



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

ASPBAE ACTIVITY REPORT | 2016





THE CONTEXT OF OUR WORK

THE year 2016 ushered in with hope and optimism for international development cooperation and global partnership. In September 2015, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly agreed a new global agenda to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹. One of these 17 goals is on education (SDG4), committing to “*Ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and promote lifelong learning for all by 2030*”. The consensus around the SDGs and SDG4 emerged from a broad-based, multi-stakeholder process with UN member states in the lead, and with the strong involvement of civil society.

Several events and developments through 2016, however, dampened hopes and offered serious challenges to the promise and, indeed, the future of international cooperation and solidarity.

The world witnessed the rising tide of populism, ultra-nationalism, and demagoguery which found stark expression in the victory of the Brexit vote in the UK, in the outcomes of the US election in November 2016, and in the ascent of the far-right in the politics of Europe on a racist, anti-immigrant, Islamophobic plank. In the US and elsewhere in the world, including in Asia, populism was coupled with wide acceptability of “strongman rule” where the autocratic assertion of the views and perceived interest of the so-called majority has been stoutly defended (Roth, 2017)².

In Europe and North America, the right-wing exploited anxieties brought about by growing racial, ethnic, and religious diversity in their communities; with these fears

fuelled further by violent terror attacks. Here and elsewhere in the world, the far right agenda held popular sway as it fed on the legitimate frustration and desperation of the majority left out of the benefits of a neo-liberal, growth-oriented development paradigm, promoting globalisation.

For indeed, millions have been left behind.

Despite progress in reducing poverty over the years, the most recent estimates indicate that in 2013, as many as 767 million people lived on less than \$1.90 a day³. In the Asia Pacific, 330 million people (or roughly 9.0% of the region’s total population) are still living on less than \$1.90 (2011 PPP) a day; and approximately 1.2 billion people are below the poverty line of \$3.10 (2011 PPP) a day.⁴ The World Food Programme estimates that 795 million people – one in nine – still go to bed on an empty stomach each night. Even more – one in three – suffer from some form of malnutrition.⁵

According to ILO, with global GDP growth at a six-year low in 2016 (3.1%),

1 Resolution Adopted by the UN General Assembly, 25 September 2015: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
2 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/dangerous-rise-of-populism>

3 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>
4 <https://www.adb.org/publications/key-indicators-asia-and-pacific-2016>
5 <http://www1.wfp.org/zero-hunger>

there are serious concerns about the ability of the world economy to generate sufficient number of jobs, improve the quality of employment, and ensure that the gains of growth are equitably shared. ⁶ILO's 'World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2017' project a rise in global unemployment by 3.4 million in 2017, bringing the total of unemployed people to over 201 million in 2017. Unemployment is expected to rise by 2.7 million further in 2018. Youth unemployment is more than three times higher than adult unemployment. Similarly, despite improvements in educational attainment, women remain twice as likely to be unemployed as their male counterparts. A total of 1.4 billion in the world are in vulnerable employment, most of them in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Vulnerable forms of employment are consistently higher for women across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Arab States. For example, in South Asia, close to 82% of women were in vulnerable employment in 2016, as compared to just over 72% of men. Working poverty remained widespread in 2016, with Asia and the Pacific accounting for around 63.5% of the world's working poor (those living on less than US\$3.10 per day in purchasing power terms). Nearly half of workers in South Asia are living in extreme or moderate working poverty. The percentage of workers in moderate or extreme poverty is relatively low in Central Asia by international standards – estimated at 6.6% of the working population in 2016 – and is expected to continue to fall, but at a much slower pace than it did over the past decade.

Inequality has persisted globally. According to Oxfam's 2017 report tracking world inequality, "*An Economy for the 99%*", new research by economist Thomas Piketty shows that over the last 30 years, the growth in the incomes of the bottom 50% has been zero, whereas incomes of the top 1% have grown 300%. Since 2015, the richest 1% has owned more wealth than the rest of the planet. Eight men now own the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of the world. Oxfam's analysis of the super-rich includes all those individuals with a net worth of at least \$1bn. The 1,810 dollar billionaires on the 2016 Forbes list, 89% of whom are men, own \$6.5 trillion – as much wealth as the bottom 70% of humanity. While some billionaires owe their fortunes predominantly to hard work and talent, Oxfam's analysis of this group finds that one-third of the world's billionaire wealth is derived from inherited wealth, while 43% can be linked to cronyism. They list several factors exacerbating income inequality: tax dodging, crony capitalism, corporations serving the interests solely of those at the top, squeezing down the costs of labour – and ensuring that workers and producers in their supply chains get less and less of the economic pie.⁷

Heightened conflict, sectarian violence, and escalated attacks on human rights characterised the period.

According to UNHCR, the year 2016 began with more than a million refugees and migrants having crossed the Mediterranean, and conflicts in Syria and elsewhere continued to generate staggering levels of human suffering, exceeding all previous records for global forced displacement.⁸ (UNHCR, 2016) In the Asia Pacific, sectarian violence and terror attacks were rife, especially in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. In Afghanistan, the number of armed clashes last year reached the highest level since the U.N. started recording incidents in 2007, with large numbers of civilian casualties. ⁹Afghan refugees constitute the second largest refugee population in the world and represent one of the most protracted situations (UNHCR 2016). Muslim minorities in Burma, in particular the 1.2 million ethnic Rohingya, continued to face rampant and systemic human rights violations. ¹⁰By mid-December 2016, the U.N. estimated that around 27,000 Rohingya had fled to Bangladesh following a fierce campaign in Rakhine of, according to human rights groups, extrajudicial executions, rapes, and arson.¹¹ The UN has also expressed

6 http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_541211.pdf

7 <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/economy-99>

8 [http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-](http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html)

[projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html](http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html)

9 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/05/10-conflicts-to-watch-in-2017>

10 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/burma>

11 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/05/10-conflicts-to-watch-in-2017/>

alarm at the unprecedented level of extrajudicial killings by law enforcement agencies in the Philippines as part of the anti-drugs crackdown of the newly-elected government.

The ongoing territorial disputes in the South China Sea and a belligerent North Korea have also threatened peace and security in the region.

Civil society and human rights defenders have come for fiercer attacks in the last period. Student activists, political opposition figures, and journalists have faced harassment and politically motivated prosecution in many parts of the region. In Malaysia for instance, sedition laws have been liberally applied to curtail criticism, especially against the corruption scandal besetting the highest levels of government¹². Student protests against corruption were met with violence in PNG with 23 injured from police direct firing on a student demonstration at the capital in June¹³. In Uzbekistan, the practice of forced labour for harvesting cotton continued: following a decade of global pressure, authorities did not mobilise children to harvest cotton in 2016, as in 2015, but instead increased the number of forced adult labourers – teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants - to meet annual production quotas, under threat of dismissal from work, loss of salary or other benefits, and even detention.¹⁴ Under the guise of anti-terrorist measures, many governments have enforced highly restrictive foreign funding regulations that have stymied the operations of legitimate non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Despite these developments, the NGO and civil society movement in the Asia Pacific region remains alive and vibrant – actively pushing back against the growing threats to democratic space and attacks on civil liberties and freedoms.

Natural hazards continued to cause significant loss of life and social and economic damage for people and communities in the region. The Asia Pacific region is one of the most disaster-prone areas in the world, with frequently occurring natural disasters including earthquakes, tsunamis, tropical storms, flooding, landslides, and volcanic eruptions affecting millions of people every year¹⁵. The biggest cyclone on record to ever hit Fiji, Cyclone Winston, left a total of 40,000 homes damaged or destroyed – and tens of thousands rendered homeless. A year after the disaster, many from the worse affected areas are still living in temporary shelters.¹⁶

Education is key to enabling people and communities to confront the human development, economic, social, political, and environmental sustainability challenges they face, to transform their conditions and better their lives.

Concerted education civil society efforts contributed in a big way towards enshrining priority to education in the new global consensus on development – in securing a stand-alone education goal within the new global development agenda post 2015 (SDGs). Although by no means perfect, SDG4 is a strong, new ambitious agenda on education being rights-based, humanistic, universal, promoting a lifelong learning framework, and offering a strong commitment to equity, inclusion, and quality.

The attempt in the first year of the implementation of the new agenda was to ensure that the global consensus on education is concretised and pursued in its full spirit and intention, in the specific realities of countries and communities. The international community, regionally and globally, rallied to sustain efforts in mobilising the necessary resources – financial, political, institutional – to enable all stakeholders, especially governments as duty bearers, to deliver the agreed targets on education and lifelong learning by 2030.

Serious challenges have however emerged. A significant decline in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and low allocations to education in government budgets are contributing to a growing push towards the private sector to fill in the financing gaps, putting at risk the SDG4 commitment towards equity

12 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/malaysia>

13 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/papua-new-guinea>

14 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/uzbekistan>

15 <http://reliefweb.int/map/world/major-natural-hazards-asia-and-pacific>

16 <http://reliefweb.int/report/fiji/fiji-one-year-cyclone-winston-many-still-need-reconstruction-efforts-continue>

and inclusion, even quality. This is also resulting in a narrowing of the agreed agenda in its implementation, at the expense of youth and adult literacy, non-formal education, and skills building that offer second chance and multiple pathways of learning, essential for education access of disadvantaged youth and adults who have been pushed out of the system. Where responses to the acute challenges the world currently faces require a citizenry that is critically aware, socially conscious and responsible, curious and creative, appreciating and valuing diversity - the push for narrow conceptions of education quality in schools and education systems is again gaining greater currency. Skills for work and life, with adult literacy as an integral component, education for sustainable development, global citizenship education do not figure in the emergent financing frameworks on education: the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity and the Education Can't Wait initiative, as examples. Institutionalised spaces for civil society participation in the SDG rollout processes at the country and regional levels are far from being actualised -with a growing resistance to civil society participation emerging.

The Global Education Monitoring Report for 2016 (GEMR 2016) underscored the need to move away from 'business as usual' approaches if the international community is to meet the SDG4 commitments, and indeed all the Sustainable Development Goals, in 15 years. On current trends, the world will not achieve universal secondary completion until 2084 – so clearly, accelerated action is needed.

Education also has enormous potential to accelerate progress towards all global sustainable development but again, a major rethink in functioning is needed. GEMR 2016 spoke of the urgent need for a wider appreciation of what should constitute education 'quality'. In a context where what accounts for 'truth' and 'reality' is increasingly contested; and where irresponsible social and mainstream media has given credence to and fed 'post-truth politics', the GEMR's analysis is very relevant when it said - *“Education systems must do more than just transfer knowledge. They must provide people with skills and competences that can support the transition to greener growth and peaceful coexistence. These include the abilities to: communicate effectively with people from other cultures or countries; better understanding of other people’s thoughts, beliefs and feelings and see the world from their perspective; adjust thoughts, feelings or behaviours to fit new contexts and situations; and think critically to scrutinize and appraise information.”*

And finally, in a refreshing departure from earlier analysis and assertions that almost solely on formal education, GEMR 2016 underscored - “Given that the most critical decisions in the next 15 years will be taken by people who have already left school, we must no longer think of education as something that only takes place within schools and universities and embrace the idea of lifelong learning not just in words but also in practice.”¹⁷

ASPBAE pursued its work and involvements in 2016 in this period of great change and flux.

¹⁷ <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2016/education-people-and-planet-creating-sustainable-futures-all/page#sthash.ZiT5JiWM.pQAzKiuv.dpbs>

MILESTONES FOR 2016: THE SUCCESSFUL CONDUCT OF ASPBAE'S 7th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ASPBAE's Seventh General Assembly (GA) was organised as a set of broad-based processes through 2016. In convening this 7th General Assembly, ASPBAE was cognisant of the important historical moment this important governance process was set within: it was the first GA after ASPBAE's 50th anniversary (2014) and the first after the new global development and education agenda were agreed and set in place.

A total of **114 member organisations - 90 life members and 9 individual members - were accredited** to participate in the 7th General Assembly.

An integral part of the 7th GA activities were **13 national consultations** organised by several ASPBAE members throughout the region between May-July 2016. The national consultations, organised by appointed Country Coordinators, were held to provide a platform to update members on the SDGs and SDG4, including the emerging architecture and follow-up mechanisms. The consultations were also a space for members in their countries to reflect on ASPBAE's work and offer suggestions on its future directions; be updated on the work of ASPBAE and its members in the country; be oriented on the 7th GA processes; and to select the country's voting representatives. Email-based consultations were conducted with members in countries where national consultations were not convened – mainly on countries where there were 2 or less member organisations.

A total of **47 Country Voting Representatives were selected** by the membership in these national processes. Through them, the membership elected its new Executive Council in a virtual voting process organised from 12-26 September 2016.

A culmination of these national consultative processes was a 2-day **Regional Workshop on ASPBAE's Strategic Directions** held from 20-21 November 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand. Organised under the theme, '*Consolidating our*



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Gains to Better Advance Transformative Education and Lifelong Learning for All', the workshop was designed to build unity on the future priorities and directions of ASPBAE. Around 120 participants attended from among the Country voting representatives, incoming and incumbent ASPBAE Executive Council (EC) members, representatives of national



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education coalitions and other ASPBAE members, ASPBAE strategic partners, and ASPBAE staff. This Workshop, and the various consultations preceding this event, offered an important opportunity for the membership of ASPBAE to come together, learn more about each other's dynamic work and diverse contexts – affirming the value for learning and solidarity that a regional platform for civil society affords.



A Regional Workshop on ASPBAE's Strategic Directions, held in Bangkok in November, aimed to build unity on the future priorities and directions of ASPBAE.

CIVIL SOCIETY'S STRONG ENGAGEMENT IN THE ROLL OUT OF SDG4 - EDUCATION 2030 AND THE SDGS



ASPBAE optimised its 7th General Assembly processes as arenas for explaining SDG4-Education 2030 and as sites for civil society strategising on how to engage country-level processes concretising the new SDG and SDG4 agenda.

ASPBAE was committed to advancing the strong engagement of civil society in the implementation of the new agenda for education and development.

A key part of this was launching **a broad dissemination campaign to build**

wider awareness on SDG4-Education 2030, especially at the country level. ASPBAE optimised its 7th General Assembly processes as arenas for explaining SDG4-Education 2030 and as sites for civil society strategising on how to engage the country-level processes concretising the new SDG and SDG4 agenda. A total of 13 national-level consultations of

ASPBAE members were conducted in this respect.

Through the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) initiative, ASPBAE worked further with its partner coalitions in selected countries to launch **broader-based dialogues on SDG4 involving a wider set of stakeholders including governments and donors.** These were organised in Mongolia (17 February, Ulaanbaatar), Bangladesh (5 June, Dhaka), Nepal (5-9 July, Kathmandu), India (26-27 July, Guwahati), the Philippines (27 July, Davao and 22 September Manila), Vietnam (12 July, Hanoi) and Timor Leste (22 September, Dili). A Pacific wide Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on SDG4 was co-organised with ASPBAE member, Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS), on October 4 in Lautoka, Fiji. This was well attended by high-level officials, including from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and ASPBAE partner coalitions/networks from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and a fledgling Samoa Education Network. A further Multi-Stakeholder Forum was held in Lautoka with ASPBAE members, USP Lautoka Campus and FRIEND, on 6 October.

Several coalitions launched wide media campaigns and sought to influence national level education planning for alignment and coherence with SDG4. NNER Myanmar pursued extensive media work to popularise SDG4 in the country, at national and local levels. NNER also participated in televised public debates hosted by Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) and the coalition highlighted SDG4 in these debates. In India, NCE India worked with other ASPBAE members in the country to catalyse participation in the email consultation process of the Ministry of Human Resource Development on a draft 'India Education Policy' - ensuring that the SDG4 agenda and CSO concerns on equity and non-discrimination, quality, gender equality, and attention to youth and adult education are reflected in the draft policy document. In Bangladesh, CAMPE contributed in the national level planning process for education 2030 (SDG4) led by the General Economics Division of the



ASPBAE was involved in the Thematic Working Group on Education 2030 as one of the civil society representatives. This Working Group is part of the overall SDG follow-up effort steered by UNESCAP.

ASPBAE worked with its partner coalitions to launch broader-based dialogues on SDG4 involving a wider set of stakeholders including governments and donors.

Planning Commission under the Ministry of Planning (MoP) and also engaged with Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME). CAMPE is a member of the Advisory Committee to the Education Minister for Planning SDG4. NCE-Nepal engaged in improving the participation of the civil society in the education sector planning process, especially in the formulation of its School Sector Development Plan (SSDP). Its participation was aimed at integrating the issues of financing, inclusion, equity, and governance in the education sector plan of the government and also harmonising the SSDP with the SDG/SDG4 target and indicators.

In support of these, ASPBAE staff and/or Executive Council members participated in these events and initiatives as resource persons and co-organisers. ASPBAE also developed a Resource Pack for these consultations which included a design template of the consultations, and a compendium of relevant resource material on SDG4-Education 2030, including discussion tools and guides on the SDGs and SDG4 follow up processes.

ASPBAE also persisted in its efforts to ensure a **strong civil society input in the regional and global follow up processes of SDG 4-Education 2030.**

At the regional level, ASPBAE was actively involved in the **Thematic Working Group on Education 2030** as one of the civil society representatives.

ASPBAE was elected by the Coordination Group of the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs (CC NGO) as one of the CSOs represented in the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee.

Co-convened by UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF, this Working Group is part of the overall SDG follow-up effort steered by the UN Economic and Social Commission for the Asia Pacific (UN ESCAP), where different UN agencies anchor regional follow-up action on each of the 17 SDGs. In this capacity, ASPBAE was also

and **ASEAN** in their processes aligning their education priorities with SDG4. ASPBAE participated in the sub-regional workshop on the SAARC Framework for Action for Education 2030 (30-31 March, Kathmandu) and sustained engagement with the SEAMEO Secretariat and ASEAN through the TWG Education 2030.

At the global level, ASPBAE was elected by the **Coordination Group of the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs (CC NGO)** as one of the CSOs represented in the **SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee (SC)** – the multi-stakeholder body convened to coordinate the support to global education efforts (SDG4) within the wider 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development architecture. It is part of the global coordination mechanism as outlined in the Education 2030 Framework for Action. ASPBAE was also elected one of the 3 Vice-Chairs of the SC representing CSOs. Two meetings of the Steering Committee were convened in 2016: 25-26 May and 8-9 December, both in Paris. The two meetings were

oriented largely to setting up the working modalities of the Steering Committee; in defining the modes of coordination of the SC with regional SDG4 processes and other global platforms related to SDG4, notably the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity; in deliberating on and endorsing the SDG4 indicators; and in forging stronger linkages with the wider UN SDG follow up processes. The SC was keen to ensure a stronger positioning of the SDG-Education

2030 Steering Committee in the UN SDG follow-up architecture and processes: this was a key effort in the period.

Through the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, the CC NGO mechanism, and in strong coordination with GCE and ICAE, ASPBAE participated in the global-level indicator-setting processes for SDG4 through 2016. The main platforms for these processes were the **Inter Agency Experts Group on SDG indicators (IAEG)** and the **Technical Cooperation Group (TCG) for SDG4** steered by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). The IAEG focused its efforts in the year in classifying the earlier agreed global indicators in terms of their readiness for use and application. The TCG offered a multi-stakeholder space for the different SDG4-Education 2030 stakeholders to agree the SDG4 thematic indicators – a menu of indicators in addition to the global SDG4 indicators to better signify the intentions of the SDG targets. ASPBAE worked closely with GCE, as they were represented in global



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actively involved in the **2nd Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 2)** on 16-18 November 2016 in Bangkok. APMED is part of the UNESCO-led SDG 4-Education 2030 regional follow-up processes, as described in the Education 2030 Framework for Action. ASPBAE lobbied for strong participation of civil society in APMED 2 and secured strong roles for civil society in the meeting's different sessions including ASPBAE being part of the Drafting Committee for the SDG4 Roadmap in the Asia Pacific, representing civil society.

ASPBAE also prioritised **engagement with sub-regional intergovernmental bodies, notably SAARC, SEAMEO,**

IAEG processes, and with Rasheda Choudhury of CAMPE Bangladesh, who represented the CC NGO in the TCG as civil society representative.



ASPBAE was elected a member of the Bureau of the Global Alliance on Literacy (GAL), which seeks to ensure attention and priority to SDG 4.6 on youth and adult literacy in all the SDG and SDG4 follow-up processes and in its implementation at the country level.

ASPBAE also participated actively in other UN and UNESCO regional and global events which sought to focus attention on specific aspects or elaborate further on the SDG4 agenda. Notable among these are the processes related to the UNESCO-convened **Global Alliance on Literacy (GAL)** which seeks to ensure continued attention and priority to SDG 4.6 on youth and adult literacy in all the SDG and SDG4 follow-up processes and in its implementation at the country level. ASPBAE attended the first Core Group Meeting of GAL on 23 May in Paris and was elected a member of the Bureau of GAL during its launch on 8 September in Paris on the occasion of International Literacy Day.

Other regional and global meetings and platforms that ASPBAE was involved in during the year were as follows -

- UNESCO Asia Education Summit on Flexible Learning Strategies for Out-of-School Children, 24-26 February, Bangkok, Thailand
- 66th United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Conference on *'Education for Global Citizenship: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals Together'*, 30 May-1 June, Gyeongju, Korea
- UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) International Seminar

In all regional and global processes, ASPBAE asserted fidelity to the full spirit of the SDG4 agenda, with special attention to the education and learning needs of marginalised and excluded children, youth, and adults, and to asserting the importance of education in the fulfilment of the other SDGs.

on girls' education, 3-6 June, Beijing, China

- ILO SDG Alliance 8.7 Regional Consultation, 14-15 September, Bangkok, Thailand
- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) Think Tank Meeting on Lifelong Learning and the SDGs, Implications for Policy and Practice; Awarding of UIL Honorary Fellows, 27-29 September, Hamburg, Germany
- UNESCO's 5th International Conference on Language and Education: Sustainable Development through Multilingual Education, 19-21 October, Bangkok, Thailand
- UNESCO Asia Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) Global Citizenship Education Network Meeting, 9-11 November, Seoul, Korea
- International Forum of Education Development by the Seoul National University and the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), 19 December, Seoul, Korea

The CONFINTEA 6 Mid-term Review Conference was originally planned for 2016 in either Indonesia or Korea. This would have been another space to reinforce attention to the SDG4 targets specifically related to youth and adult education. It was however postponed to 2017. ASPBAE, however, supported the



ASPBAE joined the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM) and participated in the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, the regional preparatory meetings for the annual High level Political Forum (HLPF).

process of developing the **Asia Pacific Mid-term Report for CONFINTEA 6** in the year.

In these processes, ASPBAE asserted fidelity to the full spirit of the SDG4 agenda, with special attention to the education and learning needs of marginalised and erstwhile excluded children, youth, and adults; to asserting the strategic importance of education in the fulfilment of the other SDGs and to sustainable development agenda as a whole; to the mobilisation of resources needed to strengthen public education systems able to deliver on the full, much wider new education agenda; and to ensuring institutionalised participation of all relevant stakeholders including learners, teachers, and civil society in the mechanisms and architecture set up to implement and follow-up the new agenda.

ASPBAE also began its efforts to expand involvement in the mechanisms and processes following up on the wider SDG agenda.

It joined the **Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM)** – the UN ESCAP supported mechanism that facilitates CSO participation in the official SDG follow-up processes. In this capacity, it attended the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) from 3-5 April in Bangkok and the Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development that preceded it (3 March-2 April). The APFSD is the regional

preparatory meetings for the annual High level Political Forum (HLPF) – which is the main follow-up mechanism for the SDGs. The process is guided by an annual theme and focused attention on a cluster of SDG goals for each year. Only Goal 17 is tracked and analysed annually. ASPBAE also sustained interaction with APRCEM through the year and invited representatives of the Coordination Group of APRCEM to attend ASPBAE’s regional SDG follow-up events to strengthen engagement. ASPBAE’s intention in the coming period is to mobilise more education CSOs into membership so that education issues and concerns hold greater visibility and prominence in the joint advocacies and submissions of the APRCEM in the official regional SDG processes.

At the global level, the main mechanism for mobilising CSO involvement in the formal SDG follow-up processes is the **Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS)**¹⁸. In 2016, the stakeholder groups were expanded to include a dedicated space for education – the **Education and Academia Stakeholder Group (EASG)**. ASPBAE participated in this mechanism mainly through GCE and ICAE, who are co-convenors of this Group, along with Education International (EI) and the European Students Union (ESU). One of its first initiatives in 2016 is a formal submission to the HLPF which ASPBAE contributed to. It also organised a side event on ‘Inclusive and Equitable Education’ during the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York on 11 July 2016.

ASPBAE strengthened its linkages with different civil society formations tracking the SDG processes and seeking to influence these. It participated in the Asia Development Alliance (ADA) consultation on ‘*CSO Engagement in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)*’, 9-11 January in Bangkok and in the ADA Asia Forum 16, from 14-16 August, also in Bangkok. ASPBAE has also been active in Bridge 4.7, a global CSO alliance tracking the follow-up to SDG 4.7 on ESD and Global Citizenship Education (GCED). It participated in the Education International Asia Pacific’s Workshop on Education 2030, 2-3 February in Bangkok.



ASPBAE strengthened linkages with different civil society formations tracking and seeking to influence SDG processes. It participated in an Asia Development Alliance (ADA) consultation on ‘CSO Engagement in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ in Bangkok.

¹⁸ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/aboutmajorgroups.html>



The Policy Forum on Youth and Adult Education and Learning in SDG4, organised by ASPBAE, DVV International, ICAE, and UNESCO, aimed to discuss ways to better advance the SDG4 targets oriented to youth and adult education.

CAPACITY BUILDING ON LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE WIDER SDG4 AGENDA

ASPBAE was well aware that as the new agenda for education is implemented, ASPBAE members and partners will need to bolster capacities in understanding the wider education agenda. There is also need to reinforce understandings about lifelong learning, and how it is expressed in policy frameworks, systems, institutional, and governance arrangements. Capacity building on lifelong learning and the wider SDG4-Education 2030 agenda was a priority undertaking for 2016. Within this however, ASPBAE also pursued focused attention to basic, youth, and adult education within the SDG4 agenda.

Several initiatives were pursued in this regard:

Participants of the Policy Forum on Youth and Adult Education and Learning in SDG4 emphasised that governments need to move away from seeing non-formal education as the responsibility of civil society, corporates, or individuals – and to more fully embrace the role and responsibility of the state to guarantee lifelong education opportunities for all, within and beyond basic education.

Policy Forum on Youth and Adult Education and Learning in SDG4:

ASPBAE worked with DVV International, especially its regional offices in South East Asia and Central Asia, ICAE, UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO Paris, and UIL in organising a ‘Policy Forum on Youth and Adult Education and Learning in SDG4’ from 24-25 November in Bangkok, Thailand. The Forum brought together representatives from governments (especially from Departments of Non-formal Education in Ministries of Education, members of parliament, and local government units), CSOs, UNESCO, and other intergovernmental bodies to discuss ways to better advance the SDG4 targets oriented to youth and adult education, specifically given the realisation that SDG4 targets that address youth and adult skills and literacy, as well as ESD and GCED, are still much less recognised and understood.

The Forum also offered a platform to launch in the Asia Pacific region two important UNESCO publications very relevant to



The Policy Forum offered a platform to launch in the Asia Pacific region UIL's 3rd Global Report on Adult Learning (GRALE 3) and UNESCO's 'Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good?'

the Forum objectives and discussions: (1) UIL's 3rd Global Report on Adult Learning (GRALE 3), *'The Impact of Adult Learning and Education on Health and Well-Being; Employment and the Labour Market; and Social, Civic and Community Life'*, and (2) UNESCO's *'Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good?'*.

The participants of the Forum emphasised that governments need to move away from seeing non-formal education (NFE) as primarily the responsibility of civil society, corporates, or individuals – and to more fully embrace the role and responsibility of the state to guarantee lifelong education opportunities for all, within and beyond basic education. GRALE 3 findings indicated that most governments spend around 1% or less on their education budgets on non-formal education for youth and adults. Clearly, the 'data revolution' needed to inform robust policy (and practice) in advancing the SDGs, will certainly need to include attention to youth and adult non-formal education as this is where data gaps are most acute. This will include generating more evidence about the benefits of youth and adult education, for access to decent jobs, health and well-being, gender equality, peace and reconciliation, responsible citizenship, and overall empowerment.

The Forum also offered opportunities to share good and best practice on youth and adult education by governments and



The Forum offered opportunities to share good and best practice on youth and adult education by governments and civil society in areas such as financing, governance, monitoring, research, ESD and GCED, gender, health, and peace education.

civil society in such areas as financing, governance, monitoring, research (such as on the wider benefits of youth and adult education), ESD and GCED, gender, health, peace education – all facilitating mutual learning and a rich exchange. It was very useful to learn from the systems approach by the governments in Thailand and the Philippines in institutionalising lifelong learning for all, spanning the areas of policy development, programme development, assessments, equivalency systems, quality assurance, as well as investing in community learning centres as hubs for learning.

The Policy Forum was but one of the collaborations between ASPBAE and DWI in advancing youth and adult education within the wider SDG4 agenda. On 7 June, ASPBAE participated in a DWI Directors Meeting in Berlin where ASPBAE offered an update on the follow-up processes and mechanisms related to the SDGs, and to SDG4 in particular, which informed DWI's deliberations on how DWI can best contribute to and intervene effectively in the SDG/SDG4 processes in favour of youth and adult education. This meeting was organised at the front end of a DWI Round Table held on 8 June at the German Parliament on *'Tackling the Refugee Crisis – in Germany and Worldwide: The Role of Adult Education and Agenda 2030'*, where ASPBAE was a discussant; and the 14th German Adult Education held from 9-10 June, themed on *'Digital participation for all'*. ASPBAE has also been working with DWI in strengthening field level competences of trainers in youth and adult education programmes in Laos through a Training of Master Trainers programme with the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) and RMIT University, Australia. ASPBAE continues to serve in the Editorial Board of the DWI journal on Adult Education and Development (AED).

CSEF as a major platform for capacity building on SDG4 and the right to education: The Civil Society Education Fund

(CSEF) initiative remained a major plank for capacity building on education advocacy, where ASPBAE continued in its role as Regional Secretariat. Phase 3 of CSEF commenced in April 2016 with provision for expansion of CSEF's coverage to 19 countries in the region¹⁹ from the earlier 17 at the end of CSEF Phase 2.

Emerging from the post-2015 processes, a major focus of capacity building work in the period was on SDG4 and how it can be best concretised and implemented at the country level to better secure the right to education and learning of children, youth, and adults – leaving no one behind. Further, the new CSEF phase was oriented towards facilitating civil society engagement in the Local Education Groups (LEGs) and/or the country-level multi-stakeholder platforms that deliberate on education sector plans and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) funding in this regard. Capacity building efforts to ensure that the national education coalition partners remain institutionally robust, credible, and effective civil society organisations, also continued in the period. As in Phase 2, capacity support was offered through both in-country and regional level processes.

Two regional CSEF capacity support efforts were mounted in the year: the Planning Meeting of CSOs for APMED 2 on 15 November in Bangkok; and the Regional CSEF Coalition Consultation on 22-23 November, also in Bangkok. The Planning meeting for APMED 2 was oriented to strategising on civil society advocacy within the APMED 2 processes – agreeing policy positions to assert roles within the programme and modes of coordination. The Regional CSEF Consultation offered a space for (1) capacity building on the SDG4 follow up, especially with respect to indicators and monitoring, and education financing; (2) strategising

towards better engagement with GPE processes, including in the 2017 GPE Replenishment Campaign; (3) engagement with the broader GCE and ASPBAE advocacy plans; (4) coordination and discussion on project reporting, including training

A major focus of capacity building work in 2016 was on SDG4 and how it can be best concretised and implemented at the country level to better secure the right to education and learning of children, youth, and adults.

in the use of a new CSEF online M&E reporting system.

On their request, ASPBAE offered trainings to coalitions along specific areas. Some of these include the following:

- Policy Advocacy Workshop with network members from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, 26-29 January, Manila
- Policy Advocacy Workshop with network members in Afghanistan, 5-8 February, Manila
- Workshop on SDG4, Education Financing and Privatisation of Education with NCE-Nepal, 2-8 April, Kathmandu
- National Education Seminar which included a session on SDG 4.7 with NNER Myanmar, 23-24 April, Taungyi
- Training on 'Basic Leadership Development and Gender Mainstreaming' focused on youth and women leaders with NCE Nepal, 6-9



The Regional CSEF Consultation offered a space for capacity building on the SDG4 follow-up, strategising towards better engagement with GPE processes, engaging with GCE and ASPBAE advocacy plans, and coordinating on project reporting, including training on new CSEF online M&E reporting system.



The Planning meeting for APMED 2 was oriented to strategising on civil society advocacy within the APMED 2 processes – agreeing policy positions to assert roles within the programme and modes of coordination.

¹⁹ India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, East Timor, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa



In an effort to better profile the successes of CSEF as an approach to strengthen public accountability, GPE invited ASPBAE to participate in the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) Global Partners Forum held in May in Washington D.C.

July, Kathmandu

- Training on Information and Communications, 18-19 July, Islamabad
- SDG4 and Media Training, CED Sri Lanka, 29 July-1 August, Colombo
- Gender Equality in Education Training with NEW Indonesia, 13-15 October, Jakarta
- Training on SDGs and Budget Tracking with the education networks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, 20-31 October, Bishkek and Dushanbe
- Workshop on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to better understand SDG 4.7 and the broader issues between education and climate change and sustainable development, 8-10 December, New Delhi, in cooperation with NCE India, Laya India, and the Indian Network on Ethics and Climate Change (INECC)

ASPBAE also facilitated several study exchanges between coalitions in the period: It co-hosted a study visit of NEP Cambodia to the Philippines, hosted by E-Net Philippines from 15-20 August. It facilitated a learning visit of the Education Coalition in Kyrgyzstan (ECK) to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 27 September-1 October, to learn more about the structure and functioning of a coalition,

including engagement with different stakeholders in advancing education issues at policy level within government systems other like-minded organisations, and at community levels. ASPBAE supported the Timor Leste Coalition for Education (TLCE) in its study visit to NEW Indonesia from 25-27 October in Jakarta which focused on policy engagement (especially with the Ministry of Education), coalition engagement with the community and school levels, and strengthening coalition governance system. ASPBAE also facilitated a learning exchange among E-Net Philippines and NCE Nepal with JNNE Nepal in Tokyo and the tsunami affected Kesunnuma from 5-10 December with the exchange focused on education in emergencies and education ODA advocacy.

In late 2016, Zehra Arshad of PCE Pakistan was elected as one of CSO representatives in the GPE Board, joining Cheik Mbow from the national coalition in Senegal. Steered by GCE, ASPBAE joined the effort to offer dedicated support to the CSO representatives in the GPE Board, enabling them to offer a strong representative voice for civil society in GPE Board processes. ASPBAE offered strong facilitation support in the meetings organised around this in preparation for the GPE Board Meeting from 28-29 November in Siem Reap, Cambodia. ASPBAE also attended the GPE Board meeting (30 November-2 December) as an observer; and played facilitating roles in the Sessions on Presentation to Developing Country Partners (DCPs) on 2 December. This offered a space for dialogue between civil society and government representatives of GPE recipient countries on how national coalitions can add value by participating in national education policy processes.

In an effort to better profile the successes of CSEF as an approach to strengthen public accountability, GPE invited ASPBAE to participate in the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) Global Partners Forum held from 19-20 May in Washington D.C. ASPBAE also coordinated closely with relevant GPE staff through the year to bolster CSO participation at all levels of GPE processes.

Inter-regional coordination for capacity building was facilitated by the GCE Global Secretariat for CSEF. From 11-15 October, they convened a CSEF Coordinators meeting along with a GPE Country Support Team meeting and a CSEF International Partners Group Meeting, all in London. ASPBAE actively participated in these events.

Two face-to-face meetings of the Asia Pacific CSEF Regional Funding Committee were organised in the year: The first was held from 19-23 March in Hanoi to agree funding for 2016. The RFC again convened from 12-16 December in Kathmandu,

Nepal, to approve funding support to CSEF coalitions, facilitating continued capacity support work in 2017. Both meetings were organised by ASPBAE, with the Hanoi meeting hosted by VCEFA and the Kathmandu meeting hosted by NCE Nepal. Additional WebEx online RFC meetings were organised by ASPBAE on 4 and 8 July.

In the year, ASPBAE was also able to successfully negotiate sustained Open Society Foundations (OSF) support to the Korean SDG4 network. This is a follow-through of the previous cooperation between ASPBAE and OSF in preparation for the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon (2014-15). ASPBAE aims to continue to support and strengthen a Korean education network that is focusing on SDG4, and in particular SDG 4.7. Linked to this, it proposes to undertake an analysis of Korea's regulatory frameworks relevant to education privatisation.

ASPBAE planning meeting for a study regarding policy and financing options for skills training and education for decent work for marginalised women: ASPBAE and Azad Foundation, India, jointly organised a planning meeting to develop a research framework for a multi-country study to build an understanding on women's work in the informal sector and the existing policy and financing options for education and skills training for decent work for marginalised women. The meeting was organised in New Delhi, India, from 5-6 October.

In preparation for this planning meeting, ASPBAE commissioned an exploratory paper to better understand the landscape of policy and provisioning (both State and NGO) for skills training for women in the informal sector in India. The paper was written by Sujata Gothoskar, an independent researcher based in India.

Presentations on the three country contexts - India, Philippines, and Australia - related to women's work in the informal sector were shared in the meeting. The discussions following the

ASPBAE and Azad Foundation, India, organised a planning meeting to develop a research framework for a multi-country study to build an understanding on women's work in the informal sector and the existing policy and financing options for education and skills training for decent work for marginalised women.

presentations led to identification and agreements on the key aspects of the proposed research study. It was agreed that the research study would aim to highlight good existing practices related to education and skills training for marginalised women, and also identify issues and recommendations for policy advocacy on financing for skills training and education for decent work for marginalised women. The core research question and sub-themes for the proposed research study were articulated during this meeting. It was agreed to pursue the viability of the research scope to cover India, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Collaboration with UNESCO on Community Learning Centres and Lifelong Learning: ASPBAE worked closely with UNESCO Bangkok in organising a Consultation Meeting on the Regional Guidelines on the Role of Community Learning Centres and Adult Competencies for Lifelong Learning from 13-14 September in Bangkok. This was part of the overall effort of UNESCO Bangkok to assist its Member States in the Asia Pacific put in place necessary policies, programmes, and infrastructure to realise lifelong learning systems. With the support from the government of Japan, UNESCO-Bangkok has been implementing a project 'Transforming Education and Training Systems to Create Lifelong Learning Societies in the Asia-Pacific' to assist countries in the region in reorienting their education and training systems towards



ASPBAE and Azad Foundation (India) organised a planning meeting for a study regarding policy and financing options for skills training and education for decent work for marginalised women.

building lifelong learning societies.

The Consultation brought together 15 participants working in the non-formal education department of the Ministry of Education, as well as experts from non-government organisations from Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Nepal. ASPBAE members, PEKKA (Indonesia) and the National Resource Centre for Non-Formal Education (Nepal), actively participated in the workshop.

The workshop gathered inputs from the participants on draft recommendations on the regional standards of the Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and the framework for adult skills and competencies in the Asia Pacific. The feedback was synthesized, enriched, and translated into two regional documents - (1) Guidelines/Recommendations on Community Learning Centres (CLCs) as Facilitators of Lifelong Learning; and (2) Guidelines/Recommendations on Adult Skills and Competencies for Lifelong Learning. These instruments provide

key lessons that will contribute in reforming the mainly formal education system of countries towards an education system that integrates non-formal and informal education. Together with the UNESCO-Bangkok's research on lifelong learning in 7 countries in the Asia Pacific, these documents can strategically help in ensuring that the commitments in Education 2030 become realities in the Asia Pacific.

ASPBAE authored two UNESCO publications arising from this titled, *'Community-based Lifelong Learning and Adult Education: Adult Skills and Competencies for Lifelong Learning'* and *'Community-based Lifelong Learning and Education: Role of CLCs as Facilitators of Lifelong Learning'*.

Completion of the Strategic Review of ASPBAE's Training for Transformation Programme in the context of a new global consensus in development and education: ASPBAE undertook an internal strategic review of its Training for Transformation (TfT) programme in late 2015-2016 to analyse ASPBAE's capacity building work to inform ASPBAE's thinking and planning in its 7th General Assembly. ASPBAE recognised that its TfT work needed to be oriented more strongly to preparing the ASPBAE membership and constituency to advance the emergent global agenda for education (SDG4 and Education 2030 Framework for Action) and to locate adult education and lifelong learning work within a world and development context in the throes of change.

Community-Based Lifelong Learning and Adult Education
Adult Skills and Competencies for Lifelong Learning

Community-Based Lifelong Learning and Adult Education
Role of Community Learning Centres as Facilitators of Lifelong Learning

ASPBAE authored two UNESCO publications - 'Community-based Lifelong Learning and Adult Education: Adult Skills and Competencies for Lifelong Learning' and 'Community-based Lifelong Learning and Education: Role of CLCs as Facilitators of Lifelong Learning'. These instruments provide key lessons that will contribute in reforming the mainly formal education system of countries towards an education system that integrates non-formal and informal education

The review was conducted by Dorothy Lucardie of Adult Learning Australia (ALA) working closely with the ASPBAE President, Jose Roberto Guevara. The review started with a face-to-face workshop with the ASPBAE Executive and staff on 17 February in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, alongside the annual ASPBAE Executive Council Meeting. Following this, individual interviews were undertaken with participants of



ASPBAE's review of its Training for Transformation (TfT) programme began with a face-to-face workshop with the ASPBAE Executive and staff in February in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, alongside the annual ASPBAE Executive Council Meeting.

ASPBAE recognised that its Training for Transformation (TfT) work needed to be oriented more strongly to preparing the ASPBAE membership and constituency to advance the emergent global agenda for education and to locate adult education and lifelong learning work within a world and development context in the throes of change.

the programme, with organisations who have sponsored participants, and with individuals from across the world who can offer insight on the strategic context of the review. The main outcomes informed the discussion of ASPBAE during its Regional Workshop on ASPBAE's Strategic Directions in November in Bangkok.

The Review's main findings were:

- The TfT programme is intellectually stimulating and emotionally engaging
- There was a strong endorsement of the integrated approach that the TfT programme took that ensured that the key pillars of a rights based, gender-sensitive, sustainability-focused, and transformative adult learning were included in all trainings.
- Learning exchanges with other participants and immersive experiences such as site visits were the most meaningful.
- Leadership skills in facilitation and advocacy, with engagement and mentoring of youth in advocacy events, were found to be the important content areas.
- The BLDC was considered the most significant programme as it had a combination of semi-academic, practicum, and immersion methodologies. The suggestion regarding the NeXT programme was to merge NeXT 1 and NeXT 2 and to include leadership training and education as a right.
- There was capacity for the programmes to be partly delivered online with a reduced amount of face-to-face interactions as this would increase accessibility to a wider range of participants, particularly those at the grassroots, and also facilitate continued involvement by alumni.
- To support capacity building across the region, further

development of the current resources on the ASPBAE website into an annotated clearing house was also suggested.

It concluded that the ASPBAE TfT programme should be cognisant of the world and regional contextual issues that could be forecast for 2030 in order to consider the capacities that will be required by ASPBAE and its members to further the aims of the youth and adult education movement and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 4. True to its tradition, TfT should also be oriented to ensuring leadership regeneration in ASPBAE and its membership as core to the sustainability of the strong education movement for change in the region.



A Regional Consultation on Education Privatisation in the Asia Pacific was a platform for coalitions to share their initiatives and agree on plans, strategies, and joint actions to address the privatisation push in the region.

THROUGH its partnership with the Open Society Foundations (OSF) in the project, ‘Addressing Financing and Privatisation Challenges in the Post-2015 Education and Development Agenda’, and also through CSEF, ASPBAE sustained its advocacy efforts to secure increased and better financing for the new education agenda, ensuring stronger public education systems, greater accountability of the private sector engaged in education, and checking the unregulated drive towards privatisation and commercialisation of education, to effectively address equity and guarantee the right to education for all.

In 2016, ASPBAE worked with five national coalitions²⁰ in UN HR mechanism to highlight the issues around education privatisation. With ASPBAE support, the coalitions prepared parallel reports which highlighted low government spending levels for education; large number of out-of-school children and dropouts; low completion rates; questionable role of donors in supporting private schools; absence or poor implementation of regulations covering private educational institutions; and inequality and segregation in access to education.

SUSTAINED ADVOCACY ON EDUCATION FINANCING FOR SDG4 AND TO UPHOLD THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

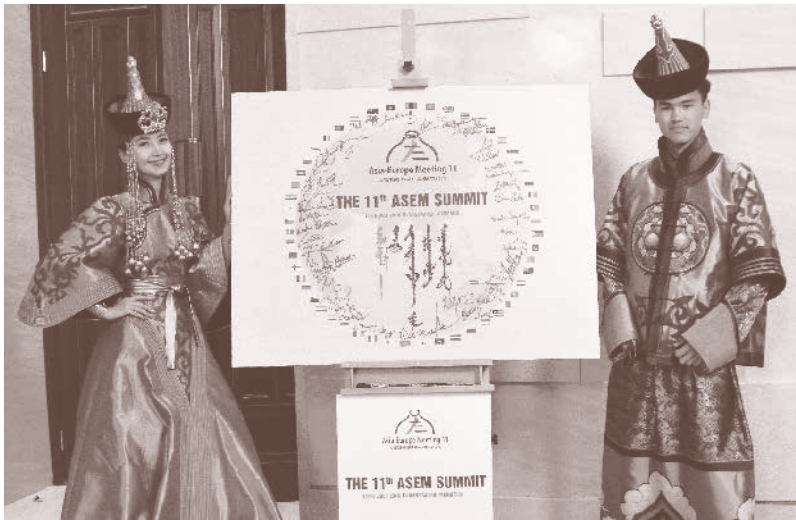
Over the year, partner coalitions, especially in Pakistan, Nepal, India, Philippines, and Mongolia, with ASPBAE support, launched country-wide awareness campaigns and dialogues with different stakeholders to highlight issues on financing in the implementation of SDG4.

Four coalitions (Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, and Mongolia) travelled to Geneva and engaged the concerned committees and presented their reports in formal NGO briefings and informal meetings with committee members.

These initiatives resulted in strong gains in the advocacy work of the coalitions and ASPBAE. The UN treaty bodies, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), in their respective reviews of Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines, took on board the submissions of civil society, notably the observations of the national education coalition partners of ASPBAE as contained in their parallel reports. The reviews articulated serious concern about the rising privatisation of education that resulted from the lack of public resources for education, the unregulated proliferation of low-fee private schools, and the high cost of private schools that is not affordable for the poor. They called the attention of State Parties to look into the discriminatory practices of private actors in education and the segregation of students and learners based on gender, economic status, and ethnicity.

ASPBAE, in cooperation with the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR), the OSF, and the Right to Education Project (RTE Project), organised

²⁰ Pakistan, Nepal, India, Philippines and Mongolia



AFE Mongolia used the occasion of their country hosting the 11th Biennial Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF11) in Ulaanbaatar to make the case for the right to education for all, transparency, accountability, and meaningful participation. They called for action against privatisation of public services, including education.

a **'Regional Consultation on Education Privatisation in the Asia Pacific'** in August-September to share coalition initiatives and agree on plans, strategies, and joint actions to address the privatisation push in the region. The consultation also discussed and solicited feedback on the draft Human Rights Guiding Principles on the Role of States and Non-State actors in the Provision of Education. Apart from ASPBAE and coalition representatives, the participants of the consultation included INGOs, human rights organisations, representatives of national HR commissions, and representatives from UNESCO Bangkok and Paris, and other UN agencies.

Over the year, partner coalitions, especially in Pakistan, Nepal, India, Philippines, and Mongolia, with ASPBAE support, launched **country-wide awareness campaigns and dialogues** with different stakeholders to highlight issues on financing in the implementation of SDG4, including their concerns on education privatisation such as the proliferation of low-fee private schools, the expansion of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in education with impacts on education access, quality, and education equity. NCE Nepal and E-Net Philippines have also begun engaging their respective governments on the observations and recommendations of the UN human rights bodies on education. AFE Mongolia used the occasion of their country hosting the 11th Biennial Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF11) in Ulaanbaatar under the theme *'Building New Solidarities: Working for Inclusive, Just, and Equal Alternatives in Asia and Europe'* to make the case for the right to education for all, transparency, accountability, and meaningful participation. They called for action against privatisation of public services, including

education.

Coalition members of ASPBAE campaigned on issues of education privatisation during **GCE's Global Week of Action on Education** held from 24-30 April, themed on *'Fund the Future: Education Rights Now'*.

ASPBAE worked closely with global partners active in advocacy on education privatisation. It attended the **Global Consortium on Education Privatisation** Meeting from 6-10 September in Nairobi; and the *Right to Education Index (RTEI)* Partners Meeting held in Dar es Salaam from 22-26 February.

ASPBAE sustained its advocacy efforts to secure increased and better financing for the new education agenda, ensuring stronger public education systems, greater accountability of the private sector engaged in education, and checking the unregulated drive towards privatisation and commercialisation of education.



ASPBAE partnered with its member organisations in India (Abhivyakti), Philippines (E-Net), and Indonesia (ASPPUK) to undertake youth-led action research for young women from vulnerable communities.

HARNESSING THE POWER OF YOUNG WOMEN FOR CHANGE: A YOUTH-LED ACTION RESEARCH TO ADVANCE THE LEARNING NEEDS OF VULNERABLE YOUNG WOMEN

AS underscored in ASPBAE's plans for the year, a key constituency for education and Education 2030 are young adults – especially marginalised young adults. ASPBAE has been working towards ensuring that marginalised youth, through their organisations, develop a stronger voice in the community, national, regional, and global processes defining the policies and programmes catering to their learning aspirations and requirements.

In 2016, the main plank for ASPBAE's work on youth and education was the ASPBAE-UIL **'Youth-led action-oriented research on education and skills for vulnerable young women'**. The research aimed to develop capacities of young women and education providers with action-research skills, and through the research, deepen their understanding of barriers and enablers to learning of young women from vulnerable communities. Through these research

and advocacy activities, it is envisaged that the youth-led research will inform the design and provision of literacy and basic skills education programmes targeting young women from vulnerable backgrounds in the participating countries.

ASPBAE partnered with its member organisations in three countries to undertake this research: Abhivyakti in India, E-Net in the Philippines, and ASPPUK (also known as the Small Business Women's Association of Facilitators) in Indonesia. E-Net Philippines worked with its member SPPI, or Centre for Local Economy Development and the Youth for Nationalism and Democracy (YND), in this project. SPPI works with poor fisher folk in coastal communities in Samar, Philippines. YND works with urban poor youth in Metro Manila. NEW Indonesia is also supporting ASPPUK in this initiative.

The core of the activities undertaken in the period involved – (1) training mainly young women from vulnerable communities in action research skills - where research is employed as a tool for learning and advocacy, spurring collective community action towards transforming the lives of young women in vulnerable, marginalised communities; (2) community-level action research undertaken by these young women in their communities; and (3) joint reflection on the outcomes of the research and planning for next steps towards practice change and advocacy. In the Philippines, a number of young men from urban poor communities participated in the trainings and research. These have been completed in India and the Philippines in 2016; while the delayed start of the initiative in Indonesia has resulted in some of the targeted activities for 2016 spilling over to the early part of 2017.

A total of 69 youth - 63 young women and 6 young men - were involved in this effort in 2016, covering a total of 11 villages (India – 3, Philippines - 6, Indonesia - 2). The young women and men involved in the research have typically been forced to drop out of school before completing secondary education, work as daily wage laborers contributing to the family income, and the women married off at a young age and continue their

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paid and unpaid domestic work in their marital homes.

The main lessons and findings from the action research so far are -

- The young marginalised girls have gained an identity as 'researchers', which has brought them dignity and recognition in the community. However, this was not gained without some strife. The workshops had bolstered their confidence to negotiate with their families and community elders and deal with adverse comments from men and boys as they started to move around collecting data.
- The experience of data collection was found to be enriching by the young girls. It brought them in contact with other girls from their community where they could hold discussions on issues of their concern.
- Critical thinking among the young girls has been enhanced through reasoning, comparing, listening to others' view point, challenging one's strongly-held beliefs, relating to the larger context.
- Basic skills of computing the data in simple frequency tables, though challenging at the start, were soon learnt. The primary analysis of the quantitative data were eye-openers for the young girls as they were able to understand the influence of poverty and patriarchy on their own lives based on concrete evidence.
- The main barriers that were evident through the study were – (i) poverty, which forced the young girls to drop out of school to supplement the family income through daily agricultural wage labour, (ii) early marriages of girls to maintain and 'uphold' the family honour, and (iii) lack of access to secondary and higher education facilities in the community
- Emerging out of the experience of data gathering were two important realities - that there is no community space for young girls to gather, and there was no access to reading resources like books and periodicals for young girls in the community beyond school text books. The young girls proposed the idea of a library only for girls and women. This intervention of initiating the community libraries for girls and women has been one of the first steps in highlighting the significance and relevance of the outcome of an action research
- There are no appropriate counseling and spaces for gathering for young women and men alike whether they be in the rural or urban settings.
- Finding livelihoods and jobs are challenging for young people, even for those who have an education, and even more elusive for the youth participants who have not finished their education.
- Schooling is the only pathway for learning for the young women, those who dropped out of school or married



The Youth Action Research involved training young women from vulnerable communities in action research skills, where research is employed as a tool for learning and advocacy.

early, do not have access to relevant learning programmes in the community, both in rural and urban settings.

- Apart from lack of education and lack of job or livelihood opportunities, marginalised youth, being in vulnerable circumstances, have to contend with problems in security, health, and risk behavior.

ASPBAE and its partners are poised to pursue the activities for the next stage of the action research in 2017 to involve:

- applying the lessons learnt from the action research in piloting alternative strategies and tools in specific learning and education programmes and services (i.e. community learning centres, NGO education programmes) to increase participation and successful completion in education programmes by marginalised young women;
- disseminating the outcomes of the research with governments (local, district, and national levels), major providers of basic skills education, and other stakeholders who can support in reducing the learning barriers faced by marginalised women;
- documentation of the action research process;
- a Regional Meeting of partners to discuss the outcomes and lessons learnt.



ASPBAE's Executive Council convened twice in 2016, in February in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and in November at the front end of the Regional Workshop on ASPBAE's Strategic Directions in Bangkok.

SUSTAINING A ROBUST, MEMBERSHIP- BASED ASIA PACIFIC NETWORK ADVANCING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

THE successful conduct of the 7th **General Assembly** was a strong contributor to organisational strengthening and membership consolidation in ASPBAE. The election of a new Executive Council (2017-2020) also signals leadership renewal and healthy governance.

ASPBAE elected a new Executive Council for the upcoming term, 2017-2020.

The incumbent **Executive Council** convened twice in 2016, from 19-21 February for its annual meeting in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and on 19 November at the front end of the Regional Workshop on ASPBAE's Strategic Directions in Bangkok. An induction meeting was also organised between the incoming and outgoing Executive Council members at the back end of the regional strategic planning workshop, offering an important opportunity for orienting the new leadership of ASPBAE on their new roles.

At the end of December 2016, ASPBAE's **membership** stood at 145 member organisations, 90 life members, and 10 individual members. It had sustained its expansion efforts in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Samoa, and Korea as planned through work on CSEF, OSF, the SDG4 follow-up actions, and with DVI support, especially through its regional office in Central Asia. ASPBAE renewed efforts to connect with key institutions and civil society networks to enhance ASPBAE's advocacy, capacity building, and resource mobilisation efforts in the South Pacific. ASPBAE intends to build on the foundations built around these in the coming period.

ASPBAE's **Information and Communications** work continued to contribute towards membership consolidation, and towards ASPBAE's advocacy and capacity building efforts. The monthly Bulletin remained a very useful source of updates and relevant information for the work of ASPBAE's membership. ASPBAE released 3 issues of ASPBAE *Ed-lines* focused on lifelong learning, on refugees, and for its final issue for the year, a synthesis of the discussions on ASPBAE's strategic directions from the 7th General Assembly. ASPBAE also sustained its social media work and maintained its website in support of its activities in the year.

ASPBAE was able to sustain its **strategic partnerships** in the year. DVVI, its longest-standing partner, remained a strong ally and collaborator in advancing quality youth and adult education and lifelong learning. ASPBAE sustained its partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for the year and until 2017 - the extension of which is to be discussed within early 2017. Work with the Open Society Foundations (OSF) continued in 2016 with the partnership renewed to 2017. ASPBAE's partnerships with UIL and UNESCO Bangkok in 2016 enabled stronger attention within ASPBAE for youth and adult education.

ASPBAE continued to operate in global spaces and remained in leading roles in the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), in the Global Campaign for Education (GE), and the Coordination Group of the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs (CC NGO).

ASPBAE was able to sustain its full **staff complement** for most part in 2016. ASPBAE faced two staff resignations in the period. Sumedha Sharma resigned in May 2016 after close to a decade of work in ASPBAE. Claude Claridad Tanvir joined the team immediately to take on coordination of the 7th General Assembly, ensuring a smooth transition. Naomi Oxenham, South Pacific Capacity Support and Advocacy Adviser, resigned in November 2016 for health reasons. As again,

tight coordination and strong team work enabled ASPBAE to cope with the difficulties associated with these changes. ASPBAE organised four all-in staff meetings in the year alongside regional events. Several face-to-face and skype-based team meetings were also convened for planning and coordination.

Finally, it has to be said that the Executive Council (2013-2016), in its final term of



ASPBAE was able to sustain its strategic partnerships in the year. DVVI, its longest-standing partner, remained a strong ally and collaborator in advancing quality youth and adult education and lifelong learning.

office, ably led the organisation through another eventful year, capping a highly successful leadership stint straddling the 50th ASPBAE anniversary celebrations in 2014, the post-2015 agenda setting campaign in 2015, and the 7th General Assembly in 2016. They pass on a strong legacy to the next leadership which will hold the organisation in good stead. They have ASPBAE's congratulations and deep thanks.



The Executive Council (2013-2016), in its final term of office, ably led the organisation through another eventful year. They pass on a strong legacy to the next leadership which will hold the organisation in good stead. They have ASPBAE's congratulations and deep thanks.

ASPBAE Ed-lines
QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

JUNE 2016 - ISSUE No.15 - QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER also available at www.aspbae.org

Adult education – a key strategy for the refugee crisis

The world is experiencing an unprecedented rise in the numbers of refugees. According to the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), more people than at any other time since UNHCR's creation began are being forced to flee their homes and seek refuge and safety elsewhere. In a report they released in mid-2016, they point to an all-time high in the numbers of refugees, forcibly displaced people and asylum seekers in the world of 2016, the number rose to a staggering 29.5 million compared to 31.2 million a year earlier and 37.5 million a decade ago. One out of 325 people today is a refugee. Further putting these figures in perspective, these numbers are equivalent to the population of a country which would be the 5th largest in the world. UNHCR believe, by current trends, the numbers are expected to further rise.

The right to education is most at risk during emergencies, yet education is critical during emergencies, times of crisis and displacement. As argued by the Emergency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE),

keeping children in schools mitigates their vulnerability to violence, rape, recruitment into fighting, prostitution, and other life-threatening, often criminal, activities. Education in those settings can also provide children with life-saving information including self-protection, disaster and abuse and other survival skills necessary in the specific context. Education provides a return to routine and hope for the future – mitigating the psychological impact of violence and displacement. For adults, education is important for coping and survival. It is a key strategy for integration in countries that take them in – realising that more and more the average period of displacement has risen on the rise. Refugees who settle need to have access to basic skills that enable them to function in the host society. Learning the language of a host country is one such skill. Providing or creating opportunities to enhance refugees' abilities to take on clerical and productive work in their host communities are essential not only for economic independence and restoring dignity for refugees and their families, but is beneficial to contribute to the local economy as well. Displaced refugees

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ASPBAE Ed-lines is produced with the support of DVV International and BMZ

ASPBAE's Information and Communications work continued to contribute towards membership consolidation, and towards ASPBAE's advocacy and capacity building efforts.

PROVISIONAL BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31.12.2016

(Amount in US \$)

	Provisional ¹ 31.12.2016	Audited ² 31.12.2015
SOURCES OF FUNDS		
Capital Fund	587,476.04	626,376.12
Add: Surplus carried from Income & Expenditure A/c	2,837.56	(38,900.08)
Total	590,313.60	587,476.04
APPLICATION OF FUNDS		
Fixed assets	266.12	362.70
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash & Bank Balances	838,733.61	526,484.52
Loans & Advances	82,823.00	62,771.14
	921,556.61	589,255.66
LESS: CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Sundry Creditors	11,910.00	21,402.47
Expenses Payable	6,004.46	17,233.05
Balance Grants	313,594.67	(36,493.20)
	331,509.13	2,142.32
Net Current Assets	590,047.48	587,113.34
Total	590,313.60	587,476.04

Notes :

1. Provisional Balance Sheet and Income & Expenditure Statements for 2016 were prepared on the basis of financial statements submitted as on 15th February 2017 by the staff, partners, and coalitions pertaining to the year 2015 and advances on the basis of funds transfers to the concerned parties and liabilities on the basis of statements provided by the participants of the workshop and/or Individual staff / members to the Secretary General
2. 2015 Accounts were audited by M/s. Mahesh Chandra & Associates, Mumbai, India.
The Audited Report is dated 24th August, 2016

PROVISIONAL INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31.12.2016

(Amount in US \$)

		Provisional 31.12.2016	Audited 31.12.2015
INCOME			
<u>Grants received</u>			
dvv international Funds	209,690.40		204,227.86
Other Funders	1,226,127.10	1,435,817.50	633,134.30
<u>Other Incomes</u>			
Bank Interest	3,460.85		3,305.69
Exchange Rate Gain / (Loss)	(14,823.14)		(22,566.33)
Sundry Balance W / off	(13,718.48)		-
Registration Fees Recd	-		3,000.00
Membership Fees	8,600.00	(16,480.77)	8,050.00
		<u>1,419,336.73</u>	<u>829,151.52</u>
EXPENDITURE			
<u>Education/training, Research & Evaluation</u>			
1) dvv international	123,720.64		136,206.70
2) Others	815,768.71	939,489.35	931,962.29
<u>Partners Infrastructure, admin. & running costs</u>			
1) dvv international	40,812.42		43,346.85
2) Others	73,443.73	114,256.15	39,906.41
Production of Publication and Media		23,727.63	-
<u>Equipment Purchase & Maintenance</u>			1,015.50
<u>Partners Personnel/Salaries</u>			
1) dvv international		19,381.83	18,983.21
<u>Audit fees & expenses</u>		5,750.00	5,700.00
		<u>1,102,604.96</u>	<u>1,177,120.96</u>
Surplus carried forward to			
Balance Sheet		2,837.56	(38,800.40)
Surplus/(Deficit) C/F to Balance			
Grants account for 2016		<u>313,894.21</u>	<u>(309,169.04)</u>

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DVV International, Germany

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Education Fund (CSEF), South Africa

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Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC),
Switzerland

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg

UNESCO Bangkok

International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), Uruguay



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