

Bunyad Foundation, Pakistan

22 May 2014



ASPBAE Executive Council Member (and Associate Director of *Laya*, based in Southern India), Dominic D'Souza, travelled to Pakistan to take part in the national consultation organised by Bunyad. Here is his first person account of the event –

The National Consultation on Education Agenda Post-2015 in Pakistan was held at the Department of Literacy and Non Formal Education, Government of the Punjab, Lahore. It was hosted by ASPBAE member, Bunyad Foundation. Participants of the national consultation were mainly from the Department, affiliated bodies of the Department, and a few civil society representatives. The consultation also served as an occasion to actively engage in the 50th anniversary celebrations of ASPBAE with the sharing of a presentation and a video on ASPBAE's 50th.

*I participated in the consultation as a member of the Executive Council, ASPBAE, representing South and Central Asia. Keeping in mind the background of most of the participants, I touched on *Laya's* work on 'literacy' and 'non-formal education' before presenting ASPBAE's 'Defining the Education Agenda for the Future', the post-2015 processes underway, the key issues and debates, ASPBAE's advocacy agenda, and other partner civil society organisations at the regional and international level. The issue of literacy as a key concern of ASPBAE was*

highlighted in the presentation. The discussion that followed acknowledged that literacy should remain a key priority in the post-2015 development agenda.

In sharing their experiences and recommendations, the participants highlighted the enormous challenge of addressing illiteracy in Pakistan, especially the Punjab, and expressed the need for a strategic planning and close coordination among government departments and civil society institutions. Summarising the views of the participants, Dr. Pervez Ahmed Khan, Secretary, Literacy and Non Formal Basic Education Department, Government of the Punjab, called for a revisit of the definition of ‘literacy’; expressed the need to gather accurate data on illiteracy, and launch functional literacy movements; suggested the use of private school premises as part of private-public partnership for literacy classes as second shifts; advocated rational allocation of funds for literacy and non-formal education; and recommended degree/diploma certification in non-formal education by universities.

Vice Chairperson of Bunyard, Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rahman, drawing on Bunyard Foundation’s vast experience in the literacy programmes, focused on the liberating role of literacy in the lives of women.

One of the key recommendations of the consultation was to seek professional assistance from ASPBAE in building capacities of personnel of the Department in developing the ‘literacy’ and ‘non-formal education’ programme. The consultation concluded with the writing of congratulatory messages to ASPBAE on its 50th anniversary.

The 5 key priorities identified at the Pakistan national consultation were –

1. The post 2015 development agenda should go beyond the MDGs and include strong statements and clear strategies on reaching the very poorest and most excluded.
2. No one should be left behind and denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status. Social inequity must be addressed.
3. Need to continue advocating for a focus on lifelong learning.
4. Learning for decent work, access to fit-for-purpose education should be accessible to people working in the formal and informal sectors.
5. Capacity building of member organisations.

Participants also highlighted what ASPBAE’s agenda for the future should be –

- Education and Literacy should remain a key priority in the post-2015 development agenda.
- The new education goals should address equity and quality concerns.
- Expanding access and participation remains essential.
- Teachers must be a central concern.
- Adequate investment in education and literacy is essential to achieving the new goals.
- Participatory approach to developing and implementing goals is essential.

Photos from next page onwards...



