial and federal levels.

With research and evidence at hand, NCE Nepal has been able to contribute to all the three tiers of government in the preparation of the new Act and policies. The coalition has been supplementing the High Level National Education Commission, an apex committee formed by the government, and chaired by the Minister for MoEST by providing suggestions to the government with regard to the Education Structure and the Federal Education Act. The CSO suggestions contributed by NCE Nepal— synthesized from its consultations, analysis and research—were highly appreciated by the Education Commission.

When the government passed the bill to “ensure Free and Compulsory Education, 2018,” NCE Nepal made a critical intervention and submitted its position to all the members of the parliament. Some of the parliamentarians lobbied for an amendment in the draft bill based on in-line with the collective CSO concerns as submitted by the coalition. As a result, some of the matters related to the definition of free and compulsory education, such as early childhood development and education for people with disabilities were improved in the final bill.

Owing to its evidence-based advocacy and lobbying efforts, despite the shrinking CSO space globally and nationally, NCE Nepal has been able to stand firmly in government forums and seen as a key development partner. The Ministry has also invited NCE Nepal to consultative meetings. Because of its dedicated space in the LEG and also its engagement for public education strengthening, NCE Nepal has reached out to other government agencies including the National Planning Commission and parliament as well as political parties, education researchers and universities.

While the LEG is active at the central level, there are several forums at the provincial and local government levels. Even the district coalitions of NCE Nepal has been able to secure their participation in the local government's policy forums. They are trusted as thematic expert organisations and consulted by the local government. Contextual inputs and thematic engagement of district coalitions have made their participation very helpful in the local level forums where issues regarding the right to education are discussed and decisions are made. One of the successes of NCE's district coalitions is that local governments have officially allocated funds to them, which has been very helpful in sustaining the engagement of the broader national coalition at the local level and in boosting the morale to perform better and further the cause of quality education for all. The Coalition's broad membership base and its research capacity have been the effective leverage in its engagement with the government at various tiers in its advocacy for quality education for all in Nepal. •





NCE National Convenor addresses the National Consultation on the Right to Education Act

2. INDIA

Judicial Activism on the Right to Education – An Effective Strategy

India is a signatory to the Dakar Declaration on Education for All (EFA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and has made elementary education a justiciable fundamental right by amending its Constitution. This was done in 2002, when Article 21-A was inserted, where it affirms that “The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.”

Consequently, the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009, made it compulsory for all state governments to fully implement its provisions by notifying and making necessary infrastructural and management arrangements by March 2013. This was to ensure that the universalisation of elementary education is achieved within the specified period.

The National Coalition for Education (NCE) India has been monitoring the implementation of the provisions of the Act both at the national and state levels and making targeted interventions. It has collected evidence of non-implementation of the provisions of the law in terms of the states' duty of child identification and school mapping, non-deployment of teachers in non-academic duties, stopping discrimination against marginalised children by private schools, and fulfilling the infrastructural requirements. Despite continued advocacy by NCE, there had not been satisfactory progress hence, NCE India found it appropriate to make interventions through judicial advocacy.

The coalition, with the support of its partners and the Human Rights Law Network, filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) case in the Supreme Court of

India on the ground of non-implementation of the provisions of the RTE Act. The Indian Constitution gives the power to the Court to find out appropriate remedy, particularly in PIL, to the aggrieved parties by directing the concerned authorities to enforce existing laws and mandate public agencies to take steps to enhance the welfare of the citizens.

The first petition was filed in 2015 wherein the court directed NCE India to raise the concerns regarding non-implementation of the Act at the state level, in the High Courts. As directed, NCE India, with support from its network partners and the Teachers' Union, filed petitions in six states during the period 2017-2018. The main issues were identified and evidence of non-implementation of the provisions was collected through public hearings, surveys, secondary research reports, and government orders, and were used to support the petitions submitted in the High Courts. PILs in six states were filed in the respective High Courts and the results have been very encouraging in a few states, while insignificant in others.

Further, in consultation with expert human rights lawyers, a PIL in the Supreme Court was re-filed with four major prayers in accordance with the RTE Act:

- ✓ As per Section 9 of the Act, ensure school mapping is conducted;
- ✓ As per Section 8 and 9, identification of children of school age 6-14 years must be undertaken;
- ✓ As per Section 18, all private schools must get recognition from the government and all the unrecognised schools must be shut down and;
- ✓ The filling up of vacant posts of almost a million teachers and the training of untrained teachers.

There have been several hearings and the Court has asked the government to respond to all the demands that have been raised in the litigation. The government of India, through its Ministry of Human Resource Development, which is responsible for education, has responded to NCE's PIL to which a counter affidavit has been filed with all the evidence collected throughout India with the help of the Teachers' Union and network partners. A national level consultation with INGOs and NGOs was organised wherein all the stakeholders presented data that was submitted to the Supreme Court and supplied evidence in support of the prayers in the litigation.



National Consultation on the Status of Implementation of the Right To Education Act hosted by NCE



Stakeholders engage in a discussion on the Right to Education in India

In one of the successful cases of judicial advocacy, a PIL was filed by NCE India through the Bihar State Primary Teachers' Union, at the High Court of Bihar Judicature at Patna (Civil writ jurisdiction cases) docketed as CWJC No. 3389 of 2016. The prayers were as follows:

1. Out-of-school children should be immediately identified and mainstreamed in schools;
2. School mapping must be immediately undertaken in all districts to ascertain the availability of neighbourhood schools within six (6) months;
3. The States should train additional professionally trained teachers to fill the vacant posts to bring down the Pupil-Teacher Ratios, and fulfil the number of Head Teachers and Subject-Specific Teachers in compliance with the RTE Act 2009.
4. The State must ensure that all private schools are complying with the norms and standards of the RTE Act 2009 and are recognised by the government.

The Patna High Court, in its positive response to the PIL, has passed the order to the State authorities to conduct mapping of all schools in the State within three weeks and to report

TEACHER SHORTAGE

SC seeks response of Centre, states

UTKARSH ANAND
NEW DELHI, APRIL 11

THE Supreme Court Friday sought explanations from the Centre and all states and UTs on shortage of schools and trained teachers across the country, in violation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act.

A bench led by CJI P Sathiasvami issued notices on a PIL that highlighted various governmental and private studies to point up that around 3.77 crore children between the age of 6 and 14 were out of schools owing to failure by the authorities in creating necessary infrastructure and providing suitable atmosphere.

The PIL, filed by the National Coalition for Education - a network of organisations fighting for the RTE — said at least 1.5 lakh schools and 12 lakh trained teachers were required to fulfil the goals envisaged under the RTE. Appearing for the petitioner,

DAMNING REPORT

- More than 3.45 cr children covered by the RTE Act were not enrolled in school as per the 2011 Census; this rose to 3.77 cr in 2012-13
- Only 10% schools met all nine infrastructure requirements as per the RTE while only 77% were within the distance requirements as per model rules
- 21% of schools are not in all-weather buildings, and 13% do not have all-weather access
- 5% of schools are single classroom buildings and the percentage of schools that do not have the required ramps to ensure accessibility is between 20%-60%
- 50% of schools do not have separate usable toilets for boys and girls and between 20% and 30% of schools do not have a usable source of safe drinking water
- Between 40% and 60% of schools do not have a playground and between 45% and 60% have no play or sports equipment
- Between 35% and 74% of schools do not have libraries
- 74% of teachers received no training. Out of this, 47% of teachers were involved in non-educational activities, and 20% were in fact were involved in midday meal preparation
- 12% of primary schools only have 1 teacher, and 45% of schools with more than 150 students had no principals

(STATISTICS BASED ON SURVEYS AND STUDIES BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE GROUPS)

months and new schools be constructed six months after completion of the process.

The petition asked the states and the UTs to recruit and train one lakh additional professionally trained teachers every month to end the shortage of educators within a year. It sought a direction that "the states and UTs upgrade all deficient schools with appropriate physical infrastructure so as to be in compliance with the RTE Act within six months.

The petition also said the states and the UTs should disclose the number of students admitted under the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota in the state in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Local press coverage as the Supreme Court in India sought an explanation of teacher shortage

back the process undertaken, to ensure child identification and admission of all the children in the schools, and to strictly regulate the private schools to ensure that they adhere to RTE norms and standards.

This has been a major achievement as the court has been very positive towards the litigation prayers and has passed serious orders to the state government.

NCE is following up with all the PILs and hearings, and also has drafted further PILs to be filed in 10 more states. Judicial advocacy has become a major intervention for NCE India in the past few years and the results have been mixed, but with successful results from the states of Bihar and Uttarakhand. •

CSEP staff and members meet with the President of Timor-Leste



3. TIMOR-LESTE

761,06/13 /18
Diario

PR Lú Olo preokupa ho edukasaun iha TL

Koordenador Civil Society Education Partnership (CSEP) Timor-Leste (CSEP TL), José de Jesus, hantem Presidente Repúblika (PR), Francisco Guterres Lu-Olo, preokupa ho situasaun edukasaun iha Timor-Leste (TL), taha alokasan Orsamentu Jeral Estadu (OJE) ba sektor edukasaun sei minimu no taha edukasaun la kobre to'o ara remota.

"PR mos preokupa ho situasaun edukasaun iha TL no PR simu ona rekomendasaun ne'e ebe olin (5/3) ani hato'o ba PR. PR mos sei azada hatutan lian sositidade civil nian ba publiku, ba Governu atual ho Governu foun atu bele komitmentu ba desenvolvimento sektor edukasaun hodi aliji kualidade edukasaun ba sira hato'i iha TL,

Inklui sei hato'o mos rekomendasaun ba PN atu bele hato' lei ne'e ebe maka adkusaun no diak ba sositidade Timorese."

Koordenador CSEP TL, inklui representante organizasaun iha CSEP, inklui representante organizasaun ne'ebe servisu iha deficiente no Uniao Profesoires Timor-Leste (UPTL) hato'o preokupasaun kona-bi situasaun ne'e mos kondusun edukasaun iha TL ba PR.

"Ami kontinua halo agromasasaun ho emidade hato-hato atu bele kualite ba in-situasaun sira no ba joven sira puta bele lee no emidade kualite sira, iha liu lingua ne'ebe maka agromasasaun iha in-situasaun, taha organizasaun sositidade civil hato'o ne'e servisu iha sira sositidade la gasta lee no nimeru emu lee ne'e mos iha liu," de-

han José de Jesus.

Nia akersenta, taha ne'e maka olin (5/3) representante organizasaun sositidade civil hato'o ne'ebe maka hamahan an iha CSEP, inklui representante organizasaun ne'ebe servisu iha deficiente no Uniao Profesoires Timor-Leste (UPTL) hato'o preokupasaun kona-bi situasaun ne'e mos kondusun edukasaun iha TL ba PR.

"Ami kontinua halo agromasasaun ho emidade hato-hato atu bele kualite ba in-situasaun sira no ba joven sira puta bele lee no emidade kualite sira, iha liu lingua ne'ebe maka agromasasaun iha in-situasaun, taha organizasaun sositidade civil hato'o ne'e servisu iha sira sositidade la gasta lee no nimeru emu lee ne'e mos iha liu," de-

munik atu bele hato'o kualidade edukasaun ba Timor-Leste hato'i iha TL hantem Koordenador CSEP ne'e.

Nia relata, iha asun balun ne'ebe maka organizasaun sositidade civil hato'o ne'ebe hato' lian sositidade, taha ne'ebe maka olin (5/3) mai kualite ho PR atu bele tau agromasasaun ba kualidade edukasaun.

Sositidade civil hato'o ne'ebe hato' emidade hato-hato atu bele hato' lian sositidade, taha ne'ebe maka hantem Action for Change Foundation (ACF), Many Hands, One Nation (MAMON), Institut Mandalan Integrasi (IMI) Habor - Dezolve Talent (HADEZTA), Foto Radom Famita (FRF) representante organizasaun ne'ebe servisu iha area deficiente no Uniao Profesoires Timor-Leste (UPTL) sira.

Local press coverage of CSEP's meeting with the President on challenges in education

Coalition Meeting with the President Led to Increased Education Commitment

The Civil Society Education Partnership (CSEP) coalition has been playing a key role in linking grassroots efforts and policy advocacy at the highest level in Timor-Leste. In order to highlight the education issues faced by teachers' unions, people with disabilities, women and youth, CSEP immediately engaged the newly elected President of Timor-Leste, His Excellency, Francisco Guterres Lu-Olo.

Since Timor-Leste is the youngest country in the Asia Pacific region, the focus of education is mostly around financing, infrastructure and quality. CSOs, led by CSEP, presented their concerns to the President, requesting him to champion and speak up on the need for the government to prioritise investing in education which would ensure inclusive, equitable, quality education and lifelong learning for all.

CSEP advocated for the realisation of the promises made by Timor-Leste's government through the Minister of Education in February 2018 during the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Replenishment Conference in which, the government committed to increase its education budget from 13.3% in 2017 to 15% of the national budget in 2019 and 2020. The President acknowledged those commitments and encouraged CSOs not to keep quiet and to



CSEP staff and members with the President of Timor-Leste (centre right)

keep pushing the government to deliver its commitments. The President also emphasised his commitment to promulgate a multilingual education policy because this is important for marginalised children and learners who live in rural areas. This would improve the quality of their learning and help them understand and learn in their own languages.

Two weeks after the meeting, the President formally addressed the country through all media channels and platforms (national television, radio, newspapers and online media) and strongly committed to prioritise education in the government's reform agenda by ensuring that everyone, especially children and youth from the marginalised sectors, have access to quality public education. He also emphasised the importance of creating spaces for learning, particularly for the most marginalised. This was a very inspiring education message that was delivered by the President, his first public address since he was elected.

CSEP continues to conduct monitoring of schools and communities, pursue research to inform its analysis of needed education policy changes in Timor-Leste and push decision-makers to craft substantive education policies based on the country context and as envisaged in the National Education Strategic Plan 2011 - 2030 and SDG 4. The President agreed that civil society entities should continue to engage with the government while he will also raise these issues with the Prime Minister in their weekly meetings with other relevant entities, and with the public at large to prioritise education in the country. The meeting between CSEP and the President became headline news in all media

channels in Timor-Leste, bringing much needed attention to critical education issues.

Following this meeting, CSEP continued leading the same civil society groups to meet with the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) to present similar recommendations to the Minister, Vice Ministers and Director Generals. The MEYS officials expressed their commitment to cooperate with all relevant entities including CSOs that are working on education.

CSEP has made positive and interactive coordination with the MEYS to address cross-cutting education issues related to equity, quality, and financing.

These efforts of CSEP have been complemented further by its active engagement with the Local Education Group (LEG) which is known as *Ação Conjunta Para a Educação Timor-Leste* (ACETL) convened by the MEYS together with UNICEF Timor-Leste and the World Bank. The LEG/ACETL holds regular meetings with development partners and CSOs as a space to discuss education issues and guide the government in implementing its national education sector plan.

The Coalition will continue to engage and approach the decision-makers such as the government, the national parliament, development partners and CSOs to ensure that education is a priority agenda for the country.

The meeting with the President was beneficial for this young nation and paved the way for sustained cooperation to ensure the right to education for all. •



4. CAMBODIA

Coalition Collaboration and Engagement with the Government and Development Partners Led to reforms

Since its founding in 2002, the national coalition NGO Education Partnership (NEP) has become the leading organisation that promotes active collaboration between NGOs working on education, and the government. NEP's strengths include its network of more than 140 member organisations, and its longstanding, constructive collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), and development partners (DPs).

NEP's stature and ability to advocate for education at the national level has improved since it occupied permanent seats in the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) and Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG).

NEP's active participation in MoEYS policy-related events, JTWG meetings and high-level meetings and consultations enabled the coalition to contribute pertinent policy-related information, feedback and suggestions to high-level Government education officials and technical departments, both in formal and informal settings.

NEP is able to maintain this broad active participation in policy developments through its national committees and working groups, and

sub-sector and thematic working groups. These groups undertake collective advocacy, research and analysis, and provided support to sub-national NGOs that work to improve the accessibility and quality of education at the provincial level.

At the grassroots level, NEP has supported its members in mobilising their communities to promote the importance of education. NEP has encouraged them to join in dialogues and make recommendations on how to improve the education sector. This support included financial and technical assistance to implement local campaigns related to World Teachers' Day and International Literacy Day, and mobilisations of civil society to conduct social audit forums to assess local education service needs. Support also included training on how to engage with the government and to identify plans for improvement. NEP has conducted local learning activities to deepen knowledge of thematic education sector issues and to build solidarity with global movements through the Global Action Week for Education (GAWE).

Additionally, NEP joined the annual Consultative Workshop on Education Sector Development between the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MoEF), MoEYS, and DPs to discuss education sector budget priorities for the upcoming year and lobbied for an increase in the national education budget. To this end, NEP mobilised all stakeholders to support the campaign messages on 'increasing the education budget to at least 20%'. Recently, five technical departments of MoEYS, DPs and four sub-sector / thematic working groups have supported the advocacy position and messages of NEP.



NEP members engage in a participatory activity at the national education financing workshop

Highlights of NEP's engagement include the following:

- In 2016, NEP provided key recommendations and inputs to the annual meeting on education budget priorities between the MoEF and the MoEYS to improve the quality of learning outcomes, improve teacher deployment systems, strengthen the efficiency of budget expenditure and address the challenge of informal school fees. NEP also joined the CSO Budget Working Group as an associate member to expand its strategy in order to increase government attention to budget accountability and transparency.
- In 2017, NEP worked closely with relevant stakeholders through press conferences and radio talk shows, posted and shared campaign messages on banners, websites and social media, and organised local campaigns that gained support from



Participants of the consultation on education financing



NEP staff and members in the national education workshop

MoEYS, DPs, teachers, and communities for an increase in the education budget.

- In 2018, NEP coordinated with the Cambodia Campaign for Education (CCE) to organise the annual campaign of GAWE with the theme 'Education Financing for SDG 4 Accountability'. NEP and the CCE were in the leading committee that organised a series of campaign activities including the national forum, local campaigns, the writing of IEC materials, a media advisory, and social media postings that all called for an increase in the national budget for education.

Through these advocacy efforts, the education budget was increased from 12.3% in 2017 to 13.3% in 2018 of the total national budget (MoEYS, 2018). MoEF also committed to increase the Program Based Budget at school level in the future. The Minister of MoEYS announced during the Education Congress 2017 that the 'MoEYS still needs an increased budget to improve the quality of learning and teaching, and is committed to increase the budget to at least 20% of the national budget'.

From NEP's experience, quality research contributed to effective advocacy at the

national and sub-national levels. Since advocating for 20% of the budget allocation to the education sector was a huge commitment that needed sufficient justification, NEP mobilised resources from the CSO Budget Working Group to conduct the research entitled 'Performance Budgeting at Primary School Level of Cambodia' and continued collecting evidence to support the advocacy for the next stages.

Significant progress has also been made by NEP, NGO members and relevant stakeholders toward the improvement of teachers' living conditions in order to help them focus on teaching and learning quality. The monthly salary of teachers has grown gradually, from USD 200 in 2016 to USD 278 in 2018. Moreover, the Minister of MoEYS openly confirmed in the Education Congress of 2017 that teacher salaries would be increased not only for 2018 but also for the years beyond.

However, the overall current and estimated annual increases in salaries were not enough considering the economic situation and the inflation rate in Cambodia as compared to its neighbouring countries. Accordingly, advocating for a continued increase of teacher salaries is a priority agenda for NEP to pursue in the coming years. •

5. PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Education Coalition Engaged Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships to Promote Quality Education

The PNG Education Advocacy Network (PEAN) was formed in 2003, and after a challenging period, was reinvigorated in 2017 with support from ASPBAE through the CSEF program. PEAN chose a new Board and Coordinator, and prioritised network and partnership building and capacity development to influence education policy.

At the national level, PEAN made a good start in 2018 by securing two positions in the PNG Local Education Group (LEG). PEAN was represented in the LEG by the PEAN Coordinator and the Vice Chair of the PEAN Board who works at the National Research Institute. In its first contribution to the LEG, PEAN urged for a section on inclusion in the PNG Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG) and Multiplier Fund proposal to GPE and Japan, aimed at improving education standards. Their recommendation was added to the final document.

PEAN ensured its participation in broader CSO forums, multi-stakeholder education policy events, and meetings with officials from government departments. For example, PEAN participated in the PNG Consultative Implementation Monitoring Council's (CIMC) meeting of over 60 CSOs including church groups and social entrepreneurs, where one of the five themes was

Students in front of the electronic billboard highlighting the importance of quality education



education. Given that adult literacy was not addressed in the PNG education plan and budget, PEAN proposed that the government legislate or adopt the PNG Adult Literacy Policy and allocate resources to enable its implementation. This recommendation was accepted in the CIMC meeting. It was incorporated in a position paper that was distributed at the National Planning Summit in Lae, the capital of Morobe Province in PNG. Prior to the Summit, the PEAN Coordinator participated in a follow-through CIMC consultation where he lobbied for the adult literacy recommendation. The CIMC is an important advocacy space which is chaired by the Minister for National Planning who reports directly to the government's National Executive Council. It has an Education and Training Sector Committee that is comprised of government representatives, the private sector, development partners and there is one space for a local advocacy organization.

At the Pacific sub-regional level, PEAN Board members from the Peace Foundation Melanesia and PNG Teachers Association attended the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat Consultative Meeting with CSOs in March 2018 to discuss key issues facing the Pacific region. In the meeting, PEAN and other CSOs advocated for access to quality education and literacy.

To inform the public about SDG 4 and PEAN's advocacy for quality education, in September 2018, PEAN organised a digital media promotion on a large electronic billboard

located in one of the busiest traffic corners in Port Moresby, close to most government offices, and where 30,000 citizens drove past each day. The one-minute promotion was screened every five minutes all day for 21 days. Through the digital media, the importance of education and the SDG 4 information on inclusive quality education were promoted to the public. •



PEAN Coordinator and a researcher work on an education budget report



PEAN Chair and Vice Chair in the Pacific coalition's sub-regional workshop organised by ASPBAE



COESI Coordinator with Solomon Islands Government officials and ASPBAE staff at the APMED meeting in Bangkok

6. SOLOMON ISLANDS

Learning Exchange Showcased COESI's Membership Diversity and Networking Approach to Influence Government Policy

The Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI) has a diverse membership that adds credibility to its claim of being a key civil society voice on education. Member organisations include a women's group, Vois Blong Mere (Women's Voice) which runs an advocacy program on radio; a youth organization, Young Men's Christian Association; Bethesda, a special school for people with disabilities; People with Disabilities Solomon Islands (PWDSI), the Literacy Association of Solomon Islands (LASI), the Solomon Islands Teachers Associations (SINTA), the Solomon Islands Association of Rural and Vocational Training Centres, and the Education Department of the Solomon Islands National University (SINU). This diversity has strengthened COESI when approaching the government with its proposals and recommendations. COESI has two board members from Vois Blong Mere and SINTA at the National Education Board (NEB) and is beginning to incorporate coordinated civil society education advocacy messages in its interventions at the national level. The NEB is the highest education advisory body in the Solomon Islands, chaired by the Permanent Secretary, directly advising the Minister of Education.

Additionally, COESI coordinated the meeting of the multi-stakeholder National Literacy Network and proposed the theme for International Literacy Day (ILD) to be 'Literacy for Lifelong Learning', with agreement from the ILD Organising Committee.

In May 2018, COESI hosted a delegation from PNG Education Advocacy Network (PEAN) for a learning exchange in Honiara, the capital of Solomon Islands. COESI

introduced PEAN to some of its members and facilitated a visit to the Bethesda Special School for children and adults with disabilities and another combined primary and secondary school that conducts an inclusive education program.

The PEAN delegation was interested to learn about COESI's approach to networking with government officials. COESI shared its careful lobbying approach - every interaction must be about forging partnerships and working together for common goals. Undiplomatic or aggressive direct public criticism will close the doors of the government to CSO engagement and it could require a great deal of effort to re-open the doors and to work together again.

The COESI Coordinator was able to draw on his experience in engaging with the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). He has long-standing links with several networks. Both experience and network linkages are essential for effective engagement with government in a small Pacific island nation like Solomon Islands. For the COESI Coordinator, this gave him inroads to the Ministry of Education, access to information and documents, and the relatively greater ability to develop direct contact with relevant officials.

The Coordinator was invited by MoET and SINTA to contribute to the development of the Solomon Islands Teachers' Scheme of Services (SOS). The collaborative proposal on the SOS was submitted to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for its consideration. The government has invited the COESI Coordinator to be part of the official Ministry of Education (MEHRD) delegation to the Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED) in Bangkok organised by UNESCO in July 2018. The Coordinator was also invited to join the LEG as the representative of COESI.

The COESI Coordinator, along with an ASPBAE Capacity Support Officer, were able to take the PEAN delegation to the Ministry of Education and met with the Ministry officials including the Head of the Strategic Support Unit, and the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer; the Head of the TVET Division; the Head of School Services responsible for inclusive education, and the Disability and Inclusion Officer. The PEAN Coordinator expressed his appreciation to COESI for the beneficial learning exchange which was relevant for PEAN's own work. The learning exchange proved to be beneficial for both organisations. •



ASPBAE Advisor meets with the Ministry of Education staff under TVET Division and Inclusion Unit, COESI and PEAN coordinators and staff.



COESI commemorates the 2018 International Literacy Day.



KoBLE volunteers conduct community survey amongst students.

7. VANUATU

Building Partnerships, Connecting with Communities, and Utilising Informal Contacts to Promote Education

In Vanuatu, despite the impact of modernisation in recent decades, the culture of family, language, close relationships and informal networking remains strong. Extended family or community connections also known as the 'wantok' system often assist in the process of collecting documents and reports on policy and its implementation, budget and spending data, internal monitoring and evaluation and discussing key issues and new ideas on education. The Kolisen Blong Leftemap Edukesen (KoBLE) uses these networks to facilitate the process as formal networks can be less effective.

KoBLE uses popular places to find key officials in the 'nakamal' or kava bar, where one can raise issues and have discussions in an informal way, which can sometimes lead to changes in policy and programmes. Further informal occasions for policy influence can occur during multi-stakeholder and civil society meetings, where KoBLE representatives find time between sessions to raise issues with the key stakeholders including meetings with members of the Vanuatu Council of Chiefs (Malvatumauri) and the Chair of the Vanuatu Christian Council who can be valuable allies in advocating for important issues including education.

Only a year old, KoBLE is a coalition that builds relationships and strengthens networks by utilising Vanuatu's informal systems. The strategy enabled KoBLE to establish itself as a partner of the Ministry of Education and Training. This relationship was subsequently formalized by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. The Ministry has also invited the coalition to join the LEG, which is a multi-stakeholder body comprised by key government officials, donors and civil society actors that makes decisions on education policy. KoBLE is now a new member of the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Committee, which consists of

the University of the South Pacific (USP), the Vanuatu Skills Partnership (formerly TVET) Program and other Ministry of Education officers. KoBLE and the Vanuatu Skills Partnership Program will soon be jointly organising the launch of the strategic plan for Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy in a multi-stakeholder forum. This will be a great opportunity to showcase the work of KoBLE, create stronger partnerships with other stakeholders working on education and also to contribute in increasing awareness on the SDG 4 agenda.

After informal approaches were made, access to more formal processes proved easier. However, KoBLE is continuously learning how to strike the right balance of being independent from the government and being its influential partner. An example of informal and formal approaches is KoBLE's independent school grant analysis project. KoBLE sent a formal letter-request to the Director of School Services informing him of the purpose of the study. The director granted the requested permission and notified the school authorities and communities.



KoBLE Board members, ASPBAE staff and CSEF Fund Manager attend financial management training.



KoBLE researcher interviews a participant of the community school survey



Representative of KoBLE speaks at the Regional Consultation for Education Advocates

The study, in conjunction with the Vanuatu Teachers' Union, is being undertaken in three schools in the capital, Port Vila, one school in rural Efate and one in an outer island of Shefa Province. The study will highlight inclusivity and specifically, accessibility in schools for children with special needs. It will also call on the government to provide more funding to train and support special teachers in the classroom.

The study has already enhanced the profile of KoBLE in the communities where it conducted interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions with community leaders. KoBLE also distributed flyers about its work to teachers and community members. School council members, principals, and parents were very cooperative and supportive of the initiative, and encouraged KoBLE to conduct further research on some of the long-standing education issues. They also expressed their appreciation that an organisation such as KoBLE exists, which can provide a space where parents and communities can raise their concerns regarding education.

By navigating through informal networks, KoBLE is playing an important role in advocating for education in Vanuatu, and in bridging the gap between organisations, communities and the government. •

8. PHILIPPINES

Review of a Vintage Teachers' Law Led to Successful Advocacy for Policy Change on Teachers' Rights

In the Philippines, there is a vintage law, passed in June 1966, the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers or Republic Act 4670, which embodies the Philippine government's commitment "to promote and improve the social and economic status of public school teachers, their living and working conditions, their terms of employment and career prospects in order that they may compare favourably with existing opportunities in other walks of life."

In June 2016, E-Net Philippines convened teachers, leaders and members from major teachers' federations in a forum on "The Status of Filipino Teachers, 50 Years After the Magna Carta" to look into the condition of teachers and if the special law has contributed to uplifting teachers' rights and status. The forum became a venue for teachers' organisations to unite in campaigning for the Magna Carta's full and rightful implementation and present their position to Professor Leonor Briones, guest of honour at the event, as she stepped into the role of incoming Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary.

As teachers expressed sadness and disappointment on the non-implementation, under-implementation or wrong implementation of the Magna Carta, the incoming DepEd Secretary recognised that teachers deserve more than just lip-service recognition and accolades, and there is a need for genuine change in their condition where their economic and democratic rights are respected and protected.

Recognising the evidence affirming existing assumptions on the deteriorating teachers' conditions and to back-up the teachers' campaign for the full implementation of the Magna Carta, E-Net Philippines embarked on a collaborative research, together with coalition members Action and Solidarity for the

Forum participants urge the government to implement the Magna Carta law to uphold the rights of teachers.



Empowerment of Teachers (ASSERT), Public Services Labour Independent Confederation (PSLINK), Samahang Manggagawang Pilipino – National Alliance of Teachers and Office Workers (SMP-NATOW), Teachers' Dignity Coalition (TDC) and Teachers and Employees Associations for Change and Education Reforms, Inc. (TEACHERS, Inc.). Case studies were gathered from different school divisions through focus group discussions and school fora, and consolidated by January 2017 in "A Review of the Magna Carta for Public Schools Teachers: Status of Implementation After 50 Years (1966-2016)" which was used to inform better education policy and decision-making in upholding teachers' rights and to effect change that can start by fully and correctly implementing the provisions of the law. A Policy Brief on the Review was subsequently published in September 2018 which also highlighted the case studies of selected provisions of the Magna Carta.

The most significant outcome of the Review is that it gave the E-Net teachers' constituency a clear position and strong evidence to effectively engage the government in policy advocacy to improve teachers' conditions.

From the studies and recommendations put forward in the Review, teachers' organisations have developed their own policy positions for legislators and education agencies, and have come up with tactical and long-term campaign agendas and strategies under the Magna Carta. Through this they persuaded more teachers to support the campaign. TDC has been reaching teachers nationwide using the Magna Carta campaign as a platform with their "Seven Demands" which also served as a banner call in a two week-long Teachers' Protest Camp at DepEd Central Office held during the October 2018 Teachers' Month. ASSERT has pushed for its "6-Need-Fix, 8-Can't Wait" Magna Carta Legislative Agenda at the education committees of both Houses of Congress. Likewise, TEACHERS Inc., PS LINK and SMP-NATOW conducted advocacy efforts on the rights and welfare of teachers including those in private schools. All demands pertain to the full and correct implementation of the Magna Carta which includes increasing teachers' salaries, strict implementation of the six-hours of work policy, special hardship allowance, hazard pay, annual free medical check-up and hospitalisation, step increments, compensation for injuries, and



Banners emphasise the rights of teachers and call for the implementation of the Magna Carta law.



Department of Education Secretary addresses the forum on "The Status of Filipino Teachers, 50 Years After the Magna Carta."

transfer allowance among other items. The Review findings also provided a basis to seek accountability over SDG 4, especially the goal for teachers to deliver quality education, and to strongly assert regular budgetary appropriations in the annual Government Appropriation Act to implement the Magna Carta provisions.

The Magna Carta teachers' campaign yielded positive outcomes. The 17th Congress Basic Education Committee and Commission on Human Rights (CHR) have committed to support a legislative inquiry and human rights investigation, respectively, to determine what provisions of the Magna Carta need revision, repeal or amendments, or reinforcements. A policy forum on the Magna Carta organized by E-Net at the Senate in November 2019 resulted to the filing of a resolution to conduct a formal hearing on this issue.

The Department of Education has issued memoranda and orders on the correct implementation of the six-hour workday and a step increment computation among others. A DepEd Memorandum released in September 2018 reiterated provisions stated in earlier memoranda specifying that: "teachers who choose to render the remaining two hours of work outside the school premises must not

be subjected to salary deductions; and that "teachers should not be required to submit means of verification (MOVs) as proof of services completed during the remaining two hours of work rendered outside the school premises." In some cases, teachers have been compensated or have received back wages. Some local governments have also committed to provide additional allowances (cost of living allowance, special hardship allowance) to support teachers' welfare. The national government has promised to upgrade teachers' salaries.

The teachers' Magna Carta campaign, backed up by concrete evidence as provided by the E-Net Review of the Magna Carta is gradually changing the landscape to uplift the condition of Filipino teachers and raise the dignity of the teaching profession once again. These reforms in the teachers sector contribute to their professional development that directly impact on education quality and school governance. •



Participants at the NNER's public facing event.

9. MYANMAR

Advocating for Education Policy Reform through Public Engagement and Empowerment

The Coalition, National Network for Education Reform (NNER), Myanmar, believes that public engagement is a powerful strategy in advocating for education policy reform.

Since 2012, NNER has been organising the National Education Forum twice a year where 500 to 1,500 participants from educational institutions, government representatives, teachers' unions and students' unions, parents, CSOs, international and national NGOs participate from across the country. Five representatives from each state and division are selected to join the network members' meeting and the National Education Forum.

The National Education Forum held in Mawlamyaing, Mon State in May 2017 included panel discussions and workshops on the review and analysis of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP 2016–2021), on local and national education issues, SDG 4, the role of CSOs in national education planning processes, and advocacy for ensuring mother tongue-based multilingual education, indigenous education, and community-based education.

The sessions on public engagement on the right to education, education for marginalised sectors, and the SDG 4 global education agenda gained significant attention and it was requested that more participants should be allowed to attend the forum in the future.

The National Education Forum has created a space for public awareness raising and for public participation in tackling critical education issues in the country. Through the forum, information about SDG 4 and Education 2030

agenda has reached the public. After the forum, participants made efforts to disseminate further the information about SDG 4 in their respective states and divisions, which resulted in the wider reach of NNER's information-dissemination efforts. Such public spaces as the National Education Forum can be utilised to feed into the national education planning.



Participants of the public facing event hold banners to emphasise the importance of the SDGs, especially education.

The previous government failed to inform the public about the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and EFA. The current government on the other hand has yet to conduct comprehensive consultations with the public, CSOs and other stakeholders on the implementation of SDG 4/Education 2030 agenda. Since there are no open spaces for the public to engage in, the issues emerging from the ground could not be heard. The grievances of the people were not included in SDG 4 implementation process that the Myanmar government has developed. The government NESP needs review and updating to reflect the higher ambition of SDG 4 and Education 2030 agenda. NNER has taken the responsibility to raise awareness on SDG 4 through public events given the government's lack of efforts to disseminate information.

NNER has translated the SDG 4 and Education 2030 Agenda in the local language for easier comprehension by the general public. It has been distributed widely through social media, emails and at every NNER education event.

To reach more people especially those in remote areas, NNER also conducted workshops in local languages where comprehensive discussions on SDG 4/Education 2030 agenda were undertaken and education issues at the local levels and in ethnic indigenous communities were discussed in depth.

High media visibility played a key role in NNER's work of popularising SDG 4 from the local to national levels. Information

about NNER's analysis of the NESP was also shared as it called for attention to the needed education policy reforms to achieve quality education, education for marginalised people, equitable financing and lifelong learning for all. Local and national media covered NNER's activities. The coalition participated in televised public debates which were also aired on radio programs.

NNER has consistently been invited by national and local media to participate in public debates, interviews, education talks, and on-air radio programs. NNER used these media opportunities to discuss key education themes such as SDG 4, NESP, education for marginalised sectors, teachers, disability issues, right to education, strengthening the education system, financing and other education issues. The national and local media have acknowledged the crucial role that NNER plays in the discussion of much needed education reforms in Myanmar. •



NNER CSEF Coordinator of the coalition lead agency speaks at the Regional Consultation for Education Advocates organised by ASPBAE.



ASPBAE staff with representative from VAEFA communicate in sign language at the Regional Consultation of Education Advocates.

10. VIETNAM

National, Regional and Global Civil Society Action: An Integrated Approach to Influence SDG 4 Processes

Almost two years after the international agreement on the SDGs at the United Nations in 2015, the Vietnam government issued the National Plan of Action on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 (NAP on the SDGs). Not long after, the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam (MOET) issued the National Action Plan on the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal on Education (NAP on SDG 4). The Ministry of Investment and Planning (MIP) was assigned by the government to be the focal point for implementation of the NAP on the SDGs.

The NAP on SDG 4 is the first finalised sector plan on the SDGs in Vietnam. Health, environment, social welfare, economy, as well as other sectors are still working on the development of their respective sector plans of action. The issuance of the NAP on SDG 4 was a result of the successful engagement with the government by the civil society coalition, the Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA), with various education partners and stakeholders not only at the national level, but also at the regional and global levels.

The lobbying efforts of VAEFA since the first Asia Pacific Meeting on Education (APMED) in July 2016 organised by UNESCO Bangkok, enabled it to engage in several rounds of consultations on the development of the NAP on SDG 4 during the first half of 2017. This resulted in four drafts of the NAP, which incorporated comments and inputs from UN agencies and NGOs.

After the issuance of the 4th draft, the MOET requested VAEFA and UNESCO-Vietnam to coordinate another round of reviews and provide written comments from UN agencies and from civil society organisations before finalising



Participants at Vietnam's Voluntary National Review (VNR) process.

the document. This was proof of the recognition by the MOET of the constructive and quality contributions from VAEFA and UNESCO-Vietnam in the previous round of consultations. The final NAP on SDG 4 was then approved by the Minister of Education and officially issued on 26 June 2017.

By actively engaging in and co-leading this process, VAEFA was able to bring the voices of its members representing the most marginalised groups in Vietnam, and incorporate the coalition's advocacy agenda, in the final NAP on SDG 4.

Recommendations made by VAEFA on the NAP on SDG 4 include improving the focus on gender equity and inclusion, being attentive to the needs of people with disabilities and out of school children, ensuring literacy education for marginalised sectors, addressing school violence, and improving the logic between some interrelated quantitative indicators in the action plan.

The good relationship and trust built with the SDG 4 focal points in the MOET was crucial in allowing VAEFA to play an active role in the development process of the NAP on SDG 4. This relationship was initiated in previous regional events such as APMED I and II in 2015 and 2016 and other similar spaces where country delegations, including the government, NGOs and the UN understood one another's positions better which facilitated better coordination and collaboration.

However, it is not always easy for CSOs to be able to participate in these regional spaces. ASPBAE, especially with funding support from the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF), played a very effective role in enabling coalitions like VAEFA secure spaces in regional consultation platforms. On the one hand, ASPBAE's Capacity Support and Advocacy Advisers have been working closely with country coalitions and CSOs to enhance their skills, capacities, and confidence in delivering education advocacy work. On the other hand, ASPBAE strongly lobbied within regional mechanisms to secure spaces for national level CSO participation, especially national education coalitions, in these important platforms. Many regional advocacy forums are part of global policy mechanisms,



VAEFA Coordinator speaks at the Regional Consultation for Education Advocates organised by ASPBAE



VAEFA Staff at the Regional Consultation in Da Nang, Vietnam in August 2019.

and recommendations forged at the regional level contribute to global mechanisms and reports. ASPBAE, which is a part of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) civil society movement and other relevant global networks, has made its interventions and lobbying work effective, drawing on the voices and priorities of national level organisations such as VAEFA.

The national, regional, and global connections and cooperation are vital to many successful campaigns and advocacy work. Government commitments and consensus are informed through the global, regional, and national architectures that helped guide national and local advocacy work. Issues, voices, and recommendations from the work on the ground were elevated in relevant regional and global spaces, which ensure the genuineness and quality of inputs to policy discussions. Through gatherings in regional, and sometimes in global policy spaces, the relationships among CSOs, the UN and governments are strengthened, which leads to better cooperation in implementing education and development commitments at the national level. •



Inception Meeting on the Development of the SDG 4 Strategic Framework and Action Plan.

11. BANGLADESH

Coalition Influenced SDG 4 Strategic Framework through Active Engagement with the Ministry of Education and UNESCO

The development of the Strategic Framework on SDG 4 for Bangladesh demonstrates the power of collective efforts of the government, development partners and the civil society. In response to a request from the Ministry of Education (MoE), the UNESCO Dhaka Office initiated a process for the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to develop an SDG 4 Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Bangladesh (SDG4SF and AP). Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), the national coalition, offered to facilitate the process together with the UNESCO Dhaka Office, the MoE, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) and the Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU). This process identified strategic priority issues for Bangladesh and provided a medium-term mission and long-term vision for achieving the SDG 4 by 2030 as well as decided on urgent actions to address immediate needs. The process was possible because of CAMPE's knowledge and expertise in the education sector and its high-level engagement with the government, and through a strategic partnership with UNESCO - Dhaka.

CAMPE helped the government in crafting a policy framework with time-bound and prioritised actions indicating clear accountability under the MoPME and MOE and in coordination with other ministries to implement the SDG 4 commitments. It also provided insights on the linkage with other key ministries and divisions in achieving SDG 4 and the intersection of education with other SDGs such as

SDG 8 on decent work and SDG 5 on gender equality. In addition, a monitoring framework is being developed covering all targets of SDG 4 taking into account global and thematic indicators to ensure systematic monitoring and reporting of the progress and results, as per the 'Metadata Plan' developed by UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS). The SDG 4 Framework and Plan will



Focus Group Discussion with youth groups on SDG4 organised by CAMPE.

also contribute to the development of the 8th Five- Year Plan (2020-2025) of Bangladesh.

As part of the SDG4SF and AP for Bangladesh, stakeholders were informed about the process which created space for voluntary involvement and also sharpened the methodology via an Inception Workshop. Rigorous stocktaking and desk reviews were carried out to look into the various initiatives taken at the national, regional and global levels. In doing so, a list was prepared and shared for further updating before the review was started. CAMPE mobilized its members to conduct local consultations to gather diverse voices in education. Thirty Key Informant Interviews (KII), four sub-national consultations, and eight Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were carried out to collect the views of key stakeholders including the concerned ministers, government officials, divisional / district administration, education officials, bilateral and multilateral agencies and civil society leaders (teachers, students, parents, school management committees, opinion leaders and enlightened civil society personalities, excluded and minority groups), and the corporate sector. Based on the findings of the sub-national consultations, a National Consultation was organised. Altogether, more than 600 people were directly consulted of which about 30% were female.

The Strategic Framework and Action Plan includes a set of strategic directions and an Action Plan for the education sector including pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher secondary and tertiary education including faith-based education services and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and basic literacy and lifelong learning, in both formal and non-formal settings. Considering the strategic importance, the government formed a Technical Team and a Steering Committee to examine the technical aspects and provide high-level strategic inputs.

To strategically enable civil society participation in monitoring accountability in SDG 4, CAMPE initiated two interventions: 1) finalisation of the Bengali translation of Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action, and 2) capacity



Sub-national consultation on SDG 4 Strategic Framework.



Participants of the sub-national consultation on the SDG4 Strategic Framework and Action Plan.

building and awareness-raising among the stakeholders on the priorities, roles and obligations in developing and implementing SDG 4. CAMPE translated the Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action under the CSEF programme which was reviewed and adopted by the government with minor editing.

IEC materials were developed as part of the capacity building and awareness raising on the priorities, roles and SDG 4 obligations. In addition, a roundtable meeting and a TV talk-show have been planned. The output of the roundtable will also be published as a supplement in a widely circulated national daily newspaper.

In sum, the broadly participated SDG4 framework process provided an opportunity for the civil society to show to the duty bearers the grassroots reality and to make them accountable to the rights holders. Now the challenge is for the government of Bangladesh to make use of the said process or its outcome in education planning, in the development of the 8th Five Year Plan from 2021-2025, and as a basis for reform initiatives. The process or its outcome is also valuable for stakeholders, including CSOs, as a reference of, or process guide to ongoing advocacy. •



AFE Mongolia staff participates in public discussions on the SDG Voluntary National Review.

12. MONGOLIA

SDG 4.7 – From Public Discussions on Curriculum Change to Contributing to the SDG Voluntary National Review

After welcoming democracy in the 1990s, the government of Mongolia has been actively working to provide quality education to its citizens. Over the years, however, it has faced many challenges in the education sector, including changing the outdated content of history, social science and civic education subjects in schools. While the SDG 4 agenda was adopted into the Mongolian education system after 2015, educational organisations have struggled to understand and translate the SDG 4.7 target in the Mongolian context.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS) of Mongolia has committed to integrate Global Citizenship Education (GCED) into the national curriculum. Even though GCED is a relatively new concept in Mongolia, some of its main themes are already present in school subjects, particularly social sciences. This includes moral education, and more traditionally, civic education. Students are taught how to become active and responsible citizens in the society and learn more about the Mongolian culture and heritage. Some GCED and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) themes related to SDG 4.7 are new concepts for the Mongolian education policymakers, especially curriculum and textbook developers. Environmental and economic sustainability, good health and well-being, peaceful coexistence, non-violence, global issues, and education for gender equality belong to GCED and ESD themes related to SDG 4.7.



Representative of AFE Mongolia discusses the key education challenges in Mongolia.

After the adoption of the Incheon Declaration, the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED) became a space to negotiate with high level government officials, cabinet secretariats and development partners to localise a single, renewed education agenda that is holistic, ambitious and inspirational, so that nobody will be left behind in education.

In 2017, after the 3rd APMED which was dedicated to 'Mainstreaming SDG 4.7', the 'All for Education!' Mongolia Coalition (AFE Mongolia) started to speak up about the transformative vision of education, urging GCED and ESD to be translated into national education policies, curricula content, teacher education and student assessment in compliance with SDG 4.7.

With support and guidance from ASPBAE and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), the AFE coalition actively worked with government agencies and non-state actors in advancing the SDG 4 goal and its targets. Member organisations of the coalition successfully engaged their constituencies and target groups, and integrated the advocacy for the SDG 4 goal and its targets in the coalition's core activities. Multi-stakeholder discussions on localising and realising the SDGs at the

national level and in grassroots contexts have also had an impact on government officials and public servants, who are responsible for implementing education policy at the national and local levels. Public events were held which included series of discussions with students, educators, lecturers and experts. Initiatives also included a photo essay on "Illustrating Social Diversity," Global Action Week on Education (GAWE) activities, and an SDG 4 Roll Out initiative to mainstream the targets of education 2030 in the education sector plan with concrete strategies and clear funding commitment. Orientation sessions with communities were also held based on tangible evidence such as case studies, research, evaluation and monitoring.

As part of its education advocacy strategy, the coalition organised a symposium on 'Global Citizenship Education in Mongolia' and invited government officials and individuals from the academia. The Adviser to the Education Minister, head of departments in MECS, lecturers, secretaries and researchers in the Academy of Science acknowledged their commitment to reform the curriculum content of the education sector in line with the concepts of SDG 4.7.



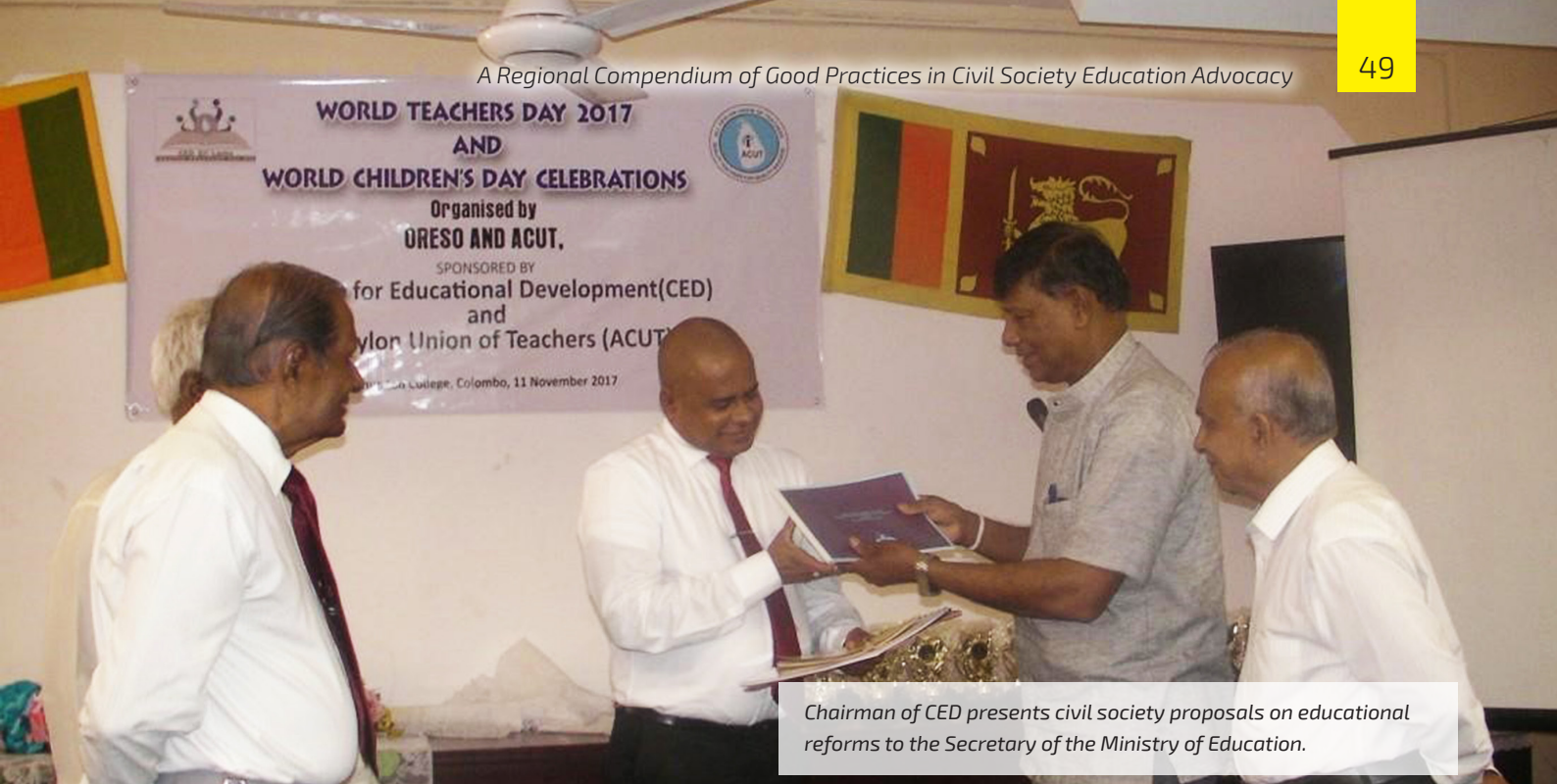
National Coordinator of AFE Mongolia speaks at the Regional Consultation for Education Advocates.

Following this event, the coalition started collaborating with the Education Institute of Mongolia in order to develop and pilot a Teachers' Guide on GCED aimed at mainstreaming the Teachers' Guide in several subject areas. Trainings for teachers were conducted and several class observations and knowledge sharing activities were organised and evaluated by the Asia Pacific Centre for International Education and Understanding (APCIEU) and the UNESCO Regional Office. The report was received positively, and the stakeholders agreed to broaden their mutual cooperation.

After years of education advocacy, education stakeholders including donors, embassies and international financial institutions have recognised AFE Mongolia's research-informed, constructive engagement approach. The Coalition is now regarded as a major player from the civil society in terms of developing education policy and initiatives in the country. AFE Mongolia has been invited to consult with the Asia Development Bank (ADB) country office on improving the methods

and management of data sources for SDG 4 national indicators, which to date have not been available in Mongolia.

Recently, the Coalition was also invited to engage in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process on the SDGs. It attended national consultations with the purpose of including civil society input in the VNR. Without research-informed, evidence-based multi-level advocacy, which starts from community orientations to organising the symposium, it would be unlikely to make effective policy change in the education sector. The Coalition believes that effective mutual cooperation is necessary to translate SDG 4 goals into concrete education policy practices. •



Chairman of CED presents civil society proposals on educational reforms to the Secretary of the Ministry of Education.

13. SRI LANKA

A Collaborative Civil Society Approach to Assessing Progress on the SDGs

During the preparation of Sri Lanka's Voluntary National Review (VNR) for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York in 2018, through civil society's engagement and pressure, the government commenced a review process. The VNR reported the progress the country has made with regard to achieving the overall Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In charged of monitoring the progress and achieving the SDGs was the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife. It played the key role in coordinating with stakeholders in the review process.

The Ministry handed over the review to the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), a government institution involved in policy formation and research. At the same time, the Ministry invited government department agencies for consultations on implementing the SDGs.

The Coalition for Education Development (CED) was invited by the Secretary of the Ministry to participate in the compilation of the VNR. CED has developed strong contacts with the Ministry, and was made a part of this process even though generally the spaces for CSO involvement in policy formulation and reforms were few in Sri Lanka. Most community-based organisations (CBOs) and other NGOs were not invited in the consultations. Thus, CSOs jointly requested the Ministry to involve them in this process. Although they were invited at the final stages of the SDG consultations, the civil society representatives felt that their voices were not being properly heard.

In this situation, a group of CSOs decided to form the Sri Lanka SDG Stakeholder Platform to initiate dialogue on developing an alternative review mechanism. CED Sri Lanka is one of the founding members of this civil society platform of 15



Members of the SDG Stakeholders Platform.

CSOs. In this platform several discussions and meetings were held to strengthen the position of civil society. CED Sri Lanka, along with other CSOs, identified the gaps in and hindrances to the development of the SDGs, and presented accurate information regarding the status of SDGs.

The other members of the group were involved in diverse sectors of community development such as poverty alleviation, health promotion, gender equality, environmental protection and education. Their work on the ground gave them the advantage of being able to gather information directly from the community rather than depend on government publications or secondary data.

After a series of SDG Stakeholder Platform meetings, the CSOs decided to prepare a Voluntary People's Review Report (VPR) on SDGs. Progress per SDG was assigned to organisations accordingly and based on expertise in particular fields. CED Sri Lanka was tasked to review and compile a report on SDG 4 focusing on Quality Education. Some of the consultations took place at the provincial level and CED member organisations facilitated these meetings where provincial issues were highlighted to ensure quality education. This teamwork provided a good opportunity for CED to develop more contacts with like-minded organisations.

Given that most members have full time work in their organisations, the voluntary work for the people's review and report compilation was difficult especially within a tight timeline. Thus, the core group members took the responsibility of gathering the information in lieu of submissions from the volunteer organisations and of compiling the VPR report. Despite the challenges, the VPR was presented at the HLPF in New York in 2018.

CED Sri Lanka has taken several initiatives for education including submitting to the Secretary of Education proposals for education reforms.

Looking back, the government decision to provide free education to all in 1938 was a pivotal point in social transformation in Sri Lanka. It made education the vehicle of social mobility, social security and social empowerment. The encouragement given by successive governments explained the phenomenal strides made by Sri Lanka in the field of education relative to its Asian neighbors. However, despite these remarkable achievements, Sri Lanka's education sector faces challenges related to quality, a mismatch of curricula and current labour market demands, inefficient administration, limited budget on education, lack of comprehensive national policy positions, unplanned policy changes carried out by the

political leaders, non-consultative policy propositions and a lack of space for civil society participation.

The government of Sri Lanka has yet to design a Framework for a National Education Policy that meets the country's commitments towards the 2030 Global Education Agenda. In this context, there is an important need for collective advocacy on the part of civil society. The government that came to power in 2015 has declared that it would introduce significant changes to the existing educational system. It also indicated that a new framework would be developed taking into consideration the targets mentioned under SDG 4. Although senior politicians including the Prime Minister made several statements with regard to educational reforms, a formal proposal or plan has not been submitted by the government. CED asked for opportunities to take part in the planning process, however the authorities have not considered their request. In this context, CED searched for alternative strategies.

After having a discussion with the CED Board members, it was decided that CED would develop civil society proposals on educational reforms. In this process, CED obtained the assistance of educators to facilitate the

consultation workshop and develop these proposals.

All the suggestions submitted by the groups were recorded, analysed and categorised under ten thematic areas. In these proposals, special attention was given to achieve the national education goals as well as SDG 4, ensuring quality education for all. The draft proposals were reviewed by a panel of experts. After consolidating all the important suggestions, CED handed over the proposals to the Secretary of Education at a special ceremony held in Colombo. The Secretary appreciated the initiative and informed that CED will be invited for future discussions. This proposal was also sent to the Education Reform Committee of the National Education Commission. Based on the proposal, CED Sri Lanka will reach out to the provincial education ministers and relevant authorities and advocate for reforms.

CED's continued advocacy efforts are contributing to the improvement of the education sector in Sri Lanka. Using different channels and multiple methods, the coalition is committed to bring a change, and play a key role in amplifying the voices of the civil society in the most important discussions on education. •



CED National Coordinator addresses the participants of the SDG Stakeholders Platform.



Students in a class on adult literacy in Afghanistan.

14. AFGHANISTAN

Promoting Youth and Adult Literacy and Education to Reduce Poverty in Rural Areas

Over the last decade, the literacy rate in Afghanistan has suffered drastically due to conflicts, poverty and displacement of people. This had a negative impact especially on girls and women. Efforts to focus on girls' education significantly faltered, resulting in fewer opportunities for girls and women. According to the Afghan government, 3.5 million children are out of school, of which 85% are girls. Only 37% of adolescent girls are literate, compared to 66% of adolescent boys.

This critical education issue is a strong component of the advocacy agenda of Afghanistan National Education Coalition Organization (ANECO) together with its founding member, the Afghan National Association for Adult Education (ANAF AE).

Since 2005, ANAF AE has been working towards the improvement of opportunities for women. Aiming to foster the development of local adult education centres in Afghanistan, ANAF AE sees itself as a national forum for the promotion of strategies and programmes of adult education with a particular focus on literacy learning, basic education, further vocational training, and continuing civic education.

Several women have benefitted from the adult literacy courses provided by ANAF AE. Women who attended the literary courses have done so in the face of significant odds stacked against them. Some women have to fight patriarchal dominance and others have struggled after fleeing from other conflict-ridden areas. The literary courses have allowed women to improve their basic literacy skills including reading, writing and basic mathematical skills. This has not only given them confidence in their own abilities but has also led some to operate small businesses from their homes, allowing them to make a living and support their own families.

Membership of a large network like ANAF AE helped the coalition, ANECO, to build on their experiences, specifically in pursuing advocacy on adult learning and education. The learnings from the local level adult education centres of ANAF AE has helped ANECO to strategise the key advocacy asks to lobby with the Ministry of Education.

ANECO has been instrumental in advancing education issues in Afghanistan through its membership in different policy platforms and participation in policy dialogues. Currently, ANECO serves as the National Secretariat of Literacy Initiatives for Empowerment (LIFE) forum. Through this strategic position, ANECO coordinates the activities of the members of LIFE forum with Literacy Department as well as UNESCO in Kabul to achieve the targets set in National Education Strategic Plan and SDG4. ANECO is also leading the national CSOs in Education Oversight Committee of NESP III (National Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021) in five major provinces of Afghanistan.



Students in the adult literacy classes commemorate Global Action Week for Education (GAWE).

In addition, ANECO integrates with youth voluntary movements like Literacy Army to reduce illiteracy within the country. The Literacy Army is initiated by another core group member of ANECO called Afghanistan Civil Society Forum Organisation (ACSFO/ Citizen Organisation).

ANECO has also conducted a study on accessibility and quality education of girls in four provinces highlighting the factors that act as barriers in girls' access to education and inquiring on the non-implementation of the gender strategy.

The impact of ANECO's advocacy from the local to the national levels complemented the successes of its coalition members like ANAF AE in implementing transformative literacy programs at the grassroots levels.

Naseema, a 23-year-old woman from Wardak Province related that she had limited opportunities to attend school as she lost her father at a young age due to the ongoing conflict in the country. These circumstances forced her to work as a carpet weaver in order to support her family. Naseema said she was fortunate enough to attend the literacy course offered by ANECO's member, ANAF AE, as her life has significantly improved after six months of taking the course. She has learned



Adult learner practices her writing in class.

reading, writing and counting and due to these enhanced skills, she can now keep track of her income and expenses and apply them to her work. Naseema is also sharing lessons learnt from the course with close relatives so that they can benefit from this initiative as well.

Two teachers who assisted in conducting the literacy courses spoke of how useful the courses have been for their adult students. Masuma Lashkari spoke of her student Fazela saying that she is extremely intelligent and assists her with the course, providing help with classroom management. Fazela is an internally displaced woman from the Ghor Province of Afghanistan. She was deprived of education as she got married at the age of 14 and had to defy her husband in order to take part in the literacy course. The course has been useful to her and she has managed to gain her husband's support as well.

Mahbooba, another teacher who conducted the literacy course outside the Refugee Camp Sakhi, Mazar-e-Sharif spoke of her student Mariza, who returned to Afghanistan after spending several years in Iran without an education, because Afghan nationals were

not allowed to attend school there. Upon her return, she enrolled in the basic literacy course, which enhanced her mathematical skills. Working as a seamstress, she can now use these skills in her measurements while stitching clothes, improving her craft and making a better living for herself and her family. Despite the challenges of being a mother of four and a housewife, Mariza's diligence has helped her graduate from the course and she is now more motivated to send her children to school.

Both ANECO and ANAFAE continue to prioritise literacy education in their advocacy work and programmatic initiatives as they believe this will greatly contribute to the empowerment of its citizens, especially the marginalised youth, women and girls and those who continue to be displaced by the protracted crisis in the country. Advocating and pushing for literacy and functional skills for these marginalised groups lead to other learning and training opportunities, for basic, formal, vocational and higher education, which will enhance their capabilities to create new life opportunities for themselves and contribute in the development of the country. •



ASPBAE Capacity Support Adviser with ANEC.



Participant supports the campaign against child marriages in the Issyk Kul region organised by AED in collaboration with the Association of Crisis Centres.

15. KYRGYZSTAN

Raising Awareness on the Issue of Early Marriage that Limits Girls' Education Opportunities

The notion of early marriage is deeply ingrained in the culture of Kyrgyzstan and to this day, the practice is widespread, becoming an impeding factor to girls completing their education. Child marriages occur in all regions of the country, although more in rural than urban areas, and among all ethnic groups. It is estimated that 12% of girls in Kyrgyzstan are married before their 18th birthday and most of these marriages are a result of bride kidnapping or parental arrangement. Often, decisions about marriage do not involve the girls or young women, as they are coerced into marriage.

Under Article 14 of the country's Family Code, the legal minimum age of marriage is 18 years; however, this national law is not fully implemented. Under this law, most early marriages are illegal as they take place without the consent of the girls below the age of 18. The increasing rate of early marriages is an alarming factor, forcing girls out of schools. Data from UNICEF shows that 12% of girls are married before the age of 18 and 1% before the age of 15. These marriages mostly take place in rural areas, often officiated by special leaders known as the *Moldo* – religious clerics of the Muslim faith. Rural clerics have carried out ceremonies with the consent of parents of the groom and bride that require religious publication of marriage but not legal registration.

In order to break the cycle of early marriage and raise discussions regarding this critical issue, the Education Coalition in Kyrgyzstan (ECK) which was renamed as Association for Education Development (AED) in 2019, and its member, Educational Centre "Success," collaborated with the "Association of Crisis Centres" and launched a campaign in 2018 in the Issyk Kul region, where this practice of early marriages is prevalent.

The information and action campaign targeted five schools in the region where students, parents, psychologists, school administrators and community members were involved in the discussion. The first step of the campaign was to acknowledge the problem, which was challenging due to the sensitivity of the issue, especially in the presence of the elders of the community. Initially, the participants were very reluctant but interactive methods were used which led to a fruitful discussion among the participants – allowing everyone's views to be heard.

During the discussions, it was highlighted that early marriages have an adverse effect on the development of both girls and boys. Girls who are coerced into marriage are unable to complete their education, which limits their means to support themselves in the future and have little chance of upward social mobility. Girls are especially isolated with limited freedom, leading them to feel disempowered. With their life choices made for them, they are deprived of their fundamental rights to health, education and safety.

Several incidents of early marriages were discussed with the parents and students in order to highlight the gravity of this issue and to inform them that such ceremonies are illegal. Not only do they result in girls dropping out of school but they lead to health issues. Child brides are neither physically or emotionally ready to become wives and mothers. They are at a higher risk of complications in pregnancies and acquiring sexually transmitted diseases.

The idea of early marriage is widely accepted in the Issyk Kul region of Kyrgyzstan and it was not unusual for girls to get married as



Students and community members who participated in the training.



Community elder shares her views in the workshop on early marriages.

early as 14 years of age. Advocacy regarding this issue proved to be challenging as the older generations were raised with a similar mindset.

The discussion was the first step in addressing the issue with lifelong and life-changing consequences. For next steps and in order to raise awareness, AED will continue to campaign and push for initiatives that will improve and transform the mindset of the people in the communities regarding this issue. With the support of political leaders, community members, psychologists and administration of schools, the coalition will increase its advocacy efforts so that in the end more girls will be able to complete their education. •

16. INDONESIA

Media Engagement is a Key Advocacy Strategy for Quality Education

Media plays a major role in public life – influencing the attention of citizens and providing facts that shape perspectives on current affairs. Various mediums such as newspapers, online sources, radio and television form the mass media. They are mechanisms used by all stakeholders to communicate symbols and messages to the wider public. The national coalition, Network for Education Watch – Indonesia (NEW Indonesia), has been actively engaged with the media as part of its advocacy strategies, in order to influence public opinion and government policy on education.



NEW Indonesia staff addresses the media on education under the theme "Democracy without Corruption."

By establishing a good rapport with editors and journalists, NEW Indonesia put the spotlight on education issues and aimed to influence people's attitudes and beliefs through the media engagement. It also provided evidence-based information to policymakers. These media interventions played a key role in highlighting the advocacy agenda of NEW Indonesia in which, the main call is to provide for 12-year compulsory, free, inclusive and equitable education to the people. This agenda includes ensuring equal education opportunities for the poor and for children with disabilities who face greater difficulties in accessing education.

This particular advocacy campaign started with NEW Indonesia's visit to media offices which then led to a series of discussions with the editorial teams. This



Coordinator of NEW Indonesia advocates for education in local news.



Coordinator of NEW Indonesia engages the media on the importance of education.

process strengthened relationships, built closer links with the media, and brought education issues to the forefront of news reporting.

NEW Indonesia then kept in touch with the journalists through formal and informal means. In a formal setting, they invited media correspondents to events such as press conferences, seminars, and focused group discussions while informal meetings were held in various locations.

In order to respond to pertinent issues in the education sector, NEW Indonesia developed a quick response strategy in collaboration with media partners. On need basis, press conferences were held and media releases sent, to highlight various issues such as the discriminatory admission policies of schools, corporal punishment, teachers' quality and lack of school infrastructure, amongst others. The purpose of issuing these media releases was two-pronged – firstly to inform the public and the other, to call for government accountability. In this way, NEW Indonesia is being noticed as a credible NGO, giving a voice to the civil society and advocating for the right of children to attend school.

For the engagement with the media to be effective, timing is crucial. Thus, NEW Indonesia started its media intervention at the time of admission of new students. The beginning of the school year is when parents are thinking about sending their children to schools. During this time, the coalition held a press conference about the discriminatory policies of some schools, as poor and disabled students were refused admission into educational institutions. In this press conference, the coalition used

information from schools based on the data from its research, and used the Right to Education Index (RTEI) as a source.

The press conference was successful in terms of spreading this information, and in pointing out that the government is under obligation to fulfil its commitments so that children could exercise fully their fundamental right to education. The press conference also started the conversation about the discriminatory practices in schools.

It became apparent that the government felt the pressure due to the strong public support for the right to education and against discrimination in schools that grew from public discussions triggered by the press conference. The civil society was given a hearing in front of the Ministry of Education to discuss the issues. After these collective efforts, the government agreed to provide affirmation policies for the poor and disabled children in the form of special quotas. The Ministry of Education released regulation No. 17 year 2017 where schools must accept a minimum 20% of poor students as well as children with disabilities.

This example shows that media engagement plays a pivotal role in CSO work because the media helps broaden the reach of CSO advocacy. In this instance, the public was informed about the critical issue in the education system, the community was mobilised to demand their rights and the policymakers were influenced to change their perspectives in favour of policies that further the interest of the people. •

FUND THE FUTURE MAKE EDUCATION A PRIORITY

' National Conference, November 21-22, 2017



ASPBAE staff presents at PCE's National Conference
"Fund the Future: Make Education a Priority."

17. PAKISTAN

Utilising International Advocacy Platforms to Promote the Regulation of Privatisation of Education

The Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) has been engaged with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) review process by providing parallel reports highlighting the issue of rapid commercialisation of education across Pakistan. PCE organised public forums in Islamabad and Karachi where the issue was discussed in detail with both coalition partners and civil society representatives. PCE has been advocating for stronger regulation in its alternative report to the Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), as well as in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Pakistan to the Human Rights Council.

The Coalition consistently argued that low spending on education negatively impacts the quality of the public school system and unduly encourages the privatisation and commercialisation of education. For some years, there have been constant demands from the civil society in Pakistan to increase the education budget. PCE had recommended that the State significantly increase the budget for education, which has only materialised to some extent in some provinces. For example, in Punjab Province, the overall development budget has increased but the non-salaried budget, which is important for the upkeep of the schools, has been significantly decreased by 11 billion rupees. Similarly, the share of education from total provincial budgets has declined in all provinces during the last few years. The share of primary education, which is mandated by Article 13 of the CESCR, has been slashed in Sindh and Punjab, which are the most populous of Pakistan's five provinces. Similarly, in Balochistan Province, the development budgets for education and the non-salaried budgets have been reduced significantly.



National Coordinator of PCE at a
Regional Consultation for Education
Advocates organised by ASPBAE

In 2014-2015, all provinces reported underutilisation of the allocated budget with Sindh having the largest percentage of an under-spent education budget of 21%, followed by Punjab at 18%. In addition to this, most of the budget was spent on recurrent costs such as salaries, with the province of Sindh spending 91% of its expenditure on salaries and allowances, whereas Punjab spent around 85%. This leaves little room for actual expansion of access or improvement of the quality of education.

The CESCR expressed its concerns on the issues of low spending and privatisation of education in Pakistan as the state underwent its first ever review in May 2016. The review focused on the status of implementation of the rights guaranteed under the 14 substantive articles of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966, 'the Covenant').

In relation to the Right to Education guaranteed under Articles 13 and 14 of the Covenant, the Committee expressed its reservations over the State's policy of privatising education through support for low-fee private schools. The Committee also noted that: 'the absence of proper assessments of the impact of the public-private partnership initiatives on the right to education prior to their adoption as well as of their effectiveness in realising the Right to Education since their adoption' was concerning.

Furthermore, the Committee raised concerns over the lack of regulation of these schools, which has resulted in low quality of education. The Committee also expressed concern that

such schools could contribute to segregation in a society where only high income families are able to send their children to private schools, while low income families have to send their children to underfunded, poor quality public primary schools, or to the country's Basic Education Community Schools, a growing number of which are delivered through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and which are, 'not properly monitored by the State party'.

In view of these worrying observations, the CESCR asked the State of Pakistan, represented by the Minister of Human Rights and the Minister of State for Law and Justice to, 'carry out an assessment of the impact of public-private partnership initiatives based on a human rights perspective and the effectiveness of low-fee private schools in meeting the State party's obligation under the Covenant.' Further, the CESCR recommended that Pakistan not only prioritise increasing the level of public funding for education, but also address the underspending of the existing education budget in certain provinces.

These concluding observations were made in June 2016, subsequent to the review of the state by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which expressed apprehension over the level of privatisation in the country. Nonetheless, privatisation by way of PPPs and support for education entrepreneurs has continued in the country, notably in Punjab where the number of partner schools jumped from 3,967 to 6,148 in 2015 and continues to rise.

PCE, along with its development partners, will continue to call for stronger regulation of

the private sector in education. Nationally, the research initiatives and public awareness forums on financing and privatisation of education are being pursued in addition to meetings with the National Commission of Human Rights to coordinate efforts to push for the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Human Rights bodies. •



PCE conducts Young Girls Workshop



SEN member SENESE promotes inclusive education at the Independence Parade.

18. SAMOA

Coalition Engages the Government to Include Healthy Eating in the Primary School Curriculum

The Samoa Education Network (SEN) is a new national education coalition which was formed in 2017, and since then has focused on establishing relationships with key stakeholders. The aim was to gain credibility to engage stakeholders in the network's recommendations to advance education policy.

The Matuaileuu Environment Trust (METI) was elected as the lead agency for SEN. Initially SEN had limited opportunities to engage with the government on a broad spectrum of education issues. However, through the groundwork and experience of METI, SEN increasingly has been able to interact with officials from the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC).

The Chair of SEN participated in the APMED 3 regional meeting in Bangkok in 2017 on behalf of SEN. In preparation for the event, he was able to meet with the CEO of MESC, who agreed for SEN to participate in the National Education Sector Advisory Committee.

This and other regional meetings, along with important committee meetings became key advocacy spaces for SEN. Through participation in regional events organised by ASPBAE, SEN has also increased its awareness on the importance of advocacy at multiple levels. At the international level, SEN was able to send a letter to the Samoan Ambassador to the UN in 2017, urging him to support the strengthening of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) document in relation to SDG 4 on education.

At the national level, the CEO of MESC also encouraged SEN to work closely with the Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA) because they are specifically involved with SDG 4.7 education issues. The SEN Chair was also able to meet with the acting CEO of Curriculum who warmly welcomed SEN's recommendations that tackle the intersection of SDG 4.7 and the curriculum, the SDG targets 4.4 on skills for decent work, and 4.5 on gender equality and inclusion — issues that SEN members are familiar with or have expertise on.

One very important area of national concern is health education, which comes under sustainable lifestyles, listed in target 4.7. Samoa has among the highest rates of diabetes and obesity in the world and these are looming to be of epidemic proportions in the country unless addressed effectively.

Over the years, SEN's member, METI has developed a non-formal integrative (second chance) education package composed of trainings in life skills, permaculture and healthy living. It promotes a whole foods, plant based (WFPB) nutrition approach,

(or diet), considered the most direct and effective measure to prevent and reverse the alarmingly high incidence of obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as diabetes. METI's efforts over the past four years at the village level and at its headquarters in the capital Apia, focused on raising awareness about the causes and consequences of unhealthy food habits, educating the sufferers of NCD and empowering them to change their lifestyles. The program has led to a closer cooperation with the government, which invited METI to transfer its medical clinics to the national hospital, to allow in- and out-patients attending the hospital to become acquainted with and benefit from the WFPB nutrition program.



Program Manager of METI with the SEN Coordinator.



ASPBAE Capacity Support Advisor with representative of SEN in a regional consultation.

SEN lobbied the MESC's Curriculum Development Unit to incorporate healthy eating in the Primary School Curriculum, which resulted in SEN being able to collaborate with MESC to develop the curriculum which will be piloted in four schools initially. The MESC hopes to roll this out nationwide in the subsequent years.



Workshop on Inclusive Education.

19. TAJIKISTAN

Advancing Inclusive Education for People with Disabilities

Support for ensuring the full exercise and enjoyment of the rights of people with disabilities has become increasingly prominent in many countries. The 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is one of the first international legal instruments that enshrines the rights of persons with disabilities. In March 2018, the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rakhmon, signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and Tajikistan became a member signatory of this Convention.

Over the past decade in Tajikistan, attitudes towards people with disabilities have changed. The country now promotes the right to personal autonomy of people with disabilities, including the freedom to make their own choices, effective involvement and inclusion in public life, access to education and employment.

This understanding about people with disabilities is guaranteed by a legal framework. In 2010, the new Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "on the social protection of persons with disabilities" was adopted. In 2011, the implementation of the National Concept of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities began. In 2016, Tajikistan adopted the Intersectoral National Program for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities 2017-2020, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The National Program was the first regulatory legal document on disability issues since the country gained independence in 1991. The said program deals with the exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities in the areas of healthcare, rehabilitation, education, life support, social protection, culture, accessible environment, justice and other spheres of life.



Women participants at the Workshop on Inclusive Education.

A comprehensive analysis on disability issues was conducted in 2015 with financial and technical support from the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNITI). The results of this analysis were incorporated by the government in the National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (NDS) and the Medium-Term Development Strategy for 2016-2020 (SSR).

studied in secondary schools. However, the present education coverage by the CWD is less than half of those registered with social security agencies.

In spite of significant achievements in the field of CWD in education in less than 10 years, much remains to be done. Additional resources are needed to create infrastructure in educational institutions, to equip them with

additional technical means, to train specialists, to overcome stigmatisation by the community, as well as to effectively coordinate the efforts of the state, civil society and the international community in determining priorities and achieving consistency in the implementation of plans and programs.

One of the policy targets of the Alliance of CSOs in Tajikistan for Education is to advocate for equitable, inclusive and accessible education for Tajik citizens. Ishtirokh, a member organisation of the Alliance conducted a study to look into the access of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) to inclusive and equitable

quality education and lifelong learning opportunities as provided in the following:

- ✎ SDG 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" and,
- ✎ SDG 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," with a focus on people with disabilities.

The results of the study provides a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the situation in the country with respect to the inclusion of people with disabilities in education at all levels (preschool, general secondary and vocational), as well as to evaluate the progress in implementing projects and programmes for inclusive education. This study will be utilised by the Alliance for evidence-based advocacy to advance the right to education of people with disabilities. •



Public organisations consisting of persons with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities (CWD) play an important role in the implementation of the policy. They provided social and educational services in various centres for children and parents of CWD, cooperated with state social protection and education bodies, provided educational services to CWD and children with special needs in educational institutions.

Due to the national policy of inclusiveness of children with disabilities in education, the number of CWD in general schools has significantly increased, and the coverage of home schooling for children with especially serious forms of disability and illness has also increased. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, in the 2016-2017 school year, 8,953 children with disabilities of school age were enrolled of which, 9.7% received education at home, 24.8% studied in specialised boarding schools and 68.6%



Asia South Pacific Association
for Basic and Adult Education

Learning Beyond Boundaries

ASIA SOUTH PACIFIC ASSOCIATION FOR BASIC AND ADULT EDUCATION (ASPBAE)

Unit 106 Sterten Place Condominium
116 Maginhawa Street, Teachers Village East
Diliman, Quezon City 1101
Philippines

Tel/Fax: 63 2 8441 4594
Email: asphae@gmail.com
Website: www.asphae.org

