Festival of Learning: Civil society plans for education post-2015 as ASPBAE’s 50-year celebrations culminate in Indonesia

In 2014, ASPBAE completed 50 years of its work in basic and adult education in the region, after it was founded in 1964 in Sydney. In honour of this important milestone in ASPBAE’s life, the 6th General Assembly of ASPBAE mandated a year-long commemoration of ASPBAE’s 50-year existence, woven into its work and undertakings through 2014. The culmination of these commemorating activities was the Festival of Learning (FOL) that was organised from 18-21 November 2014 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The FOL, with the theme - Asia Pacific Civil Society, Defining Education for the Future - saw the participation of more than 200 people from 32 countries representing 66 national civil society organisations and networks, partner and donor organisations, and individual ASPBAE members. It was organised at a moment when the world debates and collectively shapes the new development and education agenda, post 2015. It is anticipated that like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA), the new global consensus on development and education will strongly inform the focus of public policy and provisioning over the succeeding decades. Through the year 2014, therefore, ASPBAE was actively involved in ensuring a strong civil society voice in the ongoing policy debates on the post-2015 development and education agendas at national, regional, and global levels. National and sub-
regional consultations to broaden public debate on the evolving agenda were organised by ASPBAE and its members in several countries throughout the Asia Pacific. While actively participating in the official EFA review processes, ASPBAE members have also been developing alternative civil society reviews on the EFA experience - to ensure that the discussions on the future agenda are informed strongly by the lessons from EFA and its unfinished business.

The Festival of Learning was conceived as a space to bring these different conversation strands together as the global education community prepares to agree on a new global education agenda and framework of action during the World Education Forum in May 2015 in Incheon, Korea. The Festival of Learning was a space to strategise Asia Pacific civil society action in this important global policy space - defining civil society policy asks and advocacy strategies on the proposed goals, targets, indicators, the financing, governance, planning, and monitoring modalities and the role of civil society organisations. It was a platform to deliberate on the overall context and policy climate that define education and lifelong learning work in the region - especially as they interact and respond to the outstanding challenges of poverty, massive unemployment, inequity and continuing disparities, conflict, climate change, and privatisation of education, to name a few.

The Festival was also an arena to showcase the rich work of ASPBAE and its members on adult education and learning, reflecting on how the lessons from this deep practice bear on future work and indeed, the emergent development and education agendas.

With the evolving education agenda adopting a more solid lifelong learning framework, civil society contributions in this field of work, especially to address the learning needs of marginalised groups and communities, will help deepen and concretise the new policy frameworks from a human rights and social justice perspective.

The Festival also offered an occasion for ASPBAE and its members to honour ASPBAE’s 50 years of work and collectively define its vision ‘beyond 50’ - one that persists in advancing adult education and lifelong learning that empowers citizens and communities to transform their lives and conditions. In essence, the Festival of Learning was a convergence of education practitioners and advocates sharing their histories and innovations as they continue to pursue dialogues and actions towards transformative education. It was a coming together of current and emerging leaders of movements who harness the power of education in helping create a better and greener future for all in the Asia Pacific.

This issue of Ed-lines is devoted to documenting the important conversations that transpired during ASPBAE’s Festival of Learning.
EDITORIAL

Preparing for a strong civil society voice post-2015

ASPBAE’s 50-year history is a narrative of a regional civil society organisation that has ‘persisted’ by innovatively reshaping itself, in response to the highly dynamic and diverse contexts of the Asia Pacific region, whilst playing an active role in moulding, defining the very context in which it lived and thrived. Befitting this tradition, ASPBAE decided to use the occasion of its 50th anniversary to actively influence the new global agenda for education, post 2015, conscious that the consensus built around this agenda would strongly influence education policy and practice and donor priorities for the coming decades.

Through the year 2014 therefore, ASPBAE was actively involved in ensuring a strong civil society voice in the ongoing policy debates on the post-2015 development and education agendas at national, regional, and global levels. A total of 15 national and sub-regional consultations were organised by ASPBAE through 2014, involving representatives from around 20 countries in South and Central Asia, East Asia, South East Asia, and the South Pacific. ASPBAE’s Festival of Learning, convened in November 2014 in Yogyakarta, was a culmination of these consultations and processes – a space where the different conversation strands coming out of these rich and extensive discussions and debates came together to strategise a strong Asia Pacific civil society input to the World Education Forum in May 2015 (Incheon, Korea) and the UN Summit on the new development agenda in September 2015 (New York, U.S.).

Five main messages came out of these consultations, underscoring the key advocacies of the ASPBAE membership:

• Education is a human right, and as such, states have the primary obligation to ensure that quality education and lifelong learning are available to all. Innovative financing mechanisms, such as public private partnerships in education, should serve to strengthen the ability of the public sector to deliver quality education and in no way undermine the entitlements of all children, youth, and adults to their right to education. The growing commercialisation and privatisation of education, especially built on the shoulders of the poorest, should be actively opposed and thwarted.

• Education for sustainable development needs more attention and priority and must go beyond only preparing people and communities to adjust to and cope with the impact of climate change, but must increasingly be also about empowering learners, people, and communities to question and challenge the development frameworks and systems that induce climate change.

• The Muscat Agreement’s proposed overarching goal, “Ensure equitable, inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030” deserves support. Its seven targets to concretise this goal merits endorsement as they span early childhood care and education, primary and secondary education,
youth and adult literacy, technical vocational education and training (TVET), tertiary education and skills for life, education quality, education for global citizenship and sustainable development, and education financing – prioritising girls, women, and marginalised groups and communities. The more ambitious targets of governments in the Asia Pacific (APREC, August 2014) towards committing to 12 years of free and compulsory education, ensuring universal youth and adult literacy, and calls for allocations of 6% of GDP or 20% of national budgets to education met with strong backing.

- Quality education means more than ‘measurable learning outcomes’. Quality education is one that is relevant, context-based, learner-centered, and promotes sustainable development, human rights, gender equity, and global citizenship. Teachers and educators are key to ensuring education quality as are core investments in other critical inputs – textbooks, learning materials, safe and conducive learning environments – at all levels of education, in formal, institutionalised, and non-formal settings.

- Good governance in education and civil society participation are essential. Teachers, trainers, education administrators, learners’ perspectives and voices – especially those from marginalised sectors - should inform the shaping of education policies and programmes in clearly defined and institutionalised ways. Civil society participation should be embedded at different levels of governance – from school to sub-national, national, regional, and global levels. Capacity building measures to support informed involvement of these sectors should be resourced and set in place.

How much these advocacies will influence the new agenda for education post 2015 will rely on sustained efforts of civil society, strongly engaging their governments, donors, the wider public, and other education stakeholders in the different parallel processes where the new education agenda is being crafted, notably, in the processes leading up to Incheon and New York. There has been increased hope that the new agenda will take on board many of the recommendations of civil society.

Indeed, the recommendations coming out of the New York processes through the Report of the Open Working Group on the new Sustainable Development Goals released in July 2014 retained education as a stand-alone goal and bore a striking similarity in its language on the education goal and targets with the text and spirit of the Muscat Agreement. The latest document coming out of the New York processes, however, the UN Secretary General’s Synthesis Report (December 2014), is a cause for concern and worry. Its reference to education is far narrower and limited. Although maintaining the reference to ‘lifelong learning’, its focus is solely on children and youth, completely ignoring adults. Education quality (through teachers) is referred to primarily with respect to ‘work’ and ‘keeping up with technological development’. There is no reference to education for sustainable development, global citizenship, and social responsibility. Teachers are perceived in an instrumentalist way, without reference to their own human rights and the barriers to their enjoying these rights affecting their motivation, their professional development, and ability to play their full roles in education meaningfully.

The description of the UN architecture to advance the new development agenda (a “fit for purpose UN”) seems to veer towards a highly centralised set of mechanisms and processes. It is unclear if and how it intends to build on existing structures and mechanisms where civil society currently has institutionalised spaces for participation - such as in the mechanisms set up to track progress on the Dakar Framework of Action on Education for All (EFA). It is unclear how it will locate the specialist roles of UN agencies, such as UNESCO, in the follow up and implementation strategies of the new agenda.

Clearly, there is much work to be done in the months ahead to ensure a strong education agenda, post 2015, solidly standing on the right to education and lifelong learning for all. ASPBAE’s Festival of Learning offered a creative and meaningful space for civil society from the Asia Pacific to prepare well for the tasks ahead with determination and commitment.
Targets and indicators essential for future education goals to be met

Participants of the FOL brainstormed on indicators for the proposed targets in the Muscat Agreement on Basic Education, Youth and Adult Literacy and Skills for Life and Work, Teachers and Quality, Governance and Financing, and ESD and Global Citizenship Education.

The discussions around defining the post-2015 education agenda mainly revolve around two sets of parallel processes - the preparatory processes for the World Education Forum (WEF) culminating in May 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, and the preparatory processes for the UN Summit on September 2015 in New York. Typically, the language of the new agenda is framed in ‘goals’ and ‘targets’. The broader education constituency preparing for the WEF 2015 had proposed the overarching goal, “Ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030” (Muscot Agreement, 2014) and 7 targets. The discussions around the wider development agenda, where education is so far a stand-alone goal, has framed the post-2015 education goal as “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (Open Working Group Report) with 7 targets and 3 Means of Implementation.

A significant part of the discourse on the new agenda is around ‘indicators’ to concretise the emergent ‘targets’ - fostering greater accountability and better planning towards meeting the agreed goals. While there has been much discussion of late in the language of the ‘goals’ and ‘targets’, the discussions on ‘indicators’ has so far remained limited, confined largely to ‘technical’ committees of statisticians and economists. Efforts have however been set in place to expand consultation among the wider set of stakeholders for education on ‘indicators’, including civil society. It is in this context and the needed preparations of civil society for the WEF 2015 that a set of sessions on Targets and Indicators for the post-2015 education agenda was organised during the Festival of Learning.

Participants of the Festival of Learning brainstormed on the indicators for the proposed targets as contained in the Muscat Agreement, grouped in the following five areas – (1) Basic Education (2) Youth and Adult Literacy and Skills for Life and Work (3) Teachers and Quality (4) Governance and Financing (5) ESD and Global Citizenship Education. Participants were organised in five parallel workshops to discuss the targets and indicators, critiquing, in the main, the proposals set out in the Technical Advisory Group’s (TAG) recommendations on the same themes. The Technical Advisory Group for post-2015 education indicators “was established to provide technical guidance to the Education for All Steering Committee (EFA SC). It is composed of experts from the EFA Global Monitoring Report, OECD, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank. Its role is to provide feedback on the proposed post-2015 targets, to develop recommendations for indicators, and to set out a measurement agenda that meets the demands of the new education and development frameworks” (UIS: 2014).

For the first workshop on basic education, the participants focused discussions on the two targets covering early childhood care and education, primary education, and secondary education as follows:

**BASIC EDUCATION**

Target 1: “By 2030, at least x% of girls and boys are ready for primary school through participation in quality early childhood care and education, including at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalised”.

Target 2: “By 2030, all girls and boys complete free and compulsory quality basic education of at least 9 years and achieve relevant learning outcomes, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalised”.

Apart from this, there has been a push for targets related to pre-primary education (0-6 years), and a holistic approach to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) highlighting dimensions of “care” integrated in the outcome indicators such as child...
mortality, health and nutrition, and timely primary enrolment. For the nine years of basic education, from primary to secondary, the session proposed learning outcomes measured through retention, transition, and completion rates, disaggregated by gender, location, ethnicity, and social classes, as well as quality learning through disaggregated achievement outcomes (not just functional literacy) were proposed. The group on Basic Education further stressed the importance of measuring access to education which is inclusive, equal, and participatory; on governance that is transparent and accountable; and on resources, linked to equity and quality objectives.

YOUTH AND ADULT LITERACY; SKILLS FOR LIFE AND WORK

The Muscat Agreement on Target 4 is: “By 2030, at least x% of youth and y% of adults have the knowledge and skills for decent work and life through technical and vocational, upper secondary, and tertiary education and training, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalised.”

Civil society organisations argued for universal adult literacy in APREC which was carried forward by Member States in the Bangkok Statement. In the FOL, ASPBAE members further proposed targets and indicators for Adult Literacy and Skills for Life and Work which included input indicators such as government provision of universal adult literacy, and holistic continuing education that will equalise opportunities for work and community participation and promote sustainable development; fully-costed women’s literacy and education programmes targeted for marginalised communities, and capacity building programmes/professionalisation for non-formal educators/trainers. Outcome Indicators included disaggregated youth and adult functional literacy rate, % of youth with occupational skills after secondary education, % of youth who improve transversal skills and competencies for work by the end of upper secondary, % of adult learners who participated in adult programmes acquiring decision making skills, shift in attitudes and awareness, and critical analysis; women’s access to resources and assets at the household level; mobility, access to information, participation in public spaces and forums at the external level; and indicators around leadership (self-help groups, collective action, accountability).

ESD AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Target 5 of the Muscat Agreement is: “By 2030, all learners acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to establish sustainable and peaceful societies, including through global citizenship education and education for sustainable development.”

The aim of the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education framework is to ensure that every child goes to school, the quality of learning is such as to be transformative, and that it inculcates a sense of global citizenship. It also gives an opportunity for education for sustainable development to be integrated into strategies and work programmes. To monitor ESD and Global Citizenship Education, it was suggested at the Festival of Learning that the overarching target should be to prioritise and address the environmental livelihoods of communities and to be global citizens while respecting local culture and systems. There is a need for comprehensive indicators that are not restricted to any age group or institution and that engage learners in participatory and responsive citizenship, critical thinking, recognising and valuing human dignity (peace, right to food), reducing environmental footprints, and including traditional teachers.

Specific learning outcomes proposed were:

- Knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviours that encompass cognitive (e.g. creativity and critical thinking), interpersonal (e.g. collaboration and leadership) and intrapersonal
(motivation and self-reflection) domains.

- An attitude supported by an understanding of multiple levels of identity, and the potential for a collective identity that transcends individual cultural, religious, ethnic, or other differences.
- A deep knowledge of global issues and universal values such as justice, equality, dignity, and respect.

The FOL agreed that it is important to further articulate targets and indicators for ESD and global citizenship education and propose ways of collecting data to monitor and secure commitments of governments on these important targets.

**TEACHERS AND QUALITY EDUCATION**

The Muscat Agreement’s Target 6 is: “By 2030, all governments ensure that all learners are taught by qualified, professionally trained, motivated, and well-supported teachers.” The parallel session on Teachers and Quality noted that the large shortage of qualified teachers, especially in South Asia, is one of the stumbling blocks in efforts to provide every child with a good quality primary education. Apart from the actual number of teachers, it is the support for teachers and teaching quality which will greatly contribute to achieving universal primary education.

Discussions at the Festival of Learning were centred on ensuring minimum qualifications for teachers both in the formal and non-formal education, ensuring a practical student-teacher ratio, and ensuring that teachers are properly trained for the job and receive continuing education and professional development. For teaching and learning, it is imperative that there is timely distribution of learning materials, that there be certain levels of competencies achieved by learners, and that teachers are skilled with basic and subject-based training, multi-lingual training, and appropriate teaching techniques for those with disabilities. Indicators for Teaching and Quality were proposed around school infrastructure (proper buildings, separate toilets for boys and girls, access to safe drinking water), governance (proper functioning of School Management Committees, involvement of the community) and education financing (sufficient budgets to provide critical inputs for quality education, civil society engagement in policy formulation).

**GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING**

Target 7 of the Muscat Agreement states that: “By 2030, all countries allocate at least 4-6% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or at least 15-20% of their public expenditure to education, prioritising groups most in need; and strengthen financial cooperation for education, prioritising countries most in need.” This APREC’s Bangkok Statement came out with a stronger position on education financing which stated a target of 20% of national budget devoted to education or 6% of the GDP. It also called for quality and harmonised official development aid to education.

In the FOL, the parallel session on education financing and governance focused not only on financing but also on education governance - the processes by which governments make and implement policy decisions that affect the finance and delivery of schooling to citizens. Discussions at the Festival of Learning on Governance and Financing addressed the need for governments to be transparent, accountable, efficient and effective, and responsive in the provision of quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. Some suggested indicators for monitoring good governance in education were – securing 20% of the national budget and 6% of GDP for education; devoting at least 6% of the education budget to adult education; ensuring better targeted Official Development Assistance (ODA) for education; transparency in the budgeting process and the involvement of communities in that process; and civil society participation, including youth voices, in policy formulation and implementation.

The session reiterated the APREC’s position that PPPs and other innovative financing in education should strengthen the public education system and not add barriers to education of the poor and disadvantaged groups. To monitor this target, ensure government’s provision of education, and guard against privatisation of education, the sessions proposed the following indicators, among others:

- % of private schools to total number of schools (public and private)
- % of enrolment in private schools to total enrolment (public and private)
- % of children enrolled in public and private schools by income decile; by rural/urban; by ethnicity; by religion
- % of teachers in private schools to total number of teachers (public and private)

ASPBAE agreed to collate the recommendations arising from these discussions to form a consolidated submission from the Festival of Learning to the ongoing web-based consultation undertaken by the Technical Advisory Group on the Post-2015 Education Indicators.
Education for change – Keynote speakers address the Festival of Learning

“Lifelong learning is a continuous struggle”
Prof. (Dr.) Melani Budianta
Faculty of Science and Culture
University of Indonesia

“Realising the Future We Want for All”
Prof. Hubert Gijzen, UNESCO Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Jakarta, Indonesia

This article captures the main assertions of the two keynote speakers at the Festival of Learning – Prof. Melani Budianta addressed the Opening Ceremony, and Prof. Hubert Gijzen spoke at the Seminar on the Post-2015 Education Agenda held at the University of Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta.

The first Keynote Address at the opening of the Festival of Learning, given by Prof. (Dr.) Melani Budianta, Faculty of Science and Culture, University of Indonesia, focused on education as a transformational agent in the changing context of the region and the world.

Prof. Budianta shared her views on the challenges and opportunities for realising the right to education for all that transforms the structural problems in the Asia Pacific towards people-centred development. Reflecting on two case stories on learning from Indonesia and Timor Leste, she began by elaborating on what ‘lifelong learning’ means. She averred that the essence of lifelong learning is:

• to acquire the skills, knowledge, and critical awareness in order to survive and strategically position oneself in a fast changing local-global environment.
• to understand basic rights, including the rights to keep one’s cultural knowledge and identity, and to empower oneself socially, economically, politically.
• to keep developing one’s potential and to have the access to knowledge and learning technologies.
• to have a safe environment and supportive social network for sharing and exchanging knowledge.

Lifelong learning needs to be located within the concrete challenges and opportunities faced by learners in the Asia Pacific region. Learners need the tools and knowledge to address the impact of fast-paced globalisation alongside the rise of regional economic blocs (through regional free trade agreements), the challenges of democratisation with the marginalisation of vulnerable and disempowered groups, war, conflict, and violence, including the radicalisation, especially of youth and society after 9/11, widespread transnational migration of people, climate change, an increasingly connected world through information and communication technologies. The growth-oriented development framework heavily influences the content of education curricula with neo-liberal frameworks dominating formal education content. Persistent patriarchal discrimination of sexual minorities limits girls’, womens’, and minorities’ access to quality education. Adult illiteracy persists, directly correlated to poverty and new information technologies has widened the knowledge gap given a wide digital divide.

Prof. Budianta observed that state policies in education emphasises education responses “in normal conditions” where there is urgency to promote the “rights for knowledge in critical conditions” - attetive to the various layers and instances of disparity, disempowerment, violence, conflict, and emergencies that learners need to contend with as they seek to learn, to be educated. Alongside this however, the region has a history of vibrant civil society initiatives attending to education needs in this ‘critical’ contexts - although many of these have remained informal, loose, and unstable. There is also potential in using a vibrant social media and the internet to sustain existing and new networks for collaborative projects in lifelong learning.

In conclusion, Prof. Budianta highlighted continued on next page...
the importance of creating common links among Asian countries in enhancing research collaboration to regularly identify, map, and update changing civil society initiatives and needs in the region; in a stronger focus on lifelong learning in critical environments, especially for marginalised groups; and in actively engaging in resource mobilisation for civil society initiatives on lifelong learning in the Asia Pacific. She also underscored the importance of linking with universities, being actively involved in formulating and monitoring education policies, and directly engaging with grassroots communities.

Offering the second Keynote address of the Festival of Learning to open the Seminar on the Post-2015 Education Agenda held at the University of Gadjah Mada, Prof. Hubert Gijzen, Director of the UNESCO Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Jakarta, Indonesia, spoke about the role of education in realising “the future we want for all” at the Policy Seminar on the Post-2015 Education Agenda held at the University of Gadjah Mada.

He typified the imbalance between people and the planet in climate change, massive pollution of the air, soil and water, deforestation, oceans at risk, biodiversity loss, and over-extraction of natural resources.

Mirroring these imbalances, the current global discourses in defining the new development agenda point to 10 key global challenges that need addressing: Poverty Eradication, Pollution, Population Growth and Urbanisation, Food Security and Sustainable Production, Old and New Diseases, Energy, Disasters, Water and Environmental Resources, Climate Change, and Peace and Security. Prof. Gijzen asserted that the post-2015 development agenda should aim to correct these imbalances with people at the centre of the sustainability equation.

Describing the current mechanisms and processes defining the new development agenda, he observed that the new agenda is broader than the MDGs of 2000, encompassing poverty, sustainable development, peace and security, from a narrow focus on just poverty eradication; it involves more consultative processes, moving away from a reliance on small drafting committees; it promotes an overarching agenda for all and not just for developing countries; asserts horizontal cooperation rather than a ‘north-helps-south’ perspective; and argues for a broad funding base rather than reliance on Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Locating education within the new development agenda, he quoted Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director General—“Quality education is the most influential force for alleviating poverty, improving health and livelihoods, increasing prosperity and shaping more inclusive, sustainable, and peaceful societies”. He spoke of education as a catalyst for change for a sustainable future. Towards this end, he asserted that the new education agenda that seeks to realise “the future we want for all” should have the following features:

- Quality education for all
- Expansion and integration of Education for Sustainable Development
- Education for knowledge and awareness raising
- Prepare future generations for their role in the green economy

Prof. Gijzen reminded that the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (Nagoya, November 2014) offered recommendations to deepen work on educating for a sustainable future that bear strong consideration in the World Education Forum in Korea (May 2015) and in the Post-2015 Summit in New York (September 2015).
Looking back at 50 years of ASPBAE: Luminaries take centre stage

Several past and present ASPBAE Presidents, Secretary-Generals, and Executive Council members took centre stage at the Festival of Learning to reflect on the roles that ASPBAE as a regional civil society organisation played through different historical periods for education, development, and civil society - in advancing the right to education and lifelong learning.

Sandy Morrison, ASPBAE President (2005-2008) and Heribert Hinzen, Director of DVVI South and Southeast Asia Regional Office, led the panel discussion involving current and former Executive Council members of ASPBAE - W.M.K Wijetunga, ASPBAE Secretary-General (1985-1995); Rajesh Tandon, ASPBAE President (1991-2000); Usa Duongsaa, ASPBAE President (2001-2004); Robbie Guevara, ASPBAE President (2009-present); Maria Khan, ASPBAE Secretary-General (1995-present); Nani Zulminarni, Jerald Joseph, Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rahman, ASPBAE Executive Council Members (2001-2008).

Panellists were asked to reflect on what they believed were ASPBAE’s most important transformative moments – signalling strategic shifts in the functioning of the organisation.

Dr. Wijetunga pointed to the Executive Council meeting in Macau in 1990 which undertook a comprehensive reflection on the future direction of ASPBAE – appraising its current structure, programme, funding, capacities, and membership perceptions about its role and functioning. Members then saw a danger in ASPBAE being perceived as merely a “funding agency” channelising funds primarily from DVV International, its main funder. The discussions at the Macau meeting set on stream the processes which culminated in ASPBAE’s First General Assembly in 1991 – the key transformative moment, highlighted by Rajesh Tandon, which reshaped ASPBAE as a broad Asia Pacific civil society regional organisation, strongly grounded in the practice of NGOs and grassroots community educators, locating adult education work within the crucial development issues faced by people in the region.

The launch of ASPBAE’s leadership development programme in 1993 through the Basic Leadership Development Course (BLDC) was a transformative moment, Usa Duongsaa highlighted. It set in place a set of formal processes and the organisational culture that deliberately regenerated leadership from the ranks of ASPBAE’s membership and programmes, holding the organisation in good stead to date. Robbie Guevara pointed to the 5th International Conference of Adult Education (CONFINTEA 5) in Hamburg, Germany, in 1997 as a transformative moment for himself personally and for ASPBAE.CONFINTEA offered a platform for civil society adult education practitioners and activists to derive from their rich adult education practice, lessons to inform the development of alternative policy recommendations to strengthen adult education policy in such areas as environmental education, women’s education, human rights education, migrants continued on next page ...
education, adult literacy, to name some. These efforts set the stage for ASPBAE’s shift towards a stronger emphasis on advocacy work a few years after.

ASPBAE’s Second General Assembly in Darwin Australia, in 1996 was a defining moment for Nani Zulminarni’s work in ASPBAE – the first regional ASPBAE event she attended. The Darwin Declaration and discussions around it deepened ASPBAE’s attention to gender and issues of marginalisation in the region. Maria Khan pointed to ASPBAE’s participation in the World Education for All Conference in Dakar in 2000 as a transformative moment for ASPBAE. It signalled the need for adult educators to align themselves more strongly with the broader education movement advancing the right to education in all its stages and environments (formal, non-formal, life-long, and life-wide) to better secure gains for adult education which has traditionally suffered poor policy attention and resourcing.

The panellists where also asked to highlight examples of ASPBAE responses to critical educational issues and contextual challenges within their term of office in ASPBAE.

Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rahman pointed to ASPBAE’s ability to present spaces for cross-country learning and experience-sharing as important strategies to enhance the practice of adult educators. While policy work is important, so is implementation and the effective delivery of education services, especially at the community level. Much of this work falls on the shoulders of NGOs committed to reaching vulnerable communities: ASPBAE’s efforts in strengthening the competencies of NGOs has strong impact and is very valuable. Jerald Joseph highlighted ASPBAE’s attention to human rights as a defining principle in all its work. Maria Khan pointed to ASPBAE’s efforts and experience in promoting a strong interface between practice and policy, and in the dynamic interaction of national, regional, and global policy work on education – as strong contributions to the overall development of civil society work globally and to the advancement of the right to education. Heribert Hinzen underscored the value of the more contemporary work of ASPBAE in influencing the post-2015 education agenda with a strong lifelong learning framework as a strategic effort that needs to be recognised.

Rajesh Tandon cautioned that too much can be ascribed to a strong funding base of NGOs as a condition for delivering good work. ASPBAE’s history offers a more nuanced reality – money can certainly help but it can also obstruct. ASPBAE’s lean resource base at a critical time in its history compelled the organisation to draw from the rich human resource base of its membership, drawing on precious volunteer time and energies that galvanised and grew the network. It set the organisation squarely on the path of evolving strategies that were creative, dynamic, and of strong added-value to best optimise meagre resources. It matured the organisation by directing energies on substantive work instead of getting it wrapped in the business of managing and accounting for big funds and the chase to maintain these.

In his concluding comments, Heribert Hinzen stressed that in looking ahead to the post-2015 scenario, ASPBAE and its members and partners must look at the larger framework of education for all and education for sustainable development in working towards a future agenda. It is in doing so that ASPBAE will further define its niche in adult education and lifelong learning in the Asia Pacific region and in global platforms.
Many governments are faced with challenges in mobilising resources for education. Education financing is therefore an important area of debate and discussion for the post-2015 education agenda. In the paucity of funds and diminished aid to education, many governments have resorted to public private partnerships, innovative financing arrangements, and allowed unregulated private sector provision of education. This government policy poses a threat to the right to education and ASPBAE has pointed to this challenge in several post-2015 deliberations. Increasingly, ASPBAE has realised that civil society organisations need to engage their governments on the strategic impact of privatisation on the right to education. In this regard, civil society organisations also need to deepen their understanding of issues on education financing, public private partnerships on education, domestic resource mobilisation, and education ODA (Official Development Assistance).

Towards this end, a session on education financing was held at a Policy Seminar on the Post-2015 Education Agenda at the University of Gadjah Mada held during ASPBAE’s Festival of Learning. It consisted of a plenary discussion on “Education Financing and the Challenge of Privatisation of Education in the Asia Pacific”, followed by parallel workshops on Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Education, Country Case Studies on Privatisation of Education, and Domestic Resource Mobilisation. These sessions on education financing reviewed key trends and challenges in education governance and financing, and analysed the challenges getting in the way of achieving sufficiency, efficiency, and equity of education financing.

ASPBAE’s Rene Raya led the plenary session on “Education Financing and the Challenge of Privatisation of Education in the Asia Pacific”. He highlighted the increasing trend of privatisation in the region manifested in the dramatic rise in private school enrolment, the proliferation of low fee for profit private schools, the aggressive push for PPP in education, and the emergence of the corporate “chain” schools. There is a coordinated global push network that is pushing for privatisation of education led by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, transnational education consulting firms, and some development agencies.

These groups argue that private schools deliver better quality education at lower cost, and provide parents with options to enrol their children in the school of their choice. These assertions are not supported by studies and actual country experiences. In reality, the private school advantage disappears once socio-economic status is factored in, according to studies done by PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and OECD. School choice is a myth because for the poor, often, the choice is whether to stay or drop out of schooling. The lower cost of private schooling is mainly because they pay their teachers way below the national standards. Worst, privatisation and certain types of PPP, such as the voucher system and education contracting, result to segregation on the basis of ability, economic status, and ethnicity. Inequity in society is thus exacerbated.

The objective of the workshop on ODA in Education was to review key trends and challenges in ODA towards 2030 based on country cases of Japan and the Republic of Korea. Specifically, it aimed to analyse issues getting in the way of achieving sufficiency and...
quality of ODA in education. It also aimed to facilitate understanding on how donor and recipient countries can work together in pressurising governments to harmonise quality ODA in education (that promotes economic development and welfare), and outline concrete priority issues and key strategies to address issues and challenges by 2030.

Following presentations by Takafumi Miyake of the Japan NGO Network for Education (JNNE), and Moon Suk Hong of Re-shaping Development Institute (ReDI), Korea, participants of the parallel workshop agreed that by harmonising ODA in education, governments can channelise support to one sector plan, i.e. support recurrent costs of education – teachers’ salaries and books – as 90% of education budgets are earmarked for recurrent expenditures. Some of the advocacy asks identified by the participants were a provision for 10% of ODA to go to basic education; prioritising low income countries or countries with the most need; increasing predictable, long-term budget support; giving more support to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) fund; and considering scholarships as separate from education aid. There was a felt need to have effective coordination mechanisms between governments and NGOs in formulating a legal framework for ODA, better policy coherence, and strengthening analysis and interpretation of data.

Three countries presented case studies in the parallel workshop on Country Case Studies on Privatisation of Education – Philippines, India, and Pakistan. The presentation from E-Net Philippines described Education Service Contracting (ESC) as one of the largest PPP programmes in the region with the following aims: democratising and improving access to secondary education; reduce class size in crowded public secondary schools; and maintain viability of private schools. While partly successful in reducing class sizes and maintaining the viability of private schools, the programmes do not cater to poor and disadvantaged children as most accredited private schools are in the urban centers and hardly affordable. Disparity in school access remains - the rural poor, slow learners, and other disadvantaged children are left out to study in poor funded and low quality public schools.

The objective of the study conducted by NCE India was to monitor the adherence of the provisions set under the Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009) by Low Fee Private schools in India. These schools were most unrecognised and found to be violating key provisions of the RTE Act. Infrastructure is generally poor and not at par with national standards as stipulated in the Act. Majority of teachers have no professional qualifications with no provision for in-service training. These teachers are paid very low salaries and asked to sign pay checks reflecting much larger amounts to make it appear that they are paid according to national standards. Very few of these schools go through continuous and comprehensive evaluation. Fees charged by schools, including admission fees, cost of textbooks, uniforms, and supplies are hardly affordable to the poor. Most parents are forced to pull out their children after a few years in private schools. Gender gap in education is exacerbated even more where boys are twice more likely to be in private schools than girls.

NCE India reinforced the ‘Right of children to free and compulsory education’ as a fundamental right and that it must remain the state’s responsibility. It underscored that the government must develop a common school system for promoting equity and equality for all children and that the role of the private sector
The main agreements at the workshop were that governments are ultimately responsible for providing high-quality public education and innovative financing measures pursued should not result in an infringement of the right to education and should not undermine the public school system. Regulatory frameworks must be set in place to ensure that private schools and PPP programmes promote equity, quality, and the right to education, and respect the rights of teachers to decent pay and working conditions. Monitoring systems need to be in place to ensure implementation of education policies. There needs to be community participation to enhance accountability, budgets for education need to be increased, and civil society should be a powerful movement to defend the right of education.

The workshop on Domestic Resource Mobilisation focused on a discussion of key trends, challenges, and strategies for domestic resource mobilisation in countries and in the Asia Pacific. Under PPP (if at all) should be seen as supplementary to that of the government and not a substitute.

Pakistan allocates 2% of its GDP on education and spends more on its military budget that it does on education. 10% of military spending in Pakistan could put 9.5 million children in schools. The case for privatisation of education is still not convincing and many of the PPP studies in the country are donor funded, have limited critical findings, and lack conclusiveness.

The study revealed that while there is some evidence to show that PPP improves educational access, this does not automatically remove inequities. Programmes may not be sustainable as they are donor dependent and may have difficulty in scaling up. There is also contested evidence about the assertion that private schools deliver better learning outcomes. PPP programmes should not be considered as a replacement for the public education system. Some solutions suggested by the Pakistan study include the need for the Pakistani government to develop a holistic view towards providing free and compulsory education; conduct more large-scale independent research on PPPs in education and its effect on learning outcomes, teacher’s working conditions, and management practices; and for civil society to form a unified voice towards PPPs in education.

The workshop on Domestic Resource Mobilisation focused on a discussion of key trends, challenges, and strategies for domestic resource mobilisation in countries and in the Asia Pacific region. Participants shared country experiences in challenges and effective strategies in mobilising domestic resources, both initiated by government and advocated by civil society organisations.

Domestic financing bears the major portion of education financing (up to 80% by lower/middle income countries). In a presentation on Domestic Resource Mobilisation, Tanvir Muntasim of ActionAid highlighted that both education and progressive taxation contribute to reducing inequality and promoting human rights. It also proposes a solution to State’s claim of inadequate resources for education. He further stated that progressive taxation leads to equitable wealth distribution and that a broader tax base ensures more investment in social sectors like education. Furthermore, due to deep rooted public mistrust in government expenditure, revenue generation through taxation must be accompanied by earmarked progressive spending.

One major challenge has been donors withdrawing aid to basic education and focusing on higher education instead, widening the gap in achieving Education for All. Moreover, privatisation of education in the name of ‘innovative financing’ has further marginalised poor communities in accessing free education. With progressive taxation as a possible means for securing resource mobilisation, monitoring systems will have to be in place to ensure that the revenue generated through taxation is spent in an accountable and transparent manner. There is a need for broader tax bases at national levels for education financing. There is a concern that while national governments are part of commitments made at global and regional levels, there is a lack of programmes or policy frameworks to make such commitments a reality.

Some key issues identified related to domestic resource mobilisation were - lack of transparency and accountability in budgeting processes at national levels; mismanagement in spending public resources; challenges in securing political will for a percentage of income tax to be allocated for education; tax concessions to multinational organisations; and lack of civil society strategies to influence increase tax base systems.

The workshop participants suggested that globally, actors such as the GPE (Global Partnership for Education) should work towards increasing the 4 S’s – share, size, sensitivity, and scrutiny of education budgets. At the national level, coalitions need to explore engagements on taxation and progressive investments in education. And at the local level, there is a need to identify ways to fill the resource gap and consider domestic resource mobilisation as an alternative to protecting the right to education.
Statement of Commitments

ASPBAE Festival of Learning: Asia Pacific Civil Society Defining Education for the Future

Yogyakarta, 18-21 November 2014

Steadfast on our vision of transformative education and lifelong learning for all, and cognizant of the significance of the education post-2015 processes, we gathered in the Festival of Learning in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on 18-21 November 2014.

We, more than 200 educators, advocates, youth leaders, and activists from 32 countries from the Asia Pacific and outside the region, in dialogue with representatives from government and international institutions, defined an agenda for education for the future. These collective and diverse voices of civil society, attentive to the agenda of marginalised and vulnerable communities, will be carried forward to governments and duty bearers towards the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in May 2015 and the UN Summit in September 2015.

We also acknowledge the civil society consultations on education post-2015 conducted by members of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) all throughout the year which have informed significantly this Statement.

ASPBAE History, Contributions, and Civil Society Roles in Education for the Future

In celebrating the 50 years of work of the ASPBAE community, we recognised the immense contributions of civil society in realising education and lifelong learning with communities who have been systematically marginalised and denied an education. This commitment will continue as we are called to respond to emerging contexts, and face new and ongoing challenges in the Asia Pacific that can promote and hinder the right to education.

In the Festival of Learning, we reflected on the unfinished agenda, and the urgent need to expand access and ensure equity in quality education for all throughout life - in early childhood care and education, primary education, secondary education, youth and adult literacy, and skills for life and work, with particular attention to women’s literacy and empowerment. The persistence of disparities in education necessitates not only reforms in education, but a rethinking of the development paradigm that systematically excludes people from participating in economic and political life.

We anticipated emerging contexts in the Asia Pacific, and the opportunities and challenges that will impact on the right to education. These include the opening or restriction of democracy, geopolitical realignments, climate change, communication technologies and new literacies, youth perspectives and ways of learning, changing work skills, migration within and outside countries, and the trend towards privatisation of education.

Post-2015 Education and Development Agenda and Processes

We affirmed that education is a fundamental human right that enables people to exercise their other rights as empowered citizens. It is a public good and a state responsibility, making it imperative for governments to secure education for every individual regardless of age, sex, socio-economic status, geographic location, and ethnicity, without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunities, including for persons with disabilities.

We endorsed the articulation on the post-2015 overarching goal of education as contained in the Muscat Agreement, which CSOs have substantially contributed to: Ensure equitable inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030. We likewise endorsed the agreed targets contained in the Muscat Agreement and the Asia Pacific Statement on Education Beyond 2015 (Bangkok Statement) of the Asia Pacific Regional Education Conference (APREC).

We critically analysed the education post-2015 agenda based on our country contexts, grassroots experiences, and cross-country exchanges on how the agenda can better capture the aspirations of the people for education and development. Reflecting on these, we built consensus on targets, indicators, policy asks, and implementation strategies on key issues: 1) basic education 2) quality and teachers 3) youth and adult literacy and skills for life and work 4) education governance and financing, and 5) education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

Together we celebrated our diverse cultures and communities and local and indigenous knowledge when we visited learning centers in Yogyakarta and shared inspiring and transformative stories from the field.

In solidarity with our Indonesian colleagues, we called on the new Indonesian administration to make good on its promises for quality education for all and sustainable development.

Framework, Targets, and Indicators for Education Post-2015

We believe that the education post-2015 agreements will have meaningful influences on reforms in public education across countries and in communities. We agreed to engage our governments, multi-lateral institutions, and donor
partners to heed our call for a responsive and people-oriented post-2015 education agenda linked to the broader rethinking of sustainable development.

We will work collectively for the inclusion of the following in the post-2015 education agenda:

- Education should be holistic and empowering and anchored on and lead towards sustainable development and active citizenship. Sustainable development, transformative values, and empowerment must be the core goals of education.

- Expand access and equity in education and learning opportunities throughout life. We agreed on the provision of 12 years of free and compulsory education for all, spanning early childhood care and education, primary, lower, and upper secondary education, reaching out especially to the poorest and most excluded, such as persons with disabilities, indigenous and ethnic minorities, girls, and women. Affirmative action must address the multiple layers of barriers that keep children and adults from attending schools and participating in learning programmes.

- Government provision of universal adult literacy and holistic continuing education that will equalise opportunities for work and community participation and that promotes sustainable development.

- Ensure gender equality in education in terms of access and, more importantly, in content, process, and learning environments that break gender stereotypes and is oriented towards empowerment. Affirmative policies and actions must be implemented to address the economic, social, and cultural barriers that discriminate against girls and women in education. Urgent actions are needed for women’s literacy, education, and empowerment.

- Invest in quality in education whether in formal, non-formal, and informal settings. We agreed to assert that education is relevant, context-based, learner-centered, and promotes sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, and global citizenship. The vision on education quality should go beyond simply ‘measurable learning outcomes’. Education programmes must include the development of life skills that enhance critical thinking, leadership, communication and negotiation skills, peace-building abilities, and the use of technology. Professional development and the effective participation of teachers are keys to quality education.

- Secure 20% of the national budget and 6% of GDP for education and ensure transparency and accountability in education governance. Equally, governments must devote at least 6% of the education budget to adult education. Ensure that PPPs, and other innovative financing in education, strengthen the public education system and not add barriers to education of poor and disadvantaged groups.

- Ensure commitment of donors and the international community to deliver 20% of the ODA for education, half of which should go to basic education, including adult literacy. Equally, call for better targeted Official Development Assistance (ODA) for education.

- Institutionalise civil society participation, including ensuring children and youth voices, in education policy development, management, implementation, and monitoring.

To Incheon and New York

In the run up to the World Education Forum and UN Summit in 2015, we will:

- Mobilise and consolidate the aspirations, perspectives, and demands of grassroots and local communities, especially those living with disadvantages, or are marginalised and vulnerable, to inform the articulation of the Global Education and Development Agendas and their implementation processes.

- Lobby our positions with our respective governments – with the Ministries of Education, Finance, Social Services, Development and Planning, and of Foreign Affairs, and other government representatives, to the 2015 World Education Forum and the UN Summit

- Ensure that our key messages on education for the future reach the broader publics through sustained advocacy within the mainstream, traditional, and social media.

- Promote exchanges between ASPBAE members so we continue to learn and inspire each other and foster solidarity in our campaigns

- Work towards national, regional, and global mechanisms that will hold governments accountable to implementing the education post-2015 targets and ensuring policy coherence to support the realisation of the goals.