



Civil society plays pivotal role in framing the new education agenda

By Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan, ASPBAE Secretary-General



Education 2030 is an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda – recognition of education’s critical role in making transformation and change possible.

To exuberant, prolonged applause and a standing ovation, the **Education 2030 Framework for Action** was adopted during a High level meeting on 4 November 2015 in UNESCO Paris. The enthusiastic endorsement of the Education 2030 Framework of Action was a fitting culmination of an almost 3-year extensive, unprecedentedly broad, and democratic consultative process to shape the new education agenda, post 2015. A high point in the process that ran at different levels - national, regional, and global – was the World Education Forum (WEF 2015) in May 2015, in Incheon, South Korea, that gathered around 1,600 participants

including 120 Ministers of education, heads of UN agencies, and various education stakeholders, including civil society, that agreed the essential elements of the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

The Framework for Action represents the global education community’s consensus on the ways to concretise and implement the new global education agenda or ‘**Education 2030**’. This agenda builds on the achievements and unfinished work attendant to the ‘Education for All’ (EFA) commitments and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on education, while confronting the more contemporary

challenges to education and learning the world faces, such as persistent poverty and heightened inequity, the climate crisis, escalating conflict and intolerance, jobless growth and rising unemployment, especially of young people.

Education 2030 is an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda – recognition of education’s critical role in making transformation and change possible. ‘Transforming our World – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, adopted by the UN Summit in New York on 25 September 2015 outlines the new development agenda which is expressed in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. ‘Education’ is one of the 17 SDGs: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 which underscores a commitment to “*Ensure equitable, inclusive quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all*” by 2030. SDG 4 is further expressed in 7 targets and 3 means of implementation spanning early childhood care and education, primary and secondary education, youth and adult literacy, skills for decent work and TVET, tertiary education, education for sustainable development, global citizenship education, human rights education, with commitments to advance gender equality, equity, inclusion, and education quality, especially through well-trained, motivated teachers and effective learning environments for all. It also commits to increased scholarships for least developed countries in higher and tertiary education.

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Civil society and Education 2030

Civil society organisations advancing the right to education and lifelong learning were very active in the processes shaping the new education agenda. In the main, their engagement and active involvement were motivated by the recognition that the decisions coming out of these processes would have wide-ranging impact on education policy and financing – influencing the decisions governments and donors will take



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on education in the years to come. Likewise, it was prompted by the understanding that their wide experience, especially working with and for disadvantaged groups, could offer powerful input to ensure that the interests of vulnerable and marginalised communities are advanced in these processes. And finally, perhaps more primarily, it stemmed from the belief that participation by civil society in shaping policies is a right and is fundamental to good governance, robust policy and ultimately, the democratic functioning of societies.

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), DVV International (DVVI), the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), and other civil society networks on education worked vigorously to influence the post-2015 processes in its centres in New York and Paris and in the different regions. ASPBAE was particularly active in the UNESCO-coordinated processes shaping Education 2030 and its Framework for Action. Aside from its involvement in the related regional and national processes, it was, along with GCE and Education International, one of the civil society representatives in the EFA Steering Committee which drafted the Muscat Agreement – the main input of the education community to the SDG processes that formed a key basis for Education 2030. The expanded EFA Steering Committee also drafted the WEF 2015 Incheon Declaration and Education 2030 Framework for Action.

In appraising the outcomes of these

processes, many in civil society advancing adult education and lifelong learning have welcomed the new education agenda, noting its positive features.

As a stand-alone goal in the new development agenda, education enjoys a prominence which favours financing and policy priority. Education 2030 strongly affirms education as a human right and a basis for the realisation of other rights. It locates education's role as core in achieving overall human development, dignity, social justice, poverty eradication, peace, and sustainable development. The new agenda is also framed for universal application – an agenda for education in both richer and poorer countries where the earlier EFA was seen to be an agenda only for developing countries. It recognises lifelong learning explicitly as part of the new agenda and as a guiding framework. It offers a solid commitment to gender equality, equity, and inclusion – to end all forms of discrimination in education, including age-based discrimination.

Education 2030 sets out a more ambitious agenda for education access than earlier – 12 years of free, publicly funded primary and secondary education of which 9 years are compulsory; at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education; equal access to tertiary education while retaining attention to adult literacy, skills for decent work, and TVET. It promotes a wider appreciation of education quality at all levels and settings of education including adult and non-formal education, and is deemed essential to the full meaning of education equity and inclusion. Education quality is also understood as being oriented towards the full development of individuals and recognises education for sustainable development, global citizenship, human rights, the promotion of a culture of peace, and non-violence as inherent features.

Finally, Education 2030 has an agreed Framework for Action which offers guides for implementation, coordination and partnership, monitoring and financing – vital for translating intentions into action. Governments are seen as the primary drivers for the new agenda and as duty bearers for ensuring the right to education. Civil society is recognised as a full partner and as part of the new global architecture that will offer strategic support and guidance to the overall effort to achieve SDG 4 and its targets.

Civil society will, however, need to be vigilant that the implementation of the new agenda lives up to its promise and intentions.

With a wider and more complex agenda, there are capacities that need enhancement, addressing gaps in legislation, policy, structures and mechanisms at different levels, but especially at the country level, where, as again, the heart of Education 2030 will lie. The indicators with which progress on the new education and development agendas will be tracked are yet to be finalised and adopted in the 47th Session of the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016. Civil society will need to sustain dialogue well with statisticians and economists who dominate this exercise, to make sure the spirit and full intentions of each of the goals and targets are not whittled down to a much narrower, reductionist agenda.

Finally, there are serious concerns that the financing required to see Education 2030 through will not be easily forthcoming. Aid to education has been on the downturn and aid appetite is very low. Unjust tax structures have resulted in billions of dollars being lost in tax dodging – depriving especially poorer countries of much needed domestic resources for education, health,



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and overall development. Civil society has cautioned against the over-optimism in the private sector to fill the financing gap in education as this offers serious threats to equity and inclusion. In the paucity of funding, education for adults, especially non-formal education for adults, stands the most vulnerable. These are also the most difficult to measure and track - an inherent disadvantage in the 'results-based' funding regime that currently dominates.

Nevertheless, civil society advocates for the right to education and lifelong learning need to persevere, muster the very strengths that helped bring about heightened appreciation for the value of youth and adult education and lifelong learning in the current policy discourse. While there are 'wins' to celebrate, more work lies ahead to make the case for adult and lifelong learning – and the pivotal role this plays in changing lives and in "transforming our world".

EDITORIAL

Education 2030: A ‘new’ education agenda?

By Jose Roberto ‘Robbie’ Guevara, ASPBAE President

We have successfully secured a stand-alone education goal within the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Let us celebrate the launch of Education 2030 – *Ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.*



Robbie Guevara

How new is the education agenda?

It is new because it is very recent, having been adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. But in some sense it is not new, as it allows us in ASPBAE to continue our work to achieve the unfinished Education for All (EFA) agenda and maintain the progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).



While EFA and the MDGs were goals that were identified for the developing countries to achieve, the SDGs are meant to be universal that applies to all countries.

It is new because the inclusion of lifelong learning in the goal allows us who are engaged with adult education to advocate for the valuable role that adult learning plays in contributing to sustainable development. However, it is not new, as we in ASPBAE have always acknowledged the value of learning throughout one’s life, acknowledging that adult learning was marginalised when the MDGs chose universal primary education as the education goal.

It is new because while EFA and the MDGs were goals that were identified for the developing countries to achieve, the SDGs are meant to be universal that applies to all countries. However, it is not new for us in ASPBAE as we have always committed ourselves to work with marginalised communities, whether in developed or developing countries – in particular our strong commitment to women and indigenous communities – who often are also marginalised in terms of educational access, opportunities, and achievement.

It is new because there is a new global architecture that is being established to implement, monitor, and evaluate the

achievements. However, it is not new because we continue to build on the architecture we have in the region working through our individual member organisations, but also the growing number of national education coalitions we have helped to establish and develop their respective capacities.

Indeed, there are aspects of Education 2030 that are new. But as I have identified, there are elements of the goal that are not new. Let me identify a few more.

At the heart of Education 2030 is our strong commitment to education as a human right – this is not new. In fact, we continue to discover how this commitment is being threatened in many of the countries we work in.

At the core of Education 2030 is our strong stance that education is the responsibility of the state and therefore a public good. But we need to be aware and resist the growing tendency to surrender this responsibility to the private sector, based on the arguments that governments don’t have sufficient funds and that the private sector can be more efficient in delivering education.

Furthermore, we need to reflect and acknowledge the capacities that we have developed, the frameworks that we have proposed, and the successful actions that we have achieved, and make sure that we only become stronger to face the old problems using the SDGs as a new framework.

The commitment to work in partnership is also not new. It is refreshing to hear how our members are continuing to critically engage with the other key players who are committed to similar ideals of education as a right and as a public good.

It is also not new because it continues to be important for us to argue that education is the foundational goal for all of the other goals. One cannot achieve the health, gender, conservation, and partnership goals without a new kind of education and learning.



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Finally, many of us are not new to this commitment to education advocacy work. But let us take this opportunity of the ‘newness’ of the stand-alone education goal within the SDGs to RENEW ourselves, RENEW our commitment, and RENEW our partnerships. While the battle to secure the stand-alone education goal has been won, the war against those who threaten the achievement of education as a human right and a public good are themselves renewing their own strengths.

Implementing Education 2030: Lessons from EFA coordination in the Asia Pacific



The education goal is an ambitious global agenda that has to be steered by governments and requires effective partnerships with different stakeholders at different levels of governance.

The new mantra for education advocates is Education 2030 – “by 2030, ensure inclusive, equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The commitments to education signed by 184 Member States is Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and similar to all the other goals, it is an ambitious global agenda that has to be steered by governments and requires effective partnerships with different stakeholders at different levels of governance – at the country level from local to sub-national to national; at the international level, from sub-regional to regional and global.

In the SDGs, relative to the other sectors, the education sector has had more experience in forging global commitments, notably in the 1990-2000 Education All (EFA) goals from Jomtien, and then 2000-2015 EFA from Dakar, Senegal. While the SDG 4 targets are more forward looking and go beyond the agenda of the developing countries, there is admission that the EFA remains an unfinished agenda in many countries all over the world. Therefore, the skepticism over the effective and universal implementation of Education 2030 is understandable.

The experience in the Asia Pacific region offers critical lessons for ensuring support as well as demanding accountability in the implementation of the EFA that could inform the architecture for Education 2030. Importantly, there are lessons that can be learnt for civil society organisations to build on as they move forward in the next 15 years in pushing for the much-needed education reforms to ensure that SDG 4 implementation addresses the education needs of marginalised sectors.

Learning from the past

In anticipation of the signing of the SDGs in the UN Summit in New York, the Asia Pacific region, through the leadership of the Thematic Working Group on EFA (TWG-EFA), conducted an internal reflection and an external evaluation of the regional EFA architecture in 2015. These evaluations studied how the partnerships, drawing from the comparative advantage of different members, were successful in facilitating support for Member States in achieving Education for All as well as in catalysing education policy and programme development with civil society and other stakeholders at the country level.

They looked at the inextricable links of regional and global coordination and support for EFA at the country level.

Mechanism and institutionalised CSO role - The Thematic Working Group on EFA for the Asia Pacific was established in 2000 as a platform for information sharing and networking and a coordination mechanism to support the six EFA goals and the MDGs. With the recognition of civil society organisations in the Dakar Framework for Action, the TWG-EFA witnessed the sustained participation of civil society organisations in organising regional events to monitor progress and support countries in implementing EFA.

Civil society is represented by diverse partners in the TWG-EFA which includes, but is not limited to, ASPBAE, Action Aid, Plan International, Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), and All Together in Dignity Forum. Further, civil society organisations were pivotal in forming sub-thematic working groups that focused on initiatives to inform education policy reforms such as on early childhood care and development (ARNEC) and mother tongue-based and multilingual education (TWG on MTBLME). It has also been a key player in promoting girls’ and gender equality in education through UNGEI.

While civil society participation has been institutionalised at the global level through the UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs, the institutionalised participation at the regional and country levels, both at the national and sub-national tiers, needs strengthening. In the Asia Pacific, except for Cambodia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Nepal, civil society does not occupy a seat in national-level EFA coordination mechanisms. Civil society participation varies per country, depending on the political spaces opened up by government for them. At the regional level, while civil society organisations are permanently represented in the TWG mechanism, the regional architecture does not yet formally institutionalise civil society representation in the same degree as at global levels through the CC NGO - a formal mechanism within UNESCO, funded by UNESCO, and operating with defined working procedures

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that facilitate accountability and representativeness.

It is important to note, though, that what worked well at the regional level and in some countries, in terms of civil society participation in EFA mechanism/s are (1) continued presence and critical engagements of civil society organisations in the spaces provided, and (2) significant contributions – whether they be research, analysis, mobilisations – from civil society that supports EFA implementation. Civil society participation in the EFA mechanisms required tremendous efforts not only in terms of finances needed to participate at regional meetings, but more importantly, in the consistent efforts to effectively provide perspectives from the grassroots, from the citizens, whether these be policy recommendations (arising from community consultations), research and data from the field, and civil society analysis of education trends and needs from different communities (youth, indigenous, etc.).

Processes

The significance of the TWG-EFA lay in its important role in ensuring regional processes to coordinate, monitor, as well as build capacities for EFA implementation.

In evaluating it in promoting effective partnerships, the TWG-EFA highlighted three levels of its contributions: (1) Knowledge partnerships (function as learning platforms) (2) Standard-setting partnerships (draw up voluntary or country-based standards, yet subject to binding goals and regulations), and (3) Service partnerships (initiate and realise projects designed to implement development goals).

In setting standards and in ensuring accountability of countries, the important processes organised by the TWG-EFA are the periodic assessment of EFA: the Asia Pacific EFA Mid-Decade Assessment (MDA) and Mid-Term Policy Review processes in 2006-2008, the regional end-of-decade EFA assessment in 2010, and the national EFA 2015 reviews in 2014. These regional processes have been a platform for measuring progress of the country's implementation of EFA. Importantly, these meetings are also technical

workshops to help build the capacities of the Ministry of Education in policy and programme development for EFA.

The EFA Coordinators' meetings and monitoring processes contributed to strengthening linkages between national and EFA goals, elevating the issue of disparities and marginalisation in EFA in regional and national agendas. Similarly, when Member States conducted national EFA 2015 reviews, the TWG provided technical support together with review panels composed of UNESCO, UN partners, and civil society organisations.



Civil society recommends that the Thematic Working Group on EFA play a strong role in facilitating collaborative work on regional education targets such as education for refugees and migrant workers.

The TWG ensured multi-stakeholder engagement in documenting the EFA milestones in the region including the substantive participation of civil society in this process. Regional meetings ensured dialogue between government and civil society who analysed EFA progress and strategies together. Regional platforms organised by the TWG also served opportunities for partnership building among government delegates, UN agencies, and civil society and led to regional programmes to address the needs of out-of-school children and youth and mother tongue multilingual education. A strong added-value, therefore, of the regional meetings for civil society was the access these provided to pertinent information and contacts, which otherwise could not be accessed at the country level.

Creating “fit-for-purpose” architecture for SDG 4

The reflection from the TWG-EFA noted the prospects for better, effective partnerships in the region for SDG4. While there are many good experiences

and lessons to build on for the next period, there are new and complex contexts (not only around education) that need to be considered in creating an architecture fit-for-purpose.

From civil society perspectives, the recommendations worth pursuing in the creation of the Education 2030 architecture are –

1. The TWG should be more inclusive and include all the WEF 2015 co-convenors, sub-regional bodies, the private sector, and representatives of other sectors whose work supports education, e.g. social protection, finance, child protection, etc. Civil society participation should be fully institutionalised in the regional mechanism.
2. The TWG should go beyond information sharing and aim to be more visionary and innovative. As Education 2030 strongly addresses equity and lifelong learning, it is necessary to bring in data generated by civil society organisations through their citizens' education surveys, community case studies, and research on the situation of unreached populations.

3. While the regional platforms have been significant for dialogue, the TWG on EFA should recommend institutionalised processes whereby governments hold regular and meaningful consultations with civil society organisations at the country level.

4. With the broader education agenda that includes education in emergencies and global citizenship, the TWG on EFA, together with inter-governmental agencies, will have to play a strong role in facilitating collaborative work amongst Members States on regional education targets such as education for refugees and migrant workers

The architecture for SDG4 is still a work in progress as countries prepare for the implementation of the SDGs. While civil society made headway in sustaining its visibility/participation in the regional EFA architecture, it should continue its vigilance in informing the decision-making processes at the region. More importantly, it should continue to put pressure at the country level to ensure that civil society voices are heard in the SDG 4 coordinating mechanisms at the country level.

Supporting education sector planning across the full SDG4 agenda

The Education Sustainable Development Goal and the Global Partnership for Education

By David Archer, ActionAid



GPE will earmark its own resources principally for basic education - including pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, and second chance to learn for youth and adults.

On 4 November 2015, the Incheon Framework for Action was formally agreed in UNESCO Paris, putting the flesh on how countries can achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education by 2030. There is a lot of optimism around having agreed such a comprehensive and inclusive framework. But we have been here before, in Jomtien in 1990 and Dakar in 2000, when the Education For All frameworks promised so much, only to be undermined in practice by powerful donors and governments deciding to focus more narrowly just on primary education. The so-called Education for All Fast Track Initiative, set up in 2002 by over 30 bilaterals and multilaterals, was a key part of the problem, explicitly focusing its resources on primary schools, ignoring early childhood education, secondary education, youth, and adults (effectively violating its own name).

The Fast Track Initiative has now

evolved into the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) which manages over \$2 billion of funds and has a



GPE has always encouraged civil society participation in “Local Education Groups” to develop government education plans. Now there will be minimum standards set to ensure that participation is meaningful.

massive influence over the education sector plans across 62 low income countries. GPE is in the process of developing a new strategy and one of the key questions is whether it will take on the full SDG4 agenda or whether it will keep a narrow focus. The answer is now more or less clear, following

a Board Retreat in Washington in October 2015 – and although the new strategy is not finalised until December 2015, the signs are positive. The board retreat effectively agreed that its ultimate goal is identical to the framing of SDG4. Moreover, it is agreed that GPE funds that are earmarked for planning will support education sector planning across the full SDG4 agenda, in line with the Incheon Framework for Action.

Once those plans are produced, GPE will earmark its own resources principally for basic education - but “basic education” is now understood as including pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, and second chance to learn for youth and adults. Moreover, whilst most funds will go to “basic”, it was agreed that some GPE funds may also, in some contexts (where countries prioritise this), support “equity-focused” investments in both upper secondary and wider early childhood education.

Assuming this is finally agreed, this represents a major breakthrough because it means that in the future, the major donors financing education will work in a way that is broadly harmonised with the ambitious new SDG agenda. The next challenge will be to ensure that, in each country, governments do put together credible and comprehensive plans. In this regard too there is good news. Whereas GPE has always encouraged civil society participation in so called “Local Education Groups” to develop these plans, in the future there will be minimum standards set to ensure that participation is meaningful. The recent approval of the next phase of the Civil Society Education Fund (2016-2018) also means that there will be financial support for coalitions to engage actively in education sector policy. So, let us hope that this time around we can truly deliver on the ambitious education goals that have been agreed!

Crafting the indicators for the SDGs and Education 2030

A continuing challenge for civil society



Civil society should remain vigilant to ensure that the vision of the new development agenda is translated into clear, appropriate, and meaningful indicators and monitoring systems to effectively track progress through 2030.

Following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) during the UN Summit held from 25-27 September 2015 in New York and the launching of the Education 2030 Framework for Action during the High-Level Meeting held on 4 November 2015 alongside the 38th UNESCO General Conference in Paris, the focus has now shifted on the indicators framework that will track progress of the development agenda. For this purpose, the United Nations has established an Interagency Expert Group for SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG) to look into the development of global indicators for the SDGs. Earlier in 2013, the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was established by UNESCO to develop recommendations for education indicators that can be used to track global progress in the implementation of Education 2030. The new development agenda consists of 17 goals and 169 targets. SDG 4 is on education and lifelong learning which contains 7 plus 3 targets.

Civil society celebrated the adoption of the new development agenda having been one of the strongest proponents of the ambitious goals and targets articulated in the SDGs and Education

2030. At the same time, civil society should remain vigilant to ensure that the vision of the new development agenda is translated into clear, appropriate, and meaningful indicators and monitoring systems to effectively track progress through 2030.

As part of its mandate to develop an indicator framework, the IAEG-SDGs held its second meeting in Bangkok from 26-28 October 2015 to seek agreement on the proposed indicators for each of the 169 SDG targets. Identifying a meaningful indicator for every target is certainly a huge responsibility and a challenging task, considering the capacities of Member States and the reality of existing data and monitoring systems at the country level. The Bangkok meeting concluded with agreements on majority of the proposed indicators, but failed to draw consensus on 62 indicators which will need further discussions. For SDG 4 on education, all proposed indicators have been agreed upon except for target 4.7 on knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

ASPBAE, along with other civil society organisations, has actively participated in the development of the indicator

framework, particularly in the consultations and online submissions organised by the IAEG-SDG and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). ASPBAE has consistently challenged the proposed indicators for its inadequacy and weakness in capturing the SDG 4 targets. It offered alternative and additional indicators that better capture the vision articulated in SDG 4 and the 2030 Education Agenda.

ASPBAE criticized the IAEG-SDG approach of identifying only one indicator for each target, arguing that in most cases, a single indicator cannot adequately cover the full meaning of the target. As an example, the proposed indicator for SDG Target 4.1 on ensuring that “all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes” fails to capture the target of *free*, and *quality* has been reduced to mere “proficiency in (a) reading and (b) mathematics.” Civil society has consistently proposed to go beyond a single indicator as this cannot fully cover the target, let alone the goal. Civil society also proposes to include qualitative measures and periodic impact assessments, mindful that indicators alone can never be sufficient to fully measure progress on the goals.

ASPBAE has also commented on proposed indicator SDG Target 4.7 which limited the measure to “knowledge across a selection of topics in environmental science and geoscience” when the target speaks about broad range of learning: “*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.*” Instead, ASPBAE proposed to include the key components of global citizenship education and education for sustainable development, and to include an indicator measuring the extent to which these education components are mainstreamed in national education policies, curricula, and teacher education.

As mentioned, a parallel process under UNESCO is taking place for the

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development of indicators specific to education. The Technical Advisory Group has come out with a broader set of globally-comparable thematic indicators for education designed to track the education targets more comprehensively across countries. It has proposed a set of 43 thematic indicators for SDG 4 on education - including some progressive ones tracking performance consistent with human rights conventions such as the 'Number of years of (i) free and (ii) compulsory pre-primary, primary and secondary education guaranteed in legal frameworks'. It has also been proposed that all indicators are to be disaggregated by gender, location, wealth and where possible, disability and conflict to highlight performance alongside the equity and inclusion dimensions of the new agenda. The challenge, however, is how to enhance the capacities of Member States to adopt country-level indicators that will appraise them of their own performance against the full agenda of SDG 4 to inform their robust policy, and avoid instances where governments simply cherry-pick the indicators that can reflect favorable performance and or those which they have the existing capacity to monitor.

While more comprehensive than the IAEG-SDG proposed indicators, the TAG proposed thematic indicators still misses out on relevant measures to monitor progress towards better financing, improved resource mobilisation through progressive taxation, and stronger public education systems. ASPBAE will continue to engage the IAEG-SDG, the TAG, and national governments to ensure a stronger indicator framework and monitoring system. The work of the IAEG continues into March 2016 when it delivers its final recommendation to the UN Statistical Commission which is set to meet in March 2016 at the UN Headquarters in New York.

What needs to be done?

A significant number of the proposed indicators are not currently in the existing national and global statistical

systems, thus, the need to develop a comprehensive monitoring system for tracking the SDGs. Qualitative monitoring should, likewise, be developed using appropriate tools and approaches to offer deeper insights and analysis on the progress of the SDGs from the perspectives especially of local communities and disadvantaged population groups. Household surveys, community mapping exercises, focused group discussions, and local consultations must be part of the tools available for SDG monitoring. Apart from tracking outcomes, there is also a need to monitor the impact of the SDGs on policies, budgets, and practices. All these will require more and better use of resources.



ASPBAE has participated in the development of the indicator framework and has challenged the proposed indicators for their inadequacy in capturing the SDG 4 targets.

ASPBAE notes that most governments are not investing enough on improving their statistical systems and donors are not keeping to their commitment of more funding to support the production and better use of statistics throughout the developing world. It is essential for Member States to invest and allocate more resources to develop a respectable monitoring system for better data collection, processing, and analysis.

Equity is a critical cross-cutting concern across all SDG targets, including the Education 2030 targets. Progress is best achieved if the poorest, the most excluded, and other disadvantaged sectors of society are able to catch up, move forward, and achieve the SDG targets. For the proposed indicators

on education, including non-formal, literacy, and adult education, it is critical to ensure data disaggregation by gender, age group, economic status, location, ethnicity, disability, caste affiliation, residency status, and other categories specific to the national context.

Civil society must be given greater space for meaningful participation in the development of the indicator framework and in the implementation of the monitoring system at national, regional, and global levels. Civil society should be accorded full representation in all policy and decision bodies related to the monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs.

There should be full access and clear disclosure policy on all information related to the SDGs, including revenue and financing measures that will be adopted and implemented by governments, donors, and international agencies. Member States must legislate and implement clear guarantees on freedom of information to ensure credible monitoring systems.

Alternative reports should be encouraged and supported to get the perspectives of civil society actors, and to provide spaces for meaningful participation of and input from disadvantaged groups, particularly women, youth, elderly, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised sectors of society. There should be spaces for contesting official reports so that civil society monitoring and analysis can be heard and considered in global and regional platforms that will be created to monitor the implementation of the SDGs.

Finally, ASPBAE reiterates its call for ensuring the same level of ambition in the implementation, monitoring, and accountability as in the goals and targets articulated in the SDGs. In developing the indicator and monitoring framework, civil society must exercise continuing vigilance to make sure that the new development agenda is not reduced and re-written back to business as usual.

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