



# MILESTONES of ASPBAE's Work 2017-2020

This paper, '*Milestones of ASPBAE's Work 2017-2020*' was presented by Maria Lourdes A. Khan as the Secretary General's Report for 2017-2020 during the Virtual Asia Pacific Regional Strategic Planning Workshop on December 15-17, 2020 - the culminating event of ASPBAE's 8th General Assembly.



# MILESTONES

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## of ASPBAE's Work

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### 2017-2020

# BACKGROUND AND PREMISES

WHEN THE 7TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY of ASPBAE convened in 2016, the international development community had just recently agreed the new, more ambitious global development agenda, the Agenda for Sustainable Development codified in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of which was dedicated to education: SDG4, *“Ensure equitable, inclusive, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030”*. The education constituency had also agreed through a broad-based, multi-stakeholder and multi-lateral process steered by UNESCO, a Framework for Action to guide the implementation of SDG4 and all other education related targets in the SDG agenda.



ASPBAE members in the last General Assembly recognised that civil society played a strong role in the processes that built consensus around the SDGs and SDG4. They appreciated that ASPBAE had played leading roles for civil society at regional and global levels and sustained a strong interlocutor role: facilitating greater interaction between global, regional and national advocacy processes - ensuring that national/local perspectives informed global policy debates and that information on critical policy processes and debates globally informed CSO strategising and planning at various levels of work.

To realise the strong opportunities offered by the SDG-SDG4 agreements and follow up actions and spaces, the membership underscored that ASPBAE needed to build on its strengths and further enhance its capacities. ASPBAE's Strategic Plan 2017-2020 therefore outlined the trajectory of work for the period:



- “ASPBAE members and partners at the forefront of policy advocacy need to deepen understanding and broaden their strategies in arguing for the wider SDG4 agenda, where most of them have erstwhile been focused solely on individual SDG4 targets, predominantly those related to primary education and formal schooling. Understandings on lifelong learning frameworks, policies and systems is still relatively minimal.
- They also need to build deeper understanding of other SDGs – especially in areas where the goals strongly interact with education e.g. women’s empowerment, decent work, health, poverty eradication, equality and sustainable development. The SDG follow up processes also encourage drawing the interrelationships among the different goals - thus fostering greater interaction and new partnerships among civil society organisations advancing their own thematic interests. ASPBAE will need to develop capacities to operate in these new arenas including expanding its policy engagements beyond those focused solely on education e.g. beyond Ministries of Education or UNESCO.
- ASPBAE has to also foster stronger interactions between education advocates and youth and adult education (AE) practitioners in its membership, helping build a more robust civil society policy reform agenda for quality youth and adult education within a lifelong learning framework, derived from civil society’s extensive practice. Platforms that further support youth and AE practice, while harnessing this rich experience to better inform evolving public policy and provisioning on lifelong learning, will also have to be promoted.
- Conflict, natural disasters, shrinking democratic spaces in many parts of the region impact on the promise of SDG4 and in the ability of civil society to sustain their work and persist in their



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efforts. ASPBAE will need to be attentive to this in its planning and its advocacy work.

- Expanded expectations of members on ASPBAE offer signs of a healthy, credible network – but exert pressure on the resource base of the organization. In a climate where development cooperation stands challenged, ASPBAE will need to do more and find creative means to secure its medium to longer term sustainability. While present in many parts of the Asia Pacific region, ASPBAE remains relatively weaker in its presence in East Asia, some parts of the South Pacific and Central Asia. Much more can also be done to foster greater interaction among members within the region for learning, capacity-building, advocacy and solidarity - possibly with greater use as well of social media and information technologies.”

Within this understanding, the Strategic Plan 2017-2020 articulated the following Objectives for the period within ASPBAE’s overall Mission:



## MISSION

To work towards securing the right of all people to basic, youth and adult education of good quality, contributing to poverty eradication, social justice, gender equality, sustainable development and a lasting peace.

## OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Enhanced capacities of ASPBAE as a regional, membership-based organisation, equipped to optimise the national, regional and global spaces offered by the SDGs and SDG4 policy processes to advance the right to quality basic, youth and adult education within a lifelong learning framework.

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Increased abilities to press governments, donors, inter-governmental bodies and financing institutions to strengthen public education systems that deliver better in securing the right of all to quality basic, youth and adult education within a lifelong learning frame, prioritising marginalised and vulnerable groups, through reinforced civil society engagement in education policy at all levels, leading to greater institutionalised spaces for civil society participation in public policy and decision-making processes;
  - 1.1. Preserve the gains of the earlier period and ensure that the full SDG4 agenda is pursued and implemented
  - 1.2. Increased and better financing for the new education agenda with increases in national education budgets, more and better ODA ensuring stronger public education



systems, and curbing the unregulated drive for the privatisation and commercialisation of education.

1.3. Institutionalised civil society participation in national, regional/sub-regional and global education policy spaces; with broad-based, multi-stakeholder, participatory character of SDG and SDG4 mechanisms and platforms promoted at national/sub-national, regional and global levels.

2. Stronger fronts for coordinated civil society education advocacy actions; along with enhanced capacities of NGOs promoting quality youth and adult education provisioning especially to vulnerable and marginalised youth and adults in youth and adult education practice, informing public policy;

2.1. Enhanced capacities of national education campaign coalitions in the Asia Pacific to advance the full SDG4-Education 2030 agenda within the wider SDGs, concretised within the specific realities and conditions of countries within the Asia Pacific region, advocating powerfully for more and better education financing and institutionalised spaces of CSO participation in education policy.

2.2. Deepened capacities of practitioners of youth and adult education to actively promote transformative youth and adult education work, thus contributing to the development, in their countries, of strong lifelong learning systems especially attentive to the learning needs of marginalised children, youth and adults.

2.3. A stronger voice and agency of young people in ASPBAE's work and advocacies, as key stakeholders in education and lifelong learning.

3. Wider linkages with other civil society networks and organisations fighting poverty, advancing social justice, gender equality, sustainable development and peace, and thereby securing stronger recognition of the critical role of education and learning in meeting all the SDGs;

3.1. Sustain and deepen existing partnerships with global and regional civil society networks, institutes, inter-governmental formations, international bodies championing the right to education and lifelong learning especially through SDG4 processes and frameworks.

3.2. Expand involvement with civil society formations and with other government agencies, international organisations and institutions closely involved in the SDG follow-up processes, to ensure that SDG4-Education 2030 remains prominent in the global policy discourses on development and to better assert ASPBAE advocacies on SDG4.



*The overall objective is to ensure enhanced capacities for ASPBAE as a regional membership-based organisation, equipped to optimise the national, regional and global spaces offered by the SDGs and SDG4 policy processes to advance the right to quality basic, youth and adult education within a lifelong learning framework.*

4. An institutionally robust ASPBAE, able to offer a platform for exchange and learning of its members and CSOs working to advance the right to education and lifelong learning; as an advocate for the right to basic, youth and adult education and lifelong learning; and as a partner in leadership and capacity-development of its members.

The 7th General Assembly also mandated the pursuit of these objectives through four **(4) core strategies**, aligned with these specific objectives:

1. Policy Advocacy
2. Leadership and Capacity Building
3. Building Strategic Partnerships
4. Institutional Strengthening

ASPBAE promoted these objectives and pursued these strategies in a milieu which saw deep challenges to meeting the SDG promise.



*Civil society organisations faced increasing threats to survival and functioning in overt and covert ways. Legitimate protests – many by women and youth – were criminalised; fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly systematically undermined.*

No sooner had the ink dried in the agreements penned to secure the international SDG commitments, the world witnessed reversals in gains towards multilateralism, global solidarity and partnership. Ultra-nationalist and populist tendencies peaked in the polity of major democracies. In Europe and the US, race, ethnic, religious divisions were aggressively and violently stoked by a more visible, strident, expanding far-right. In Asia and in many parts of the world, this right-wing 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.

Heightened conflict, sectarian violence and escalated attacks on human rights characterised the period. Democratic spaces continued to shrink with authoritarian governance being legitimised by elections in many settings including in the Asia Pacific. Civil society organisations faced increasing threats to survival and functioning in overt and covert ways. Legitimate protests – many by women and youth – were criminalised; fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly systematically undermined.

Natural disasters have come at a huge cost to lives, livelihoods, a fair chance of a future of any promise for millions.

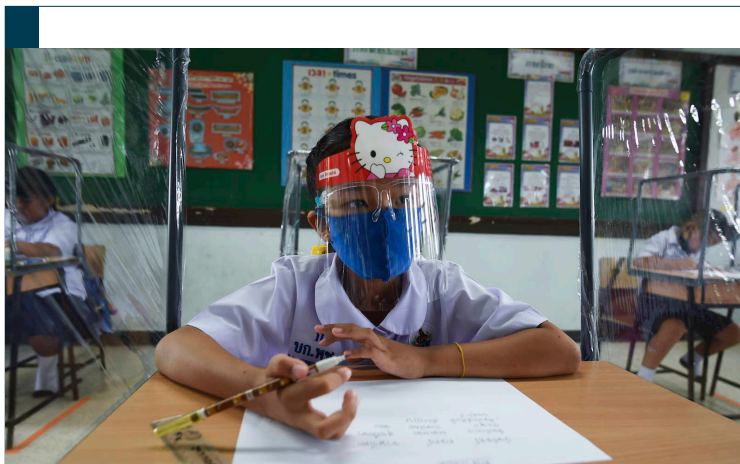
The HLPF 2019 reported modest gains in the fight against poverty with a decline in the percentage of people living in extreme poverty. But the absolute numbers remained staggering: 700 million people living in extreme poverty; as many as 1.3 billion if one counts

**The education sector was badly hit with closures of schools and other education institutions disrupting education access of 1.6 billion students, with hundreds of millions of children and youth unable to continue their learning.**

multi-dimensional poverty. Income inequality persisted; unemployment was high especially among young people. In 2019, more than 630 million workers worldwide – that is, almost one in five, or 19%, of all those employed – did not earn enough to lift themselves and their families out of extreme or moderate poverty. Despite the region's rapid economic progress over the past decades, 79.1 million workers in Asia and the Pacific, or 4.2%, remained in extreme poverty in 2019.

It was in this context that the world was confronted with a health and human crisis of vast proportions. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought the world to its knees – exposing the fragilities of health, education and social protection systems world-wide; and the profound impacts of structural inequalities. The world was already in crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic hit hard on an already weak world economy plunging the world economy into deep recession with the possibility of historical levels of unemployment and deprivation.<sup>1</sup> The UN observes that small and medium enterprises, the self-employed, and daily wage earners are being hit the hardest; with the crisis threatening to push back any limited gains made on gender equality and further exacerbate the feminisation of poverty, vulnerability to violence, and women's equal participation in the labour force.

An estimated 71 million people are expected to be pushed back into extreme poverty in 2020, the first rise in global poverty since 1998.<sup>2</sup> Underemployment and unemployment due to the crisis means some 1.6 billion already vulnerable workers in the informal



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economy – half the global workforce – may be significantly affected, with their incomes estimated to have fallen by 60% in the first month of the crisis.<sup>3</sup>

The education sector was badly hit with closures of schools and other education institutions disrupting education access of 1.6 billion students, with hundreds of millions of children and youth unable to continue their learning. Digital technologies offered valuable avenues to address the crisis, facilitating the continuity of business activity, enabling the dissemination of important health and safety information that saved lives and supported the continuity of education access. However, the deep digital divides within and across countries exacerbated the already existing inequalities in access to education, learning, information and connectivity. According to ITU, an estimated 3.6 billion people

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_report\\_socio-economic\\_impact\\_of\\_covid19.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_report_socio-economic_impact_of_covid19.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

<sup>3</sup> Ibid





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have had no access to the internet, with the majority of the unconnected living in the least developed countries. Social divides including in gender have put the marginalised in greater disadvantage and at greater risk of sustained learning loss. Further, the lockdowns heightened girls' exposure to gender-based violence including sexual exploitation and early and unintended pregnancies, while also removing their access to vital services for protection, nutrition, health and well-being.<sup>4</sup> As the UN underscored, *"the pandemic has created the most severe disruption in the world's education systems in history and is threatening a loss of learning that may stretch beyond one generation of students."*

<sup>4</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/gem2020-extraordinary-session-background-document-en.pdf>

Some celebrated how the international community rallied around common coordinated efforts to deal with the pandemic and the health crisis. While the crisis fostered global solidarity and international cooperation that had till that point been on the wane, the pandemic also spurred autocratic responses in many countries, circumventing democratic and accountability processes in the emergency response – flouting internationally agreed human rights standards and once again undermining human rights.

**It is in this context of great challenge that ASPBAE steadfastly pursued its efforts to advance the right to education.**

**The following offers the main milestones of its work in 2017-2020 against the Objectives it set for itself:**



*Lockdowns heightened girls' exposure to gender-based violence including sexual exploitation and early and unintended pregnancies, while also removing their access to vital services for protection, nutrition, health and well-being.*



## OBJECTIVE 1

Increased abilities to press governments, donors, inter-governmental bodies and financing institutions to strengthen public education systems that deliver better in securing the right of all to quality basic, youth and adult education within a lifelong learning frame, prioritising marginalised and vulnerable groups, through reinforced civil society engagement in education policy at all levels, leading to greater institutionalised spaces for civil society participation in public policy and decision-making processes.

*ASPBAE and its members play strong roles as civil society representatives in the Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED) – as speakers, facilitators, and, for ASPBAE, as a member of the Drafting Committee in successive APMEDs representing civil society.*

Without a doubt, ASPBAE expanded its competencies in the period to be better positioned to make the case for stronger public education systems that promote the full SDG4 agenda, advancing the right to education, especially of marginalised groups and communities.



# 1:

## CONTINUING LEADERSHIP ROLES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE SDG4 ARCHITECTURE

ASPBAE sustained and increased its leading role for CSOs in the SDG4 architecture.

It was inducted into the Asia Pacific Thematic Working Group on Education 2030+ co-convened by UNESCO and UNICEF in 2016 and has remained part of it through 2017-2020. The TWG is the main regional coordinating mechanism for the SDG4 follow up. It convenes the annual Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED), which brings together the different stakeholders in SDG4 especially governments in platforms for capacity-building, monitoring and dialogue on ways to better ensure the SDG4 targets. ASPBAE and its members play strong roles as CSO representatives in this space – as speakers, facilitators and, for ASPBAE, as a member of the Drafting Committee in successive APMEDs

representing civil society. ASPBAE has also been present in the meetings of the SDG4 National Coordinators meetings convened at the back end of the APMEDs, where ASPBAE has had the opportunity to update on the CSO initiatives at country and regional levels to follow up on SDG4 including on earlier APMED-agreed actions.

Given the proactive and constructive contributions that ASPBAE and its members have been able to offer, ASPBAE has been invited to various technical committees organised by UNESCO and UNICEF in the region on SDG4 – related to financing, monitoring, and different content areas within the SDGs and SDG4. ASPBAE is part of the group drafting the Mid-term Review Report on SDG4, anchoring the sections on SDG4.4 and 4.6. This Report will be the main reference document for the 3rd Asia Pacific Regional Education Ministers Conference in 2021 – a high level meeting convened to offer a political steer to SDG4 work in the region. ASPBAE has also been asked to contribute to content areas related to the participation of civil society in SDG4 processes.

ASPBAE's attempt in its engagements in these spaces has been to push the boundaries to ensure more meaningful participation of CSOs especially from the country level. In the early days of EFA and the post 2015 processes, national-level CSOs were conspicuous in their absence, with CSO representation largely confined to INGO representation. There has been a marked shift in the nature of CSO participation in these regional SDG4 spaces over the last 4 years. ASPBAE lobbying within the TWG Ed 2030+ and the demonstrated credibility and representative power of ASPBAE network and its member national education



*ASPBAE playing a nominating role as the Asia Pacific regional Focal Point for the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 (CC NGO/Ed2030). This has expanded CSO participation in these events – including in prominent speaking roles in plenary and other sessions.*

**The demonstrated credibility and representative power of ASPBAE and its member national education coalitions led to agreement on a defined protocol institutionalising local CSOs in APMED events.**

coalitions, led to agreement on a **defined protocol institutionalising the participation of country-level CSOs in the APMED events**. ASPBAE members, especially national education coalitions, have after all, a strong presence in education policy arenas in the country. At least 14 coalitions members of ASPBAE are formal part of government committees or policy bodies in education. UNESCO explicitly encourages governments to include CSOs in their official delegations – an option several governments have since taken, for example the Philippines, Bangladesh, Tajikistan. With this, dedicated slots for CSOs were offered with ASPBAE playing a nominating role as the Asia Pacific regional Focal Point for the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 (CC NGO/Ed2030). This has expanded CSO participation in these events – including in prominent speaking roles in plenary and other sessions.

ASPBAE sustained its strong engagement with the SDG4 global follow up processes. It represented in the Education 2030 Steering Committee from 2016-2019 and served as Vice-Chair for 2016-2018. In this role, ASPBAE is able to amplify the advocacies of the Asia Pacific CSOs along with the concerns of CSOs from other regions in coordinated ways.

ASPBAE participated in the two (2) Global Education Meetings organised in the period and was the CSO speaker invited to address the technical segment of the extraordinary session of the GEM in 2020 (October, online).



*With ASPBAE support, its members have been significantly contributing to the efforts of their governments to align their national education plans and policies with the wider lifelong learning framework advanced by SDG4.*

In the policy spaces ASPBAE and its members participated in, they had successfully asserted fidelity to the full SDG4 agenda within the framework of the right to education and lifelong learning; a focus on equity and inclusion attentive to excluded and marginalised groups and communities, especially girls and women, wider notions of education quality, the need to strengthen public education systems with governments meeting their obligations as duty bearers of education rights, more and better aid to education and the democratic participation of education stakeholders including CSOs, teachers, youth and students, parents in education policy processes and decision-making.

With ASPBAE support, its members have been significantly contributing to the efforts of their governments to align their national education plans and policies with the wider lifelong learning (LLL) framework advanced by SDG4. E-Net Philippines successfully lobbied for the Alternative Learning System legislation within a LLL framework, arguing for the institutionalisation and financing of the ALS to provide continuing education for children, youth and adults not in the formal education systems. NCE Nepal has been lobbying for lifelong learning within the Ministry of Education as well as the High-Level National Education Commission, while also reaching out to local governments in this effort. AFE Mongolia continued its engagements on LLL with the Ministry of Education and also engaged the development of the National Strategy for LLL. In its spotlight report 2019, AFE-Mongolia called for the need for policy coherence, aligning the education sector plan with the SDG4, in particular, the need to legislate policies on lifelong learning, inclusive education and the full agenda of SDG4 attentive to the needs of marginalised children, youth and adults. In Vietnam, the coalition VAEFA has been actively involved in the

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preparations for the development of their country's new Education Strategy Development Plan (ESDP) 2021-2030. As part of the initial preparations on ESDP development, VAEFA co-hosted a much-appreciated capacity building initiative for officials and staff of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and local CSOs, with ASPBAE providing input and training, on how to strengthen and fully embed ALE and LLL in the new ESDP. In Timor Leste, following strong lobbying of CSEP, the new Education Sector Plan refers to the full articulation of SDG4, including LLL.



## 2:

## A MUCH STRONGER PRESENCE OF AN EDUCATION CSO VOICE IN THE SDG PROCESSES

ASPBAE significantly expanded its presence in the SDG-related platforms at regional and global levels in 2017-2020 where in the earlier period, ASPBAE's presence was confined primarily to global and regional education policy and notably the SDG4 spaces.

ASPBAE brought the depth and strength of its network to engage meaningfully in country, regional and global SDG follow up processes.

Through years of building their credibility in policy engagements in education, ASPBAE members, notably national education campaign coalitions were poised to participate in the processes that rolled out the SDGs at the country level. ASPBAE's documentation and review of CSO participation in the SDG processes in 2019, through the CSO Spotlight Reports on SDG4 undertaken in 16

countries<sup>5</sup>, revealed that all ASPBAE members participating in this process were engaged in the government-led processes rolling out and customising the SDGs. Spaces open to CSOs were however uneven: in some countries, CSOs were represented at the highest levels of the SDG and/or SDG4 architecture in their countries; some were only offered token participation. Some mechanisms were more institutionalised and on-going while others were one-off.

With the tools of analysis on CSO Spotlight Reports developed collectively under ASPBAE's steerage, ASPBAE members were well-prepared to engage the official Volunteer National Review (VNR) processes. They harnessed the data and analysis developed through their own and supportive ASPBAE-led research and policy analysis to inform these processes with stronger messages on education inclusion and equity. Endeavours of the coalition in Vietnam (VAEFA) for example to engage the VNR process in their country drew attention to issues of inclusion especially for children and youth with disabilities. CED Sri Lanka led the CSO push for CSO participation in the VNR process in the country where there was none – and managed to draw attention to the need for investments in quality skills training for youth and adults to address issues of unemployment.

ASPBAE members participated in the official VNR processes in 18 countries from 2017-2020<sup>6</sup> – higher than the targeted number of 6-9 countries. 22<sup>7</sup> CSO Spotlight Reports on SDG4 were developed in the period 2019-2020 surpassing



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<sup>5</sup> ASPBAE led a coordinated effort developing 16 CSO Spotlight Reports on SDG4 covering the following countries: India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Japan, Cambodia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Timor Leste, Australia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu in 2019

<sup>6</sup> VNR 2018 in Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Australia; VNR 2019 in Pakistan, Mongolia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Timor Leste, Vanuatu, Aotearoa/New Zealand; VNR 2020 in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, PNG, Solomon Is., Samoa

<sup>7</sup> India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Japan, Cambodia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Timor Leste, Australia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu in 2019 and Nepal, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, India, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in 2020.

the targeted 6-9 reports. Further, a synthesis of the 16 country spotlight reports – the Asia Pacific Spotlight Report on SDG4 – was published which significantly contributed to the review of SDG4 - in Asia Pacific in 2019.

At the regional and global levels, ASPBAE markedly expanded its presence. In 2017-2020, ASPBAE led strong delegations of its members in the regional preparatory meetings for the HLPF, the **Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD)** and its CSO preparatory processes through the **Asia Pacific Peoples Forum (APPF)**. This enabled a more powerful voice for education in the CSO debates as collective advocacies were shaped for presentation in the APFSD. In the process, ASPBAE and its members also deepened their understanding of the wider SDG agenda and sharpened their articulation of how SDG4 is critical to the achievement of other SDGs. With spaces for CSOs in the official processes being very limited – the slots are negotiated very

**Through sustained lobbying within the APPF and APFSD, attention to education was reflected in the official documents coming out of these processes.**

competitively among CSOs. The wide reach of ASPBAE to countries in the region proved a strong asset in getting these coveted slots. Very few regional organisations would have members representing wide constituencies and be well organised to engage in the South Pacific or Central Asia or in the smaller countries in South East Asia like East Timor. ASPBAE could therefore nominate for slots dedicated to widening representation from these areas. This enabled ASPBAE to have a consistent presence in the official regional HLPF spaces.

Because ASPBAE and members have spoken credibly and well on issues of education they have since been recognised as the representative voices for SDG4 **within the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM)** – the main mechanism for CSO engagement in the HLPF preparatory processes in the Asia Pacific. While ASPBAE's proposition to create a distinct constituency for education within APRCEM still meets stiff resistance, recognition of the need for an organised education contribution in the APRCEM processes was concretised with the creation of an Education Working Group. Seven (7) members and partners of ASPBAE have since become formal members of APRCEM: CAMPE Bangladesh, CSEP Timor-Leste, NCE-Nepal, NNER Myanmar, NCE-India, Azad Foundation, India and Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Bangladesh, although double that number have been very active. ASPBAE is confident they will pursue formal membership shortly.



*ASPBAE and its members have since been recognised as the representative voices for SDG4 within the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM) – the main mechanism for civil society engagement in the HLPF preparatory processes in the Asia Pacific.*

Through sustained lobbying within the APPF and the APFSD, education was reflected in the official documents coming out of the APFSD from 2017-2019. The importance of “education and training for women to better prepare them for the changing world of work and the application of information and communications technology”<sup>8</sup> was part of the APFSD official report in 2017. The APFSD 2018 report referred to how education is important to strengthen resilience of vulnerable groups and the need to build resilient infrastructure and develop early warning systems, including with respect to education to ensure preparedness for natural disasters and economic shocks.<sup>9</sup> The report of the 2019 APFSD which devoted a major section on SDG4 as a goal under review reflected the strong advocacies of civil society on removing the systemic barriers for inclusive education, on working towards the full realization of Goal 4, diversifying learning pathways, both in formal and non-formal education to eradicate illiteracy, support for teachers as well as caregivers and facilitators for early learning and early childhood development and reversing the stagnation of funding to the education sector including well targeted financing to reach the marginalised.<sup>10</sup>

ASPBAE also began to participate in the global High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York from 2017-2019 and in the on-line sessions in 2020. ASPBAE organised side events in 2018 and 2019 – opening opportunities to work with strategic partners (ICAE, DVVI, GCE, UIL, CoNGO, to name some), introduce ASPBAE to a wider set of development players globally, and draw attention to its advocacies on education. Through GCE and ICAE who jointly steer the Education and



*ASPBAE delegation to the 2019 Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD)*

Academia Stakeholder Group,<sup>11</sup> ASPBAE had a link to the global official processes of the HLPF. In 2020 though, ASPBAE and its members PEAN in PNG and CAMPE Bangladesh managed to secure speaking slots reserved for CSOs in the HLPF official sessions.

ASPBAE and its members were able to participate in the SDG-SDG4 processes as they moved to on-line platforms in 2020 on account of the travel

**ASPBAE and its members were able to participate in the SDG-SDG4 processes as they moved to on-line platforms in 2020 on account of the travel and mobility restrictions imposed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/FSD\(4\)\\_3\\_Report\\_E.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/FSD(4)_3_Report_E.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://undocs.org/en/ESCAP/RFS/2018/4>

<sup>10</sup> <http://undocs.org/en/ESCAP/RFS/2019/3>

<sup>11</sup> The Education and Academia Stakeholder Group is the main platform for the education constituency to be represented in the official mechanism for NGO participation in the HLPF. i.e. through the Major Groups and other Stakeholders mechanism.



and mobility restrictions imposed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. While this had its advantages, there is no doubt that the on-line modes of these processes vastly diminished the opportunities and spaces for CSO lobbying and engagement. Many countries presented their VNRs through a video recording which dispensed with the interventions from the delegates and CSOs in this process. CSO speaking roles are far reduced and the possibility for side-discussions, networking in the corridors of the Conference, informal meetings on the side of the events which have been significant arenas for lobbying have become non-existent. CSOs fear that these diminished spaces become more entrenched and normalised even when the COVID-19 related restrictions are lifted.

ASPBAE sought to expand its association with intergovernmental sub-regional formations such as South East Asia Ministers of Education (SEAMEO), the Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the period, to advocate alignment of their education policies with the SDG-SDG4 agreements. While there have been more possibilities of this within SEAMEO, CSO engagement within SAARC and ASEAN have continued to remain very restricted. However, with the regional ESCAP-led SDG follow up processes being organised sub-regionally as well, ASPBAE has had possibility to engage with governments at sub-regional levels within the period, nevertheless.



## ADVOCACY TO STRENGTHEN PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEMS ATTENTIVE TO THE FULL SDG4 AGENDA AND STEMMING THE UNREGULATED DRIVE FOR PRIVATISATION AND COMMERCIALISATION



*ASPBAE worked with national education coalitions in 6 countries on budget advocacy to ensure equitable and gender-responsive financing that prioritise those who are furthest behind.*

Recognising that the lion share of financing for public education systems will have to be raised domestically – by governments<sup>12</sup> - a big thrust of ASPBAE's effort in the period was focused on domestic resource mobilisation.

ASPBAE worked with national education coalitions in 6<sup>13</sup> countries on budget advocacy to ensure equitable and gender-responsive financing that prioritise those who are furthest behind. Coalitions analysed education budgets and identified financing gaps, mapped strategies to better advocate for equitable and gender-sensitive financing by proposing concrete budgetary measures to address the gaps, improve access and quality, and prioritise the marginalised sections of the population. Started in 2019, the effort however slowed down in 2020 when planned advocacy actions had to be postponed in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, ASPBAE members persisted in the spaces and opportunities available to advocate for the protection of education budgets and the inclusion of education in the stimulus packages of government. This has been critical in the face of low priority accorded to education and training in stimulus packages: a mere 0.09% according to UNESCO estimates.

To also better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education financing at the ground level, ASPBAE started a research effort in 2020, the outcomes of which are envisaged to be used by ASPBAE and its coalition partners in their campaigns to protect and increase the education budgets related to learning continuity, safety, protection, and equity. It is hoped that the research will also yield more insight on the government financing responses and the presence of private players in the learning continuity programmes of government and the impact of these on public financing.



*ASPBAE members persisted in the spaces and opportunities available to advocate for the protection of education budgets and the inclusion of education in the stimulus packages of government.*

Even before COVID-19, the gaps in education financing worldwide had already triggered a push for 'innovative financing' and a number of global education financing initiatives have come up advancing these: International Financing Facility for Education (IFFED) around loans, Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) promoting impact bonds, as examples.

This prompted ASPBAE to review different **domestic resource mobilisation** options including existing efforts undertaken by governments in the region. The coalition in Nepal reviewed government policies and the experience in tracking tax avoidance and exemptions of big corporations – to ascertain what is lost by the public coffers that could have otherwise gone to education. In India, the coalition started their review of the experience on education cess, an additional levy introduced by the Central Government in India to raise resources

<sup>12</sup> According to the Global Education Monitoring Report 2018, governments account for 79.3% of total education spending, households for 20.4% and donors for 0.3% globally.

<sup>13</sup> India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Philippines, Kyrgyzstan



specifically to finance its education targets and programmes. In the Philippines, the coalitions will review the experience of the Special Education Fund (SEF), an additional tax on real estate levied by local governments which accrue to a special education fund. The analysis in these cases are expected to offer policy options and recommendations to effectively generate additional resources for education, and inform the coalitions' advocacy efforts on education financing.

ASPBAE sustained its efforts to **challenge education privatisation** in the period. A major space for advocacy in this respect was the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) which agreed its Private Sector Engagement Strategy in 2019. With ASPBAE having joined the GPE Board in this year as one of the civil society representatives, it participated actively in pushing back on the recommendations to apply GPE grants and resources for funding the private sector in education. The concerted advocacy effort of CSOs resulted in agreement that "no GPE funds can be used to support for-profit provision of core education services". And while an exemptions clause under exceptional circumstances formed part of the consensus, the guidelines and conditions for these exemptions to be exercised were sufficiently stringent to prevent abuse. In the GPE strategic planning process currently underway, CSOs have also succeeded in pushing back efforts to dilute the conditions around domestic resource mobilisation by developing country governments to access GPE grants. Scaled up engagement with GPE was expressed not only at the GPE Board level. Engagement at the country level also expanded through the participation of national education coalitions in Local Education Groups

(LEGs). Of the 15 countries in the Asia Pacific where LEGs exist, national education coalitions are members in 12 of them. ASPBAE and its members also participated actively in the 2018 Replenishment campaign and are also gearing up for the 2021 Replenishment.

ASPBAE contributed to the global efforts to challenge education privatisation also through its membership in the Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC) where it served as a member of the Facilitation Group until 2020. The Consortium which campaigns around issues of education financing and privatisation globally, led the effort to develop and disseminate the Guiding Principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education or the 'Abidjan Principles'. ASPBAE was active in the discussions shaping the Abidjan Principles and hosted one of its launch events in the Asia Pacific in 2019 in Bangkok.

Some planned activities on education financing had to be postponed to the next period on account of the COVID-19 pandemic or scaled



*ASPBAE worked with national education coalitions in 6 countries on budget advocacy to ensure equitable and gender-responsive financing that prioritise those who are furthest behind.*



*ASPBAE sustained its efforts to challenge education privatisation. A major space for advocacy in this respect was the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) which agreed its Private Sector Engagement Strategy in 2019.*

down because of resource constraints. ASPBAE could not extend beyond 2017, its efforts to advocate within the UN Human Rights review mechanisms, or pursue the tracking of low fee private schools and country advocacy efforts on the regulation of the private sector in education on account of funding limitations.

Education financing will certainly be an area of priority of ASPBAE for the coming period. The economic cost of the COVID-19 pandemic is huge. The sharp recession in the global North and South will have damaging effects on public revenue-raising capacity and budget allocations. According to UNESCO, it is expected that public expenditure on education is likely to fall by 8% in 2020 even if governments protect the budget share of education. It can fall by as much as 12% however if public spending deprioritises education over for instance health in this period. The financing gap to meet the 2030 SDG4 targets estimated at US\$148 billion pre COVID-19 can expand by anywhere

between US\$320 billion and US\$455 billion over the 10-year period to 2030 – representing an increase from 22% to 31%.

ASPBAE and its members will have to be prepared to fight hard to protect domestic and international funding for education. It is thus poised however to scale up its advocacy on tax **justice** and in better understanding the different international financing modalities including those that promote loans to education, in the coming period. It will seek deeper understanding of the **impact of debt servicing on public education** in the Asia Pacific especially for basic, youth and adult learning and education.



*ASPBAE contributed to the global efforts to challenge education privatisation also through its membership in the Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC) where it served as a member of the Facilitation Group until 2020.*

# 4:

## SCALED UP ADVOCACY ACTIONS ON ALE ESPECIALLY AT COUNTRY LEVELS

The tendency to reinterpret and present a narrower version of the full SDG4 agenda was apparent early on as it was being contextualised and implemented. The SDG4 targets related to youth and adult learning and education were clearly being missed out – most especially in the global financing mechanisms for education that were sustained into the SDG4 era and the new ones that arose. The push for a narrower focus of SDG4 became stronger in the COVID -19 period – as the worldwide recession massively threatened the availability of public resources and aid for education.

Recognising the value of adult education and learning on its own and as it serves the other SDG4 targets and the overall SDG agenda, ASPBAE scaled up its ALE advocacy work especially at the country level. ASPBAE's tack was to locate its ALE Advocacy work in the core of the SDG-SDG4 and overall education advocacy efforts of national education coalition members. In its first phase of scaling up in 2019, ASPBAE launched this effort in 6 countries<sup>14</sup> in the region where national education coalitions were well positioned in technical committees of governments, in SDG-SDG4 processes and/or where existing domestic policy processes underway offered strategic opportunities to make a powerful case for ALE (e.g. review of education sector plan, consultations around a new Education Act or law). This effort was increased to cover 8 countries<sup>15</sup> in 2020. Currently, youth and adult education practitioners with education advocates in at least 8 countries of the region actively influence (through policy papers, meetings, lobby groups etc.) the concretisation of the ALE-related targets in SDG4 in their respective countries and have a defined advocacy agenda for youth and adult education.

A coordinated regional review of Volunteer National Reviews (VNRs) from an adult education lens further built the analytical base of ASPBAE and its members for policy engagement on ALE especially in the SDG-SDG4

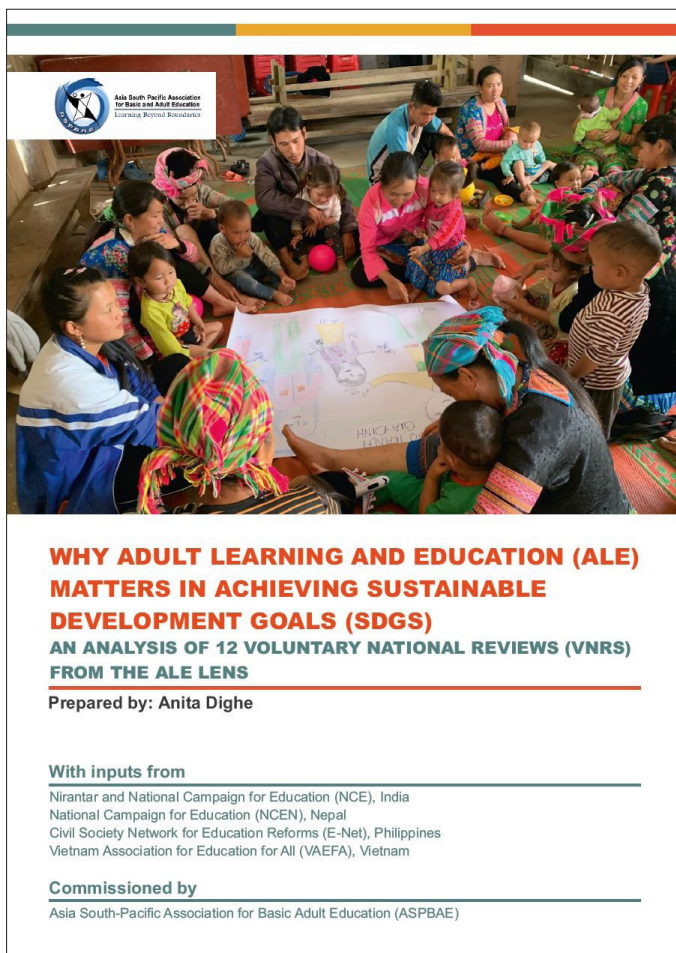


*ASPBAE scaled up its adult learning and education (ALE) advocacy work, especially at the country level. ASPBAE's tack was to locate its ALE Advocacy work in the core of the SDG-SDG4 and overall education advocacy efforts of national education coalition members.*

<sup>14</sup> India, Nepal, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, Afghanistan

<sup>15</sup> India, Nepal, Vietnam, Philippines, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia





*A coordinated regional review of Volunteer National Reviews (VNRs) from an adult education lens further built the analytical base of ASPBAE and its members for policy engagement on ALE.*

processes at the country level. Member coalitions in India, Vietnam, the Philippines and Nepal developed reviews of their respective countries. ASPBAE commissioned Anita Dighe, an eminent researcher on ALE from India to do the review for VNRs in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Mongolia, Laos, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu.

The Nepal Campaign for Education (NCE Nepal) disseminated their ALE analysis of Nepal Volunteer National Review (VNR) to various education stakeholders in the country and to members of Parliament, to the Ministry of Education and the High-Level National Education Commission that is charged with preparing education policies at the local and national level. With this report, they were also able to offer concrete recommendations to the Nepal SDG Coordinating Committee on ALE policy

issues that needed attention in the preparation of Nepal's 2020 VNR. E-Net Philippines was very active in lobbying efforts for a pending Bill on Alternative Learning System (ALS) as a member of the Technical Working Group (TWG) of this Bill. Aside from completing the VNR review from an ALE perspective, the Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA) undertook a study on the implementation of ALE policies in Vietnam, informed by a district level survey they launched reviewing continuing education programmes in place. They are keen to use the outcomes of these analysis to inform the next education strategy development planning process of Vietnam where VAEFA has a seat in the defined consultation processes. At the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, NCE India and Nirantar Trust, being located in areas adversely affected by the economic shock from the COVID-19 lockdowns, became actively engaged with the NGO relief effort in India, attending to emergency needs related to loss of income, shelter and food deprivation and documented government and CSO initiatives in providing essential services during COVID-19 to inform their advocacy efforts. Nirantar became strongly engaged in the effort to support poor women with access to digital literacy skills to facilitate their access to crucial information on health e.g. how to protect themselves in the COVID-19 context, and on public social safety nets they can access e.g. food aid, cash transfers. These are just some examples of country level actions on ALE Advocacy which were launched and persisted even through the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Policy and financing options for skills for work of marginalised women

**Background:** The rapid changes across the world have had a huge impact on the future of work and of learning. In the current scenario where there is a wide gap between people to be skilled and the opportunities available, it is vital to ask which people have access to skill building initiatives and who are left behind. Within the education and lifelong learning agenda however, the issue of skills for work for marginalised women in the informal sector has been neglected. Since 2015, the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), through its member organisations, has carried out two scoping papers, two country research studies on skills development for marginalised women (with Azad Foundation in India and PEKKA in Indonesia), and an overarching synthesis report.

These explored the following question:

*What are the policy, governance and financing options required to include and/or provide skill development and adult education for decent work and economic and social well being to the marginalised women in the Asia Pacific women – given the perspectives of 'no one left behind' and social justice?*

This explainer compiles information from these sources to provide insights into the interlinked issues, which are important to understand the world of women and work from an empowerment framework.

This is also prepared on the occasion of the High Level Political Forum 2019 which under the theme, "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" will specifically review SDG 4 (education) and SDG 8 (decent work) – the core areas of ASPBAE's study, along with gender and women's empowerment, the focus of SDG 5 (gender equality). It hopes to contribute to civil society organisations' efforts to hold governments and other decision-makers to account, in making equity and education for all, a reality in the important space of the SDG follow up.

surfaced strong analysis that defined a Gender Just Framework for Skills for Work of Marginalised Women, along with policy recommendations to concretise this and offer benchmarks for appraising skills programmes for work. The research outcomes have fed into country level advocacy work of the ASPBAE partners in the research, informed ASPBAE advocacy at regional and global SDG-SDG4 spaces and other arenas such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) processes.

Aside from these country level ALE advocacy actions, ASPBAE sustained its ALE advocacy in the different regional and global policy spaces it participated in, including the SDG-SDG4 spaces. It was a member of the UNESCO-led Global Alliance on Literacy in its inception, serving as a Co-Chair; and it has since revitalised its involvement as an Associate Member in the GAL's restructured formation. ASPBAE continued its

*A 4-country Study on Policy and Financing Options for Skills for Work of Marginalised Women, covering India (with Azad Foundation), Indonesia (PEKKA), Bangladesh (DAM), and Vietnam (VAEFA), opened another plank for policy advocacy on ALE.*

A 4-country **Study on Policy and Financing Options for Skills for Work of Marginalised Women**, covering India (with Azad Foundation), Indonesia (PEKKA), Bangladesh (DAM) and Vietnam (VAEFA), opened another plank for policy advocacy on ALE, linked to SDGs 5 (women's empowerment) and SDG8 (decent work). It also brought to the ALE advocacy effort, practitioners of adult learning and education, to bring their vast experience of ALE practice to bear on advocacy on ALE policies. The research



*ASPBAE sustained its ALE advocacy in the different regional and global policy spaces it participated in, namely the UNESCO-led Global Alliance on Literacy and the International Mid-term Review for CONFITEA 6.*





*ASPBAE continued its active participation in the CONFITEA 6 related processes including co-hosting with ICAE, the CSO Forum preceding the International Mid-term Review for CONFITEA 6 convened by UIL in October 2017 in Suwon, Korea.*

active participation in the CONFITEA 6<sup>16</sup> related processes including co-hosting with ICAE, the CSO Forum preceding the International Mid-term Review for CONFITEA 6 convened by UIL in October 25-27, 2017 in Suwon, Korea. ASPBAE is currently involved in the 7th International Conference on Adult Education (CONFITEA 7) preparatory processes and in this regard, along with UIL, DVV International and ICAE, co-organised the Virtual Asia Pacific workshop on the National Reports for the 5th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 5) on July 23, 2020. GRALE 5 will be one of the major documents for reference in the 7th International Conference on Adult Education (CONFITEA 7) in 2022 in Morocco. The CONFITEA 7 processes will hopefully offer a wider space to draw global policy attention to ALE and define ways to stem

its neglect especially in financing and monitoring. The preparatory country-level processes undertaken through country-level contributions to GRALE 5 were disappointing in the very limited space offered for CSO engagement – far less than what was available in the earlier CONFITEA 6 processes. The strict timelines that too within a COVID-19 context of mobility restrictions may have contributed significantly to this. ASPBAE with ICAE has been lobbying closely with UIL to ensure the trend of CSO exclusion does not extend to the unfolding CONFITEA 7 regional and global processes in 2021-2022.

ASPBAE is poised to mobilise a strong CSO input and participation in the Asia Pacific regional preparatory consultation for CONFITEA 7, planned for 2021.

<sup>16</sup> 6th International Conference on Adult Education





## OBJECTIVE 2

Stronger fronts for coordinated civil society education advocacy actions; along with enhanced capacities of NGOs promoting quality youth and adult education provisioning especially to vulnerable and marginalised youth and adults in youth and adult education practice, informing public policy

5:

**CAPACITY SUPPORT TO SCALE UP COMPETENCIES OF BROAD-BASED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS TO ADVANCE SDG4 AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION**

Under the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) initiative in 2017-2019 and its successor programme, Education Out Loud (EOL) beginning in 2020, ASPBAE was able to sustain support to 19<sup>17</sup> education campaign coalitions and nascent CSO education networks - up from 17 coalitions in the earlier period.

Support was offered in institutional strengthening, in education policy dialogue, in active public outreach, in undertaking research and building evidence to promote quality, equity, financing and education system reform, and to participate effectively in global and regional education policy processes. **Customised, demand-driven capacity-support** continued to be offered through various modalities e.g. in technical support during coalition strategising workshops, country-level trainings on identified areas especially related to engagement in the SDG-SDG4 processes, in education financing advocacies and on deepening their understanding of lifelong learning. ASPBAE accompanied coalitions in their policy events, in dialogues, engagements with local education groups (LEGs), and with Ministries of Education and beyond – Ministries of Finance, Youth, Women and other government bodies at provincial/state and local levels. ASPBAE also participated in and supported coalitions in their public-facing initiatives including press meetings, briefings and mobilisations.

Active and substantive support by ASPBAE to the EOL eligible coalitions enabled them to successfully pass the scrutiny involved in the EOL application processes. None of the EOL-eligible coalitions faced a break in their funding in the transition between CSEF and EOL on account of their robust advocacy plans and proposals. Further, ASPBAE sustained its capacity support to

coalitions who were not eligible for EOL funding, particularly, the coalitions in India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. These coalitions have remained active and effective even through the COVID-19 pandemic context.



**NCE  
NEPAL**

**National Campaign for Education Nepal (NCE Nepal)**

[www.ncenepal.org.np](http://www.ncenepal.org.np)

*National education coalitions remained highly active during the COVID-19 pandemic – in participating in the emergency relief effort; in launching public education campaigns on health; and in information campaigns on social protection measures.*

Neither did ASPBAE's capacity support flag in the face of the COVID-19 context – where international travel bans and lock downs prevented face-to-face interactions: support simply adapted to online, distance modes.

<sup>17</sup> India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Vietnam, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, PNG, Solomon Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu



This support remained necessary to assist coalitions in their incredible responses to the COVID-19 emergency. National education coalitions remained highly active through this period – in participating in the emergency relief effort; in launching public education campaigns on health and in information campaigns on social protection measures that affected communities can avail of; they were present in shaping the learning continuity plans of governments, attentive especially to issues of access, quality and equity; they lobbied hard to protect education budgets and for the inclusion of education in stimulus packages; and they participated in the dialogues around emergency COVID-19 grants for education to ensure that the funded plans attend especially to the marginalised groups and communities.

In addition to customised, country-focused and country level capacity support, cross-country trainings, workshops, exchanges, learning events formed part of the menu of capacity building efforts ASPBAE offered. An **annual Regional Consultation of Education Advocates** offered a space for joint assessment and planning for coordinated campaigns at regional and global levels and provided much appreciated avenues for cross country experience sharing and capacity building. Several thematic/issue-based workshops and trainings were also organised at regional and sub-regional/cluster levels aligned to the needs of coordinated campaign initiatives. **Information bulletins, policy briefs, toolkits, resource packs** were developed by ASPBAE as part of their capacity support. The Toolkit on CSO Spotlight Reports, or the Resource Guide for participation in UN Human Rights mechanisms are two examples.

Alongside these more structured training activities, ASPBAE offered **‘real world’ capacity**



*An annual Regional Consultation of Education Advocates offered a space for joint assessment and planning for coordinated campaigns at regional and global levels.*

**support** embedded in actual policy and advocacy events. ASPBAE would convene CSO meeting at the front end of major policy meetings to jointly plan, agree priority ‘policy asks’, and define lobbying strategies to meet the agreed advocacy objectives. ASPBAE would also coordinate these agreed efforts through the course of the policy event – where the CSOs learn from and support each other. ASPBAE organised these in all the APMED and APFSD events in the period and in other SDG-SDG4 related policy meetings as well. This was also the mode of capacity support and engagement pursued by ASPBAE and its partner regional organisations within the GCE umbrella, in the GPE related processes.

In 2020, ASPBAE released a publication, **‘Persuading Powers II: A Regional Compendium of Good Practices in Civil Society Education Advocacy’** which documents lessons from the experience of ASPBAE and its 19 coalition partners in capacity building and education advocacy within the CSEF Phase 3 effort.

# 6:

## BROADER ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN ALE PRACTITIONERS AND ADVOCATES TO ENHANCE THE PRACTICE OF TRANSFORMATIVE ALE AND STRENGTHEN ALE ADVOCACY RESPONSES

With the traditionally low priority accorded by government to adult learning and education (ALE), it has largely fallen on NGOs to offer much needed adult education provision especially for marginalised youth and adults in the region. Support to enhance ALE practice therefore remains an essential part of ASPBAE's work. ASPBAE however believes that the scaling up needed to meet the extensive learning needs of youth and adults in a highly dynamic context, rife with much challenge as well as opportunities, requires the public sector to step up and meet its obligations as the duty-bearer for education. Policy advocacy on ALE is therefore an imperative in ASPBAE's work to advance the right to education. NGO experiences in running transformative ALE initiatives that attend to the learning needs of the marginalised offer powerful lessons and insights that can not only further replicate good practice but also help shape better ALE policies.



*To be better aligned with ASPBAE's more current work, the design of the Basic Leadership Development Course (BLDC) was updated to embrace the SDG4 framework, and was carried by a new set of Course Directors.*



### PERSUADING POWERS II

A Regional Compendium of  
Good Practices in Civil Society Education Advocacy

*In 2020, ASPBAE released a publication, 'Persuading Powers II: A Regional Compendium of Good Practices in Civil Society Education Advocacy' which documents lessons from the experience of ASPBAE and its 19 coalition partners in capacity building and education advocacy.*

A wider dialogue and engagement among ALE practitioners and ALE advocates has thus been considered by ASPBAE as enriching for both ALE policy and practice.

The **Basic Leadership Development Course (BLDC)** is one of ASPBAE's major arenas for capacity building directed at ALE practitioners in dialogue with ALE advocates. To be better aligned with ASPBAE's more current work, the course design was updated to embrace the SDG4 framework, and was carried by a new set of Course Directors. A more deliberate process for follow up was also introduced. The **BLDC Tracer**



*ASPBAE's work in advancing SDG 4.7, launched in 2019, aimed to build capacities of education advocates to develop a policy reform agenda that effectively mainstreams SDG 4.7 in government public education and lifelong learning systems.*

**Study** documented how BLDC alumni applied what they learned from the BLDC in the work they undertake in their respective organisations. Where needed, ASPBAE also offered mentoring support to pursue these identified projects or initiatives which included structured trainings on SDGs and SDG4; gender equality in education; the YAR initiative and employing participatory approaches in on-going trainings of organisations, among others. Run annually through 2017-2018, the Course mobilised over a hundred emerging leaders in ASPBAE member organisations; more than 50% women and around 1/3rd young people.

ASPBAE's work in advancing SDG4.7<sup>18</sup> launched in 2019 draws from its large pool of experts and practitioners in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), human rights and peace education, citizenship education (CitEd) to help

**build capacities of education advocates to develop a policy reform agenda which effectively mainstreams SDG4.7 in public education and lifelong learning systems of government** – in basic, adult, formal and non-formal education delivery systems. It also addresses attention to education in emergencies (EiE), drawing the linkages between EiE and SDG4.7 i.e. how SDG4.7 offers the strategic responses to addressing the root causes of emergencies i.e. mainstreaming SDG4.7 to embed peace building, climate change education and sustainability in the education systems. A regional workshop organised in 2019 catalysed country-level capacity building initiatives in SDG 4.7 in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Mongolia, Indonesia, and the Philippines in 2020, and soon, Bangladesh and Afghanistan in the coming period.

ALE practitioners in women's education, skills for decent work and livelihoods formed the core of the policy and advocacy effort around advancing a Gender-Just Framework for Skills for Work of Marginalised Women. Several working group meetings were organised to shape the Study on Policy and Financing Options for Skills for Work of Marginalised Women which birthed this framework. Opportunities for cross-country learning and exchange among CSOs advancing education for women's empowerment and decent work and livelihoods were also organised through sub-regional thinking conclaves organised in 2017-2018.

<sup>18</sup> SDG4.7: By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development





*At an ASPBAE-organised regional study exchange in Bangkok (November 2017), hosted by the Ministry of Education of Thailand, participants learnt how public education systems can be expanded to become lifelong learning systems, catering to the needs of youth and adults.*

Several study exchanges were also co-organised and facilitated by ASPBAE in the period. Some were bilateral - offering cross-country learning on ALE practice and experiences in advocacy among ASPBAE members and partners. A multi-country Regional Study Exchange on Youth and Adult Learning and Education: Realising lifelong learning in the public education systems was organised by ASPBAE in November 2017 in Bangkok. Hosted and co-organised by the Office of Non-formal and Informal Education (ONIE), Ministry of Education, Thailand the study exchange was oriented to have participants learn how public education systems can be expanded to become lifelong learning systems, catering as well to the learning needs and interests of youth and adults, especially from marginalised communities, and drawing from the rich practice of NGOs who have been at the forefront of innovations on education provision for youth and adults, especially those in hard-to-

reach communities and difficult circumstances. ASPBAE had hoped it could offer more of such study exchanges co-organised with relevant government agencies in other countries in the region, from which good practice on ALE public policy and provisioning can be better understood and learned. However, ASPBAE funding limitations prevented an expansion of this effort.

ASPBAE worked closely with DVV International's (DVI) South East Asia Regional Office in shoring up capacities of master trainers in the Department of Non formal Education, Ministries of Education in Laos and in Cambodia. ASPBAE helped **customise modules of the DVVI-developed Curriculum globALE (CG)<sup>19</sup> for the training needs and contexts of these master trainers in Cambodia and Laos.**

<sup>19</sup> Curriculum globALE (CG) is a cross-cultural core curriculum for the training of adult educators worldwide. It describes the relevant skills needed to lead successful courses and provides guidance on their practical



*To offer the dedicated and sustained support needed for the scaled-up ALE advocacy efforts, ASPBAE began a Regional ALE Advocacy Training in 2019.*

ASPBAE also continued to offer **demand-driven, customised capacity support on ALE** to members where requested and possible.

To offer the dedicated and sustained support needed for the scaled-up ALE advocacy efforts of ASPBAE, it began a **Regional ALE Advocacy Training** in 2019 – set to become one of the regular/annual regional capacity-building offerings of ASPBAE. In the COVID-19 context, ASPBAE organised a virtual webinar series in September 2020 focused on Community Learning Centres in the COVID-19 context, and in cooperation with ICAE, a workshop on strategising for ALE especially for the upcoming CONFITEA 7 policy moment. ASPBAE launched its study on the Analysis of VNRs from an ALE lens in this webinar series. These training/workshops are envisaged to help ASPBAE members and partners in the coordinated ALE advocacy efforts, sharpen their policy recommendations on ALE in such areas as public provisioning of ALE through CLCs, systems

of Validation, Recognition and Accreditation of prior learning, and addressing the huge data gaps in ALE that stand in the way of policy attention and priority.

**A paper on Transformative Adult Learning and Education (ALE)** that codifies ASPBAE's understandings on this drawn from its work will be finalised in 2021. It is envisaged to offer a reference and guide for ALE advocacy and capacity building efforts of ASPBAE and its members.



*ASPBAE's Youth-led Action Research (YAR) was initiated in 2016 with the support of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). The YAR effort started off with ASPBAE's members in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines.*

# 7:

## GROWING THE YOUTH CONSTITUENCY OF ASPBAE TOWARDS THEIR EXPANDED PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN ASPBAE'S WORK

One of the strong messages offered by the 7th General Assembly of ASPBAE in 2016 was to expand the organisation's youth engagement. Students and youth are after all, core stakeholders in education. For those whose education rights are honoured and protected, participation in education forms a significant part of youth transition to adulthood – to family life, to professional advancement. For those outside education systems, it offers perhaps the best safety net to aid them cope with the demands of life, work, decision-making, thrust as they are in early adulthood. The Asia Pacific is home to the largest number of youth in the world: in 2019, there were 663 million young people in Asia and the Pacific, or 55% of this age cohort, globally.<sup>20</sup>

At the onset, ASPBAE decided that's its youth engagement efforts should prioritise mobilising and supporting marginalised youth. The lynchpin of this attempt was the **Youth-led Action Research (YAR)** which involved the training of young women from marginalised communities with participatory action research tools to help them analyse the factors preventing their greater access to and participation in education in their communities; to define community actions that can be undertaken to address these; and to dialogue/engage with policy makers, adult education providers, and other stakeholders in their communities on ways to improve education and skills opportunities that address their identified learning needs and aspirations. Initiated in 2016 with the support of

the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), this effort was pursued with ASPBAE members Abhivyakti Media for Development (AMD) in India, Association For Women In Small Business Assistance (ASPPUK) and NEW Indonesia in Indonesia, and E-Net Philippines with SPPI (Centre for Local Economy Development) in the Philippines. ASPBAE offered community, country-level and regional/cross-country trainings, workshops and consultations to advance this initiative. Four (4) regional workshops and trainings were organised by ASPBAE within 2017-2020 on YAR.

The effort in India, christened 'Shodhini' or 'seeker' has since expanded after its pilot to 10 more villages in Nashik, India. They have sustained the community Shodhini Library for Girls, which provide access to reading materials, encourage good reading habits, and offer a safe space for young women to converge. Several young women mobilised through the YAR effort in West Sumatra, Indonesia, have sought greater financial independence and autonomy through livelihood ventures, assisted by ASPPUK. ASPPUK has also expanded its YAR effort to West Kalimantan. In the Philippines, the Solo (single) Parent Organising initiative which emerged from the YAR process – recognising that many of the school leavers have been pushed out on account of unwanted adolescent pregnancies and early marriage – have mobilised their members to better access benefits they are due as guaranteed by the Philippines Solo Parent Act of 2000.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/626046/covid-19-youth-employment-crisis-asia-pacific.pdf>





*Youth leaders coming out of the YAR effort have been mobilised by ASPBAE in various regional policy events, offering authentic, grounded inputs from young people coming from marginalised communities.*

The youth leaders coming out of the YAR effort have been mobilised by ASPBAE in various regional policy events through the period, offering authentic, grounded inputs from young people coming from marginalised communities in these spaces. They addressed the participants of the UNESCO and UNICEF

convened 5th Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 5) in 2019 (Bangkok), and in the South East Asia Ministers of Education (SEAMEO) Innotech's 15th International Conference on Inclusive Education, 'Thriving in the Margins' in 2018 (Manila), as examples. At least 18 youth leaders from marginalised communities participated in regional and global policy spaces in the period and youth leaders in at least Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, India, Nepal and the Philippines have been engaged in policy dialogues with their governments on education at the country level.

ASPBAE also mobilised the participation of youth from among the wider ASPBAE membership in its advocacy engagements especially within the SDGs. Organisations of youth joined ASPBAE's delegations in the successive Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD) and its preparatory CSO processes and successive APMEDs. Country-level youth consultations were also organised to offer analysis and recommendations from young people in the 2019 CSO Spotlight Reports on SDG4 developed by national education coalitions with ASPBAE.



*In 2019-2020, the YAR effort expanded to Mongolia, Nepal, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and Sri Lanka.*



*The outcomes of country-level consultations and a Regional Youth Consultation were discussed in an online Regional Youth Forum organised in November 2020.*

In 2019-2020, the YAR effort expanded to Mongolia, working with All for Education (AFE) Mongolia; in Nepal, working with NCE Nepal; in Timor-Leste, with the Civil Society Education Partnership (CSEP), in Vanuatu, with Kolisen Blong Leftemap Edukesen (KOBLE) and in Sri Lanka with the Coalition for Education Development (CED). In this phase, the organising effort was no longer limited solely to young women from marginalised communities.

It was clear at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic that young people especially from marginalised communities were severely impacted – not only in terms of increased vulnerabilities in health and safety, or the loss of education opportunities with the closure of schools and education institutions, but in food, shelter, income deprivation with the massive lockdowns and loss of jobs. In recessions, retrenchments occur and the youth are cheapest to fire. Many of them are also in the informal

sector with uncertain job security to begin with.

Realising this, ASPBAE launched a YAR effort deliberately focused on providing a space for marginalised young people in marginalised communities to collectively come to grips with the impact of COVID-19 on their lives, participate meaningfully in finding solutions and recommend actions that secure their access to education and learning opportunities that help them cope with the emergency and set them on a much firmer track to recovery. ASPBAE collaborated with members in 9 countries<sup>21</sup> in this **YAR-COVID-19** effort. The initiative catalysed powerful youth-led actions in the different countries. In many countries, the youth played a significant role in relief work and in helping NGOs and local governments reach communities on time. In the Philippines, out-of-school youth dialogued with government, demanding their rights to food, education, and the right to ask questions. In Timor-Leste it fostered the creation of a marginalised youth



*ASPBAE launched a YAR effort focused on providing a space for marginalised youth to come to grips with the impact of COVID-19 on their lives, participate meaningfully in finding solutions, and recommend actions that secure their access to education and learning opportunities.*

<sup>21</sup> Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Timor Leste, Philippines, Mongolia, Vanuatu





forum which began engaging with governments on education issues. They presented their research findings to the State Secretary for vocational training and employment and argued for increased state budget allocations to address the concerns of marginalised youth impacted adversely by the pandemic in the loss of their access to learning and opportunities for work. Young girls and women were particularly active in these processes.

The YAR-COVID-19 effort has animated wider youth engagement on issues of basic, youth and adult education, where stronger youth constituencies in the 9 countries covered are envisaged to remain active through the coming period. It fostered youth interactions in-country and across the region, supported by inter-generational dialogue. It is through this dynamic effort that a collective youth voice within ASPBAE has emerged, representative of youth-led processes within ASPBAE. An ASPBAE youth core group has since been formed which analysed the recommendations of young people in the 2019 **Regional Youth Consultation**, the YAR efforts and based on these, conceptualised and steered country-level consultations of youth within the ASPBAE membership in 7 countries<sup>22</sup>

in the region to offer their recommendations to ASPBAE in its strategic planning process as part of the 8th General Assembly. The outcomes of these consultations were discussed in an online **Regional Youth Forum** organised by the youth core group in November 2020.

ASPBAE and its partners have developed **toolkits, videos and other learning materials around the YAR** effort to document the practice and to offer guides to enable replication of the initiative in other areas and countries. It is hoped that not only ASPBAE members or other NGOs adopt and customise the approaches advanced by YAR for meaningful engagement of marginalised youth – but also government agencies and outfits.

Barring the regular annual regional trainings that ASPBAE organised, notably the BLDC and the Regional Consultation of Education Advocates, ASPBAE organised at least 37 regional and cluster capacity-building events through 2017-2020, averaging therefore some nine (9) regional/sub-regional trainings per year. At least 50% of the participants in these were women.

<sup>22</sup> Nepal, India, Philippines, Mongolia, Timor-Leste, and Indonesia





## OBJECTIVE 3

Wider linkages with other civil society networks and organisations fighting poverty, advancing social justice, gender equality, sustainable development and peace, and thereby securing stronger recognition of the critical role of education and learning in meeting all the SDGs

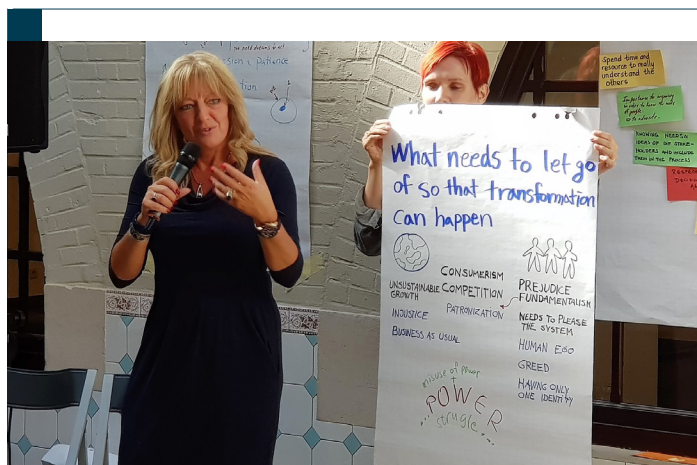
8:

**NURTURING OLD AND NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR ADVOCACY, CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND MOVEMENT BUILDING**

ASPBAE remained an active member of and provided leadership within two (2) powerful global civil society formations representing wide, broad-based movements for transformation in education and lifelong learning: the **Global Campaign for Education (GCE)** and the **International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)**.

ASPBAE continued to serve in the Board of GCE – represented by the ASPBAE Secretary General in the period 2017-2018, succeeded in 2019 by Jose Roberto Guevara, ASPBAE Immediate Past President. ASPBAE member, NCE Nepal, represented by Ram Gaire succeeded Rasheda Choudhury of CAMPE Bangladesh (also an ASPBAE member) as the other representative from the Asia Pacific in the GCE Board. ASPBAE co-hosted the GCE World Assembly in Kathmandu, Nepal in November 2018 and has been an active partner in GCE-led global campaigns on the right to education through the period. ASPBAE remained a core part of the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) which came to a close in 2019-2020, after more than 10 years. This GCE-conceptualised and steered path-breaking global initiative on capacity building for education advocacy deepened the global CSO movement with coordinated, reinforcing campaign actions at national, regional and global levels through the decade of its work.

ASPBAE offered the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) its two recent Presidents: Sandra Morisson (ASPBAE President 2004-2007) was ICAE President from 2016-2019, succeeded in 2020 by Robbie Guevara (ASPBAE President 2008-2016). ASPBAE incumbent President, Nani Zulminarni was elected as ICAE Vice President in 2020. ASPBAE and ICAE sustained their collaboration on global advocacy efforts advancing the right to adult and lifelong learning and education in the SDG and CONFITEA platforms in the period. ICAE offers



*ASPBAE remained an active member of and provided leadership within the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE).*

a strong voice for ALE and lifelong learning in its engagements within the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) through the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group (EASG) and in the CONFITEA processes having co-organised with UIL, the International Mid-term Review of CONFITEA 6 and its CSO Forum in 2018. With the intensifying moves to narrow down the SDG4 agenda in its implementation and financing at the expense of ALE, ICAE's voice and global leadership for civil society is even more needed. ASPBAE will remain committed to support and strengthen ICAE's efforts and work.

ASPBAE sustained its strong collaboration and partnership with the **regional formations in both GCE and ICAE**, notably the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), the Latin American Campaign on the Right to Education (CLADE) and the Latin American Council for Popular Education (CEAAL) in ICAE; and the Africa Network Campaign on Education For All (ANCEFA), Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) and the Arab Campaign for Education (ACEA) in GCE.

With ASPBAE's expanded involvement in the SDG platforms, ASPBAE strengthened its participation in the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM), the Global Call to Action against Poverty (G-CAP), the Asia Development Alliance (ADA), Bridge 47 and the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO). ASPBAE continues to be represented in the CoNGO Regional Committee in Asia-Pacific (RCAP). Through cross-sectoral engagements fostered within the SDG processes in the region, ASPBAE forged stronger ties with the Institute for Social Entrepreneurship in Asia (ISEA), finding common ground in the promotion of skills for decent work, livelihoods and social enterprises. ASPBAE was a co-organiser of the ISEA-led 'Third Social Enterprise Advocacy and Leveraging

(SEAL Asia) Conference with the theme 'Social Entrepreneurship and Cross-Sectoral Collaboration: Towards Accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals' in September 2020.

ASPBAE continued to play an active role in the **Coordination Group of the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 (CCNGO/ED2030)**<sup>23</sup> representing the Asia Pacific, optimising the opportunities this mechanism offered to directly influence the Education 2030 Steering Committee, the Technical Working Group on the SDG4 Indicators, Global Education Meetings and other SDG4 follow up spaces. ASPBAE co-hosted the 8th Global Meeting of the UNESCO CC NGO/ED 2030 in Siem Reap, Cambodia in 2017.

ASPBAE expanded its engagement with UNESCO Bangkok in the period as it assumed leading roles on behalf of civil society in the UNESCO-led and influenced SDG4 follow up processes in the region. Recognised for its wide reach to civil society organisations in the region, its sustained advocacy engagement and research on issues of education equity, inclusion, education financing, basic education, ALE and lifelong learning, UNESCO Bangkok had frequently mobilised ASPBAE's participation in its policy summits, experts group meetings, policy conferences, seminars and workshops through the period. ASPBAE has also contributed to various capacity building initiatives of UNESCO on ALE. In 2018, it contributed to the UNESCO-led effort to develop online learning content for CLCs to help strengthen the capacities of Community Learning Centre (CLC) leaders, managers and educators to deliver quality and inclusive education to adults and youth across the Asia-Pacific. Through 2017-2019, ASPBAE also supported the UIL and UNESCO Bangkok led effort to develop a learning module to support CLCs and

# Futures of Education

LEARNING TO BECOME

*ASPBAE is working to mobilise contributions from CSOs in the Asia Pacific to the UNESCO-led initiative, the Futures of Education, that seeks to catalyse a global debate on how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet.*

<sup>23</sup> The CC NGO is the institutionalised mechanism for CSO participation in the global SDG4 follow up processes, as defined in the Education 2030 Framework for Action mandated by 184 UNESCO Member States.





*ASPBAE continued to play an active role in the Coordination Group of the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 (CCNGO/ED2030) representing the Asia Pacific.*

community organisations in the Asia Pacific in translating their education for sustainable development (ESD) commitments into action. ASPBAE is currently working with UNESCO Bangkok and the UNESCO CCNGOEd2030 to mobilise contributions from CSOs in the Asia Pacific region to the UNESCO led initiative, the Futures of Education.<sup>24</sup> UNESCO has also readily participated in numerous ASPBAE events to offer resource person support and solidarity.

**DVV International** has been ASPBAE's longest standing partner in international cooperation for adult learning and education. It has remained a steadfast ally in global and regional policy advocacy and a solid partner in capacity building to promote ALE policy and practice. The external evaluation of DVVI's Asia Programme in 2017 concluded that the partnership with ASPBAE has been strategic: ASPBAE and DVVI are peers at the international stage in promoting adult education and that DVVI's core funding to ASPBAE has been critical to ASPBAE's on-going impact, especially in policy advocacy and its capacity to offer state-of-the-art capacity building leading to strengthening leadership and work in the region. ASPBAE

supported the effort led by DVVI in 2017-2020 to develop and rally around a common global 'brand' for adult education. This stems from the observation that the term 'adult education' is perceived and understood differently in various regions and contexts of the world. There is also a plethora of terms used to label this sector and body of work and this has been standing



*ASPBAE supported the effort led by DVVI in 2017-2020 to develop and rally around a common global 'brand' for adult education.*

<sup>24</sup> *The Futures of Education: Learning to Become initiative seeks to catalyze a global debate on how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet. Relying on broad, open consultative process, the work will be guided by a high-level International Commission of thought-leaders from diverse fields and different regions of the world who will steer this process of defining a forward-looking vision of education and learning.*

**ASPBAE's ability to expand its work in the period owed much to the confidence it gained with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) which invited ASPBAE to be a strategic partner in 2018-2021.**

in the way of advocating successfully for its priority in financing and public policy. It has been proposed that the varied regional meanings/ connotations of AE need to be located under a universal brand umbrella, with 'Adult Learning and Education' (ALE) as the central anchor point. ASPBAE joined DVVI in the commemoration of its 50th anniversary in 2019. The 3-year grant cycle of DVVI starting in 2021 is being successfully negotiated currently.

The **UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)** and the **South East Asia Ministers of Education (SEAMEO) Centre for Lifelong Learning (SEAMEO CELLL)** were also strong partners of ASPBAE in its global and regional ALE work.

ASPBAE's ability to expand its work in the period owed much to the confidence it gained with the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** which invited ASPBAE to be a strategic partner in 2018-2021. SDC relations expanded in 2020 with linkages built between ASPBAE and their country offices in the Asia Pacific. While the COVID-19 crisis significantly reduced the possibilities for working together more concretely, the exchanges offered useful starts to build on cooperation in the coming period. The linkages offered by SDC to its other partners notably the Inter Agency Network on Education in Emergencies and NORRAG<sup>25</sup> opened valuable opportunities for ASPBAE to important research and resource person support for education.



*The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and the South East Asia Ministers of Education (SEAMEO) Centre for Lifelong Learning (SEAMEO CELLL) were strong partners of ASPBAE in its global and regional ALE work.*

ASPBAE continued to work with the Open Society Foundations, the Right to Education Initiative (RTEI), the Global Initiative on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR), Action Aid International in various global advocacy efforts challenging education privatisation, and through the Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC). ASPBAE hosted the Consortium's Global Meeting in September 2017 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

ASPBAE started working with Oxfam Ibis in its role as Grant Agent for the Education Out Loud facility of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in 2019 and has been liaising closely with their EOL Grant Management Unit at global and regional levels, especially to cohere capacity-support efforts for national education coalitions partners of EOL.

ASPBAE remained part of the Global Advisory Committee (GAC) of the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) with ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni as ASPBAE's representative replacing Nitya Rao in 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and Training (NORRAG) is a Learning Partner for the Asia Pacific and Europe of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Knowledge Innovation Exchange (KIX) initiative which aims to offer a space for sharing knowledge, innovation and best practices across countries and at the regional and global levels to enhance national educational policies and outcomes.





## OBJECTIVE 4

An institutionally robust ASPBAE, able to offer a platform for exchange and learning of its members and CSOs working to advance the right to education and lifelong learning; as an advocate for the right to basic, youth and adult education and lifelong learning; and as a partner in leadership and capacity-development of its members.

9:

**STAYING INSTITUTIONALLY ROBUST: MANAGING CHANGES AND TRANSITIONS CREATIVELY AND BOLDLY**



The ability of ASPBAE to organise its 8th General Assembly in the midst of a very challenging period, globally, is testimony to the solid governance tradition of ASPBAE and the seriousness it accords its accountability processes. ASPBAE successfully completed a virtual electoral and voting process mandating a new Executive Council (2021-2024) and approving Constitutional amendments that better reflect ASPBAE's current identity and aspirations. The following were elected members of the ASPBAE Executive Council (2021-2024):

**ASPBAE President**

Ms. Nani Zulminarni (PEKKA, Indonesia)

***Member from South Asia (female)***

Ms. Meenu Vadera (Azad Foundation, India)

***Member from South Asia (male)***

Mr. Ehsanur Rahman (DAM, Bangladesh)

***Member from East Asia (female)***

Ms. Eri Yamamoto (SVA, Japan)

***Member from East Asia (male)***

Mr. Amartuvshin Dorjsuren AFE, (Mongolia)

***Member from Southeast Asia (female)***

Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Anh, (VAEFA, Vietnam)

***Member from Southeast Asia (male)***

Mr. Thein Lwin (TCF, Myanmar)

***Member from South Pacific (female)***

Ms. Kilala Devette-Chee (PEAN, PNG)

***Member from South Pacific (male)***

Mr. Peter Clinton Foaese (ACE Aoteroa, NZ)

***Member from Central Asia (female)***

Ms. Nasiba Mirpochoeva (Micro Invest, Tajikistan)

***Member from Central Asia (male)***

Mr. Tilebaldy uulu Eliizar (IYD, Kyrgyzstan)

A core part of the 8th General Assembly is the organisation wide review and strategic planning process. Country and sub-regional/cluster meetings of members were organised in June to August 2020 to jointly reflect on ASPBAE's work and possible future directions forming part of the organisational strategic review and planning processes. These consultations also attended to the procedural obligations of preparing for elections and voting; and debated the proposed Constitutional amendments. Following these consultations, thematic working group meetings, think-pieces/papers were organised to go deeper in analysis on issues identified by members as needing further attention by ASPBAE. These discussions will culminate in the ASPBAE Virtual Regional Strategic Planning Workshop, 15-17 December 2020.

A highly competent and engaged ASPBAE Executive Council (EC) of ASPBAE provided leadership through the period, ensuring ASPBAE could successfully navigate the complexities of its work and context. Members of the Executive remained active even in between meetings of the EC to offer programmatic guidance and to the SG, wise counsel. The **annual Executive Council** meetings



*A highly competent and engaged ASPBAE Executive Council of ASPBAE provided leadership, ensuring ASPBAE could successfully navigate the complexities of its work and context.*

were also organised as sites to interact face-to-face with members in the country hosting the EC meetings, enabling a more in-depth appreciation by the EC of the work and engagements of its members.

As on March 4 2020 - the most recent date the ASPBAE Executive Council approved new membership applications – ASPBAE's membership stood at 158 members organisations and 97 individual and life members. This represents an increase in absolute number of members from the last General Assembly when it stood at 152



*In its March 2020 meeting, the ASPBAE Executive Council agreed to designate Central Asia as a full-fledged, stand-alone sub-region in ASPBAE's governance structure.*

member organisations. The trend of expansion is seen largely in East Asia (SR2) and in South and Central Asia (then SR1) – the latter enabling ASPBAE to constitute a stand-alone Central Asia sub-region or Sub-Region 5. In its March 2020 meeting, the ASPBAE Executive Council agreed to designate Central Asia as a full-fledged, stand-alone sub-region in ASPBAE's governance structure since the critical mass of members in the area has been reached.<sup>26</sup>

Following the steer of the 7th General Assembly that ASPBAE review its membership fee structure, the ASPBAE Executive Council appraised the matter realising that the membership fee structure had not be amended or updated since the early 2000's. The Executive reviewed the membership fee structure from the starting point that membership fees foster accountability. They offer a strategic means to enhance the autonomy and independence of the organisation: a membership-based organisation should be able to cover the costs of its basic governance processes, for example, the meetings of its Executive Council. In the ASPBAE EC meeting held in Japan in early 2019, the Executive approved to amend the membership fee structure. It maintains a differentiated fee structure but is based on members' ability to pay rather than a member's geographic location. ASPBAE's fee structure will therefore be adjusted as follows:

- Organisations with annual turnover of less than \$100,000 pay US \$100/year;
- Organisations with annual turnover of \$100,000 and up to \$300,000 pay \$200/year;
- Organisations with annual turnover of over \$300,000 pay \$300/year.

While this new membership fee structure was supposed to be implemented in 2021, it is recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic has put pressure on the resource base of its members, hence, it will be recommended to the new Executive Council that the application of ASPBAE's new membership fee structure be postponed for at least a year, and the new effectivity date to be deliberated upon after a review of the situation before the end of 2021.

Membership consolidation and expansion was reinforced by ASPBAE's strong **Information and Communications programme**. ASPBAE's

<sup>26</sup> At least 10 member organisations operating/located in at least 50% of the countries in the potential sub-region

*Membership consolidation and expansion was reinforced by ASPBAE's strong Information and Communications programme. ASPBAE expanded the use of its social media for its advocacy work and approved the use of a new logo effective 1 January 2021.*

monthly Bulletin, tri-annual newsletter, *Ed-lines*, postings in social media and updates on the ASPBAE website continued to offer useful information on ASPBAE's work and on developments that support over-all advocacy and capacity building efforts for basic, youth and adult learning and education. ASPBAE expanded the use of its social media for its advocacy work in the period. ASPBAE updated its website with 2 new sub-sites, envisaged to open more interactive platforms with members – enabling them to showcase their practice, initiatives and share their news. A new logo was developed that offers a visual identity that better represents the organisation's values, nature of work, and its adaptability and creativity going in to the future. The new logo and brand identity will go live on 1 January 2021.

ASPBAE's **gender mainstreaming efforts** continued to be steered at the highest level – through a standing Committee of the ASPBAE Executive Council. This Gender Mainstreaming Committee observed that while there were several good efforts in place to mainstream gender in ASPBAE's work and functioning, much more can be done to embed this in the work of the whole organisation – bringing the ASPBAE membership along in these processes. Alongside the strong efforts to highlight issues of gender discrimination

in education in ASPBAE's policy advocacy and capacity building work, various capacity building activities were further organised in the period to enhance capacities of members on gender issues. These were woven into the trainings and capacity building activities organised by ASPBAE: in the annual BLDC, the annual Regional Consultation of Education Advocates, in ASPBAE's budget analysis and budget advocacy work and in the development of CSO Spotlight reports. ASPBAE drew from the deep pool of feminist educators, women's rights activists and gender experts that it had within its membership to support these efforts.

ASPBAE's **grant base** for the period 2017-2020 remained strong with a diversity of partners and the continued support of DVV International, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) through the Global Campaign for Education (on CSEF) and Oxfam Ibis (on EOL) and the Open Society Foundations (OSF). Project funds were also sourced from UNESCO and Action Aid International for instance, for one-off activities. ASPBAE grants increased by 13% in this period compared to the last (2013-2016).<sup>27</sup>



*ASPBAE's monthly Bulletin, tri-annual newsletter, Ed-lines, postings in social media and updates on the ASPBAE website continued to offer useful information on ASPBAE's work and on developments that support over-all advocacy and capacity building efforts for basic, youth and adult learning and education.*

<sup>27</sup> Based on estimates for the year 2020, as on end November 2020.





*ASPBAE's robust governance and strong staff complement enabled ASPBAE to remain institutionally strong and vibrant through a period of much flux.*

The increase would have been markedly higher if not for the COVID-19 crisis which resulted in a cancellation and postponement of several ASPBAE activities in 2020.

ASPBAE's robust governance and strong staff complement enabled ASPBAE to remain institutionally strong and vibrant through a period of much flux. ASPBAE gained new partners in international cooperation in the period, leading to an expansion of its programmes to new areas, the scaling up of existing ones, and as with such new partnerships, it needed to adapt to new funding processes and arrangements. Through these, ASPBAE was preparing for a significant leadership change with the decision early on in the period of the incumbent ASPBAE Secretary General (SG) to make way for a successor and regenerate ASPBAE's leadership. This meant – among other things - a relocation of the ASPBAE Secretariat from Mumbai to Manila which started in 2017 in a phased manner, and is set to be completed by end 2020.

The ASPBAE **staff complement** in end 2020 stood at 18 staff members – 11 programme and 7 administrative and finance staff. Two new

programme staff positions were opened in 2019-2020: a Youth Coordinator and a Programme Officer for the Training and Transformation Programme. This staff complement account for the needs of the transition of the ASPBAE Secretariat to Manila, Philippines, to facilitate a smooth turnover.

At the end of a comprehensive executive search and selection process that included well-publicised advertisements, detailed applicant interviews, consultations and EC deliberations and assessment, the Executive Council in July 2020 **appointed Maria Helen T. Dabu as ASPBAE's new Secretary-General effective 1 January 2021**. The second half of 2020 offered the opportunity for mentoring and orientation between the Secretary-General and the Secretary-General Designate.

The significant leadership shift will no doubt usher in a period of adjustment, as these transitions go. But with a new highly capable leadership, ASPBAE can also rely on a formidable staff team of outstanding and committed professionals, steeped in ASPBAE's work and history. They will be steered by an experienced Executive Council, prepared for this change. ASPBAE can well withstand the expected stresses of the transition. It is fully equipped to take on this challenge and is poised to move into a future of considerable achievement in advancing the right to education.



*The Executive Council, in July 2020, appointed Maria Helen T. Dabu as ASPBAE's new Secretary-General effective 1 January 2021.*





# FINANCIAL REPORT

## AUDITED BALANCE SHEET 2017-2020

*Amount in US \$*

	PROVISIONAL <sup>1</sup> 31.12.2020	AUDITED <sup>2</sup> 31.12.2019	AUDITED <sup>3</sup> 31.12.2018	AUDITED <sup>3</sup> 31.12.2017
<b><u>Sources of Funds</u></b>				
Capital Fund	559,846.57	581,136.11	598,621.64	590,313.60
Add: Surplus carried from Income & Expenditure A/c	31,111.94	(21,289.54)	(17,485.53)	8,308.04
Total	590,958.51	<b>559,846.57</b>	<b>581,136.11</b>	<b>598,621.64</b>
<b><u>Application of Funds</u></b>				
Fixed Assets	-	154.70	179.29	213.10
<b><u>Current Assets</u></b>				
Cash & Bank Balances	955,491.85	916,070.07	990,294.83	674,995.43
Loans & Advances	119,753.33	135,485.73	41,196.48	143,340.98
	1,075,245.18	1,051,555.80	1,031,491.31	818,336.41
<b><u>Less: Current Liabilities</u></b>				
Sundry Creditors	147,165.68	116,858.86	99,241.93	104,786.66
Expenses Payable	47,443.21	22,408.00	20,001.00	-
Balance Grants	289,677.78	352,597.07	331,291.56	115,141.21
	484,286.67	491,863.93	450,534.49	219,927.87
Net Current Assets	590,958.51	559,691.87	580,956.82	598,408.54
Total	590,958.51	559,846.57	581,136.11	598,621.64

### NOTES

1. 2020 Accounts were audited by M/s. Romano Mendez & Co., Manila, Philippines 2. 2018 Accounts were audited by M/s. Romano Mendez & Co., Manila, Philippines  
The Audit Report is dated 12th April, 2021
2. 2019 Accounts were audited by M/s. Romano Mendez & Co., Manila, Philippines
3. The 2018 and 2017 Audited accounts have been presented in the 2019 and 2018 ASPBAE Activity Reports respectively



## AUDITED INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT 2017-2020

Amount in US \$

### **INCOME**

	<b>Audited 31.12.2020</b>	<b>Audited 31.12.2019</b>	<b>Audited 31.12.2018</b>	<b>Audited 31.12.2017</b>
Grants Received	<b>908,989.09</b>	<b>1,192,214.30</b>	<b>1,398,840.04</b>	<b>1,081,977.85</b>

### **Other Incomes**

Bank Interest	1,962.61	3,035.41	3,616.81	3,760.12
Exchange Rate Gain / (Loss)	5,994.88	(7,367.32)	(11,459.40)	9,012.23
Coordination Cost (As Per Contract)	-	-	-	4,285.00
Sundry Balance W/off	1,500.00	-	-	-
Registration Fees Recd	-	3,000.00	1,500.00	2,900.00
Australia Govt - COVID19 Relief Grants	22,478.87	-	-	-
Membership Fees	8,953.65	6,954.02	1,479.71	7,835.00

<b>949,879.10</b>	<b>1,197,836.41</b>	<b>1,393,977.16</b>	<b>1,109,770.20</b>
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### **EXPENDITURE**

Education/training, Research, Advocacy & Evaluation	866,917.13	1,073,660.14	1,068,006.05	1,167,317.62
Partners Infrastructure, admin & running costs	57,998.82	72,500.24	72,271.48	76,324.50
Production of Publication and and Media	5,382.50	5,330.12	25,550.25	28,353.55
Partners Personnel/Salaries	41,100.00	41,100.00	24,033.49	20,840.15
Audit fees & expenses	10,288.00	5,340.00	5,661.00	7,080.00

981,686.45	1,197,930.50	1,195,522.27	1,299,915.82
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Surplus carried forward to				
Balance Sheet	31,111.94	(21,289.54)	(17,485.53)	2,837.56
Surplus/(Deficit) C/F to Balance				
Grants account for 2020	(62,919.29)	21,195.45	215,940.42	(192,983.18)

## ASPBAE

# EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS 2017-2020

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### PRESIDENT

**Zulminarni Hidjazi Arsyad 'Nani'**

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ASPBAE WISHES TO THANK THE FOLLOWING  
FOR THEIR CONTINUING SUPPORT

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DWV International,  
Germany

Foundation Open Society Institute (OSI),  
Switzerland

Global Campaign for Education (GCE) for the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF),  
South Africa

OXFAM IBIS for Education Out Loud (EOL),  
Denmark

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC),  
Switzerland

UNESCO Bangkok,  
Thailand

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning,  
Germany

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ASPBAE's Milestones Report is Produced with the Support of  
DWV International and BMZ



BMZ



Bundesministerium für  
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit  
und Entwicklung





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