

### **Three continents, three events... success and numerous take-aways!**

What a marathon few weeks it has been! The Sub-Regional Advocacy Workshop in the Pacific, the High-level Political Forum 2018 (HLPF 2018), and the 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED 4) are now behind us and it is perhaps timely to reflect back on these back-to-back events.



ASPBAE staff and several ASPBAE members were closely involved in these events. Many of them spent tireless hours preparing for them and traveling to far ends of the world to ensure that civil society voices were heard in the global and regional platforms – a passionate quest towards demanding that governments commit to their promises towards education and lifelong opportunities for all and that civil society contribute to the chorus for inclusive and equitable education. It was a time for ASPBAE and its members, especially the national education coalitions in the Asia Pacific, to speak up, hold governments to account, and demand that quality public education remain in its rightful place as a fundamental human right and that persons of all ages are able to access and benefit from learning opportunities throughout their lives.

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The **Sub-Regional Advocacy Workshop in the Pacific**, held in Suva, Fiji, from 2-4 July 2018, was an arena to voice ideas, share perspectives, and learn from challenges in the South Pacific. The workshop was followed by the Vaka Pasifiki Conference held from 5-6 July, also in Suva

ASPBAE's Peter King actively blogged throughout the event where he quoted the Chair of the Solomon Islands education coalition (COESI), Gideon, as saying that the Solomon Islands had failed to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, not because the country disagreed with the Convention, but because it was afraid of the cost of its implementation. A strong concern also raised was related to the formal education system in the South Pacific, especially in relation to Maori and Pacific island youth, where one 'mould', or education formula, has been used for different unique identities which has often resulted in learners feeling alienated from the learning content and teaching methodologies. The interactions of the education coalitions in Fiji was a space for all these different identities to come together, to share their stories, share their experiences, learn from one another, and forge closer ties with each other. ASPBAE's Peter King captured it perfectly in his concluding blog – *"In the end, as the discussion was summed up, it remained clear that Pacific islanders are close friends, and really, in many ways, a cultural and linguistic extended family. Like family members, they bicker, but in the end, are strong and will defend each other."*

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The **High-level Political Forum 2018** (HLPF 2018) took place in New York from 9-18 July 2018. ASPBAE held a side event on 10 July focusing on '*Learning Cities: Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies through education*'. The side event, jointly organised by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO), and the United Methodist Church, highlighted the intersection of SDG 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), with SDG 11 (make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), and SDG 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns).

While the role of learning cities for sustainable development in communities was a focus of the side event.

The main panel of the side event was made up of several prominent personalities – Jose Enrique Garcia III, incumbent Congressman of the 2<sup>nd</sup> district of the historical Province of Bataan, Philippines; Song, Young-Wan, Director General of Culture, Sports and Education at Suwon City, Korea; Liberato Bautista, President of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO); Luis Gonzalez Arenal, President of the School of Architects, Mexico; and Raúl Valdés-Cotera, Senior Programme Specialist at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and Programme Manager of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. The side event was well attended by approximately 75 participants from different sectors – civil society, academics, environmental groups, faith-based organisations, and others.

In her presentation, representative of the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group and Secretary General of the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), Katarina Popovic, highlighted that, "Learning cities is the practice that successfully integrates the whole scale of lifelong learning: children, youth, adult, elderly; formal and non-formal education; different levels of education; and various sectors and areas". Katarina also pointed out that learning cities showcase how the SDGs can work at the local level and they showcase the functioning and resilience of cities through transformative learning.

Speakers at the event spoke about supporting individual empowerment, intercultural dialogue, and activities for social cohesion; and facilitating decent employment and entrepreneurship that spur local

economic development. Sharing by the speakers also showcased how the SDGs can work at the local level; how cities can ensure resilience through transformative learning; and how cities can successfully integrate the whole scale of lifelong learning in and outside the formal school system.

A [Ministerial Declaration](#) was adopted at the conclusion of HLPF 2018.



There was a flurry of events around the **4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030** (APMED 4) that was held from 12-13 July in Bangkok. There was a pre-APMED 4 meeting for Asia Pacific civil society organisations from met to brainstorm on the issues to be debated at APMED 4 and to strategise and agree on common advocacies from the Asia Pacific. Then there was a National Coordinator's meeting that was held after APMED 4.

The pre-APMED meeting saw the active participation of over 25 national civil society education coalitions from the region, many of them ASPBAE members. The participants agreed a [core set of recommendations](#) to APMED 4 which guided their lobbying and advocacy efforts within this important policy space.

The theme of this year's APMED (4) was *Transforming Learning – Meeting the skills demand to achieve SDGs in the Asia Pacific*. It specifically focused on SDG Target 4.3 and Target 4.4, and explored progress and challenges towards implementing and monitoring skills development and outcomes through formal, non-formal, and informal education. ASPBAE President, Nani Zulminarni, ASPBAE Executive Council Members, Meenu Vadera, representing South and Central Asia, Thein Lwin, representing Southeast Asia, and Nasiba Mirpochoeva, Co-opted Executive Council member representing Central Asia, actively participated in APMED 4, as did several of ASPBAE's national education coalitions from the region. Youth representatives who were ASPBAE partners in the Youth-led Action Research - Norfriza Yesmita (Mita) from ASPPUK, Indonesia, and Manisha Gangode from Abhivyakti, India - also participated as resource persons in APMED 4, sharing the outcomes of the research and advocacy efforts.

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Following are some civil society reflections at the conclusion of APMED 4:

- The pre-APMED meeting was useful for identifying issues beforehand to be well-equipped during the formal sessions;
- The recommendations paper that was agreed upon during the pre-APMED civil society meeting provided coalitions talking points and boosted confidence in intervening in discussions and influencing others;
- Civil society presence set a high standard among participants from sub-regional groups and parallel workshops;
- Follow through will help in assuring proper coordination institutionalising recommendations.

The APMED 4 outcomes document is still in process. Keep watching this space as we will share it with you as soon as it is made available. The meeting documents are available [here](#).

In conclusion, ASPBAE would like to thank all of those who contributed with blogs and photos throughout these major events over the last few weeks. We truly appreciate the time and effort that was given to the blogs amidst very busy travel and programme schedules. We enjoyed reading and sharing your views and experiences and we hope to bring you similar first-hand accounts for our future events.

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