

Keeping the challenge of education privatisation and public private partnerships in the World Bank agenda

18-14 October 2018, Bali, Indonesia



ASPBAE took part in a Civil Society Policy Forum held as a part of the Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG).

ASPBAE participated in the Civil Society Policy Forum (CSPF) held as an integral part of the Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG). More than 600 civil society participants from 69 countries participated in the Forum to dialogue and exchange views with the WBG and IMF officials, government delegations, and other stakeholders on a wide range of development and economic issues.

This year's CSPF was highlighted by the Roundtable Discussions with the WBG Executive Directors on 9 October 2018; the [Civil Society Townhall](#) convened and joined by the heads of IMF and WBG, Christine Lagarde and Jim Yong Kim, along with civil society representatives

from across the world on 10 October 2018; and the launching of the WB's [World Development Report 2018](#) on 'Learning to Realize Education's Promise' and the [Human Capital Index](#) on 11 October 2018.

Among the civil society sponsored events during the CSPF was the panel session on 'Education Equity, Financing and Privatisation' organised jointly by ASPBAE and Oxfam International, along with E-Net Philippines, the Network for Education Watch Indonesia (NEW Indonesia), Oxfam Pakistan, and ActionAid International. Among the panellists was Luis Benveniste, Education Practice Director of the World Bank. ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, participated in the panel session and most of the other high-level events in the CSPF. She accompanied and guided the team in its lobby engagements with the WB Executive Directors.

Katie Malouf Bous, Oxfam's Senior Policy Advisor, introduced the session and the panel speakers, and explained the critical importance of analysing the impact of privatisation, particularly Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in education, on equity and the right to education.

ASPBAE's Rene Raya started the panel discussion by noting that the Asia Pacific is one of the most challenged regions in education, hosting the largest number of youth and adult illiterates, and accounting for nearly a third of out-of-school children globally. It is also the least spender on education compared to other global regions, with countries such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Philippines, and Indonesia spending less the 3% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This level of expenditure is way below the UNESCO recommended benchmark of 6% of the GDP. Meanwhile, Official Development Assistance (ODA) to education has gone down in recent years, and much of it has remained tied, unpredictable, and misdirected.



ASPBAE's Rene Raya participated in the Civil Society Policy Forum. He highlighted that Official Development Assistance (ODA) to education has gone down in recent years, with much of it remaining tied, unpredictable, and misdirected.

The combination of chronic underfunding in education and the aggressive push coming from global financial institutions, primarily the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), have encouraged the aggressive entry of private, for-profit, and corporate investment in education. Countries throughout the region have increasingly allowed the private sector to play a greater role in policymaking, school management, financing, and the provision of education at all levels.

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Zeeshan Siddique, Oxfam Pakistan, stated that while the World Bank has been supporting education foundations that provide subsidies to private schools to reach out to poor and disadvantaged children, there has been no observed improvement in enrolments, access, and gender equity.

In Pakistan, which is home to over 22 million out-of-school children, Zeeshan Siddique, Project Coordinator of Oxfam Pakistan, confirmed that the World Bank has been supporting education foundations that provide subsidies to private schools to reach out to poor and disadvantaged children. However, after investing billions of dollars over several decades, there has been no observed improvement in enrolments, in access, and in gender equity as the programme failed to reach the rural poor, particularly girls. Moreover, school quality had been compromised given the poor infrastructure, substandard facilities, and unqualified teachers in low-fee private schools.

Similar experiences have been noted in Indonesia. Abdullah Ubaid Matraji, National Coordinator of NEW Indonesia, presented the BOS programme (School Operational Assistance), which is the main assistance programme of the government that caters to both private and public schools. The programme, which started in July 2005 through a US\$ 600 million loan from the World Bank, had experienced serious implementation problems. The allocation of BOS fund had not been equitable and its disbursement not transparent. There is also weak control of the funds by the school committees which makes it easily susceptible to misuse and corruption.

In the Philippines, the Education Service Contracting, that was started in 1988, is regarded as one of the longest running and largest education PPPs in the Asia Pacific. ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano explained that under this scheme, the government contracts private schools to deliver secondary education using public funds. She noted that the programme, conceptualised and supported by the World Bank, is not equitable as it discriminates against the poor who cannot afford the top-up fee charged by most of the contracted private schools.

On the part of the World Bank, Luis Benveniste highlighted the Bank's consistent and long-standing support to education, and pointed out that 99% of bank education resources goes to the public education system. He also raised the point that parents, even the poor, prefer to send their children to private schools.

Rene Raya, however, argued that the Bank has been the most active promoter of education PPPs and has actually conceptualised, endorsed, and supported some of the largest PPP projects in the region. The Bank, therefore, should account for such a role instead of presenting itself as the champion of the public education system for which it is clearly not. Cecilia Soriano also asserted that most parents actually prefer to send their children to public schools. Citing the experience of Nepal, she mentioned the case of children migrating back to government schools after improving infrastructure, keeping premises secure, and completing the training of teachers. In Nepal, privatisation has further widened inequity in education and caused segregation based on socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, and disability.



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ASPBAE called attention to and argued against the World Bank's policies promoting privatisation of education that impact negatively on the right to education.

argued against such policies during the Civil Society Roundtable with the WB Executive Directors, the European CSO (civil society) Dialogue with WB Executive Directors, and the Forum of the International Development Association (IDA) which were attended by top officials of the WB, donor states recipient countries, and by CSO representatives.

ASPBAE's Cecilia Soriano appealed to the European Directors of the World Bank to rethink its policy framework of PPPs in education, citing the Asian experience with PPPs which only exacerbated inequity and discrimination, and resulted to further segregation in education. ASPBAE's Rene Raya raised the same issues during meeting with WB Directors and the IDA Forum, and called for a review of the Bank's policies and investment programme which provide funding to private education providers.

While most of the WB Directors defended and justified the Bank's education policies, several WB officials and representatives of donor countries acknowledged that there are bad PPPs, and promised that they will review such cases. This may not be the best response that ASPBAE would have wanted, but it kept education privatisation and PPP issues in the agenda of the World Bank.

After moderating the open forum that followed the panel presentations, Katie Malouf Bous concluded the session by summarizing the main points raised and urging the Bank to review its education policies, particularly the WB-supported PPP projects in the education sector.

ASPBAE raises education privatisation issues in World Bank-sponsored events

ASPBAE maximized different opportunities during the Civil Society Policy Forum to call attention to the World Bank's policies promoting privatisation of education that impact negatively on the right to education. ASPBAE strongly

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